



DISCERNING *OUR FUTURE*

Introduction & Overview

First United Methodist Church of Shreveport

Agenda

- What is Discernment
 - Our Discernment Objectives
 - Our Discernment Process
- History & Overview – How did we get here?
 - Theology
 - Sexuality
 - Our Options
 - Finances & Organizational Details
- Next Steps in our Discernment Process

What is Discernment?

- "... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"
(2 Corinthians 10:5)
- In the church, sometimes spiritual discernment is used particularly during deep and challenging decision making.
- Spiritual discernment is setting oneself or the community apart for a time of deep listening for the Holy Spirit's wisdom, insight and calling. It is not judging others (Matthew 7:1-2), but encountering God's wisdom and understanding in others, the community of faith and ourselves for discerning God's calling for the congregation and each of us individually.

Our Discernment Objectives

- To objectively educate and clearly communicate to the FUMC Shreveport congregation on the following:
 - The Relevant Theological and Organizational issues plaguing the UMC Denomination.
 - A FAIR assessment of the UMC's ability to resolve the current controversy and disorder for the church around these issues.
 - The Options available to our Church and the implications of each.
- How do we approach this process?
 - In love, grace & prayer with our eyes focused on the Lord.
 - Trying to get close to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and to discern His will.

Our Discernment Process

- The FUMC Shreveport Discernment Taskforce has developed and organized a 40 Day Discernment plan for our church that includes:
 - Prayer: 40 Days of Guided Prayers.
 - Education: A series of big meetings designed to educate the church on the theological and organizational issues at hand.
 - Worship & Exploration: A series of Wednesday night meetings for church members to have any questions answered and expounded upon.
 - Conversation Circles: An opportunity for small group discussion and Q&A.
 - Congregational Alignment:
 - At the end of the 40 days of Discernment, the Church Council will reconvene to consider the recommendation of the Task Force.
 - Should the Church Council elect to invoke paragraph 2553, the District Superintendent is notified and sets a Church Conference for the entire Church Body to vote.

Our Discernment Process

Prayer

- Over the next 40 Days, the Taskforce asks that each church member pray for wisdom, clarity, and grace.
- Please pray that the Holy Spirit would move through and among us as we do this challenging work of discernment.
- Prayer Walks with Dr. Bell : Each day, Dr Bell will take a "prayer walk" around our church during the 40 days at 10:05 am (2 Cor. 10:5) to cover the church in prayer.
- Our staff has kindly provided us with a prayer calendar and daily prayers to help guide us in prayer throughout these 40 days.
- Please join us in opening and closing our FUMCS Discernment period with a Day of Prayer. Please visit the Firstshreveport.com/events to sign up:
 - Wednesday, September 7th in the Sanctuary
 - Sunday, October 16th in the Sanctuary



DISCERNING OUR FUTURE

40 DAYS OF GUIDED
PRAYER & DISCERNMENT
SEPT. 7TH – OCT. 16TH

Please use this prayer calendar provided by the Task Force as a guide for your discernment journey.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 FIRST		SEPTEMBER	7 INVITE the Holy Spirit into this prayer journey	8 Pray for GUIDANCE	9 Pray for our CLERGY	10 Pray for REVIVAL
11 Pray for church members BONDING	12 Pray for HUMILITY	13 Seek God and LISTEN	14 Pray for DISCERNMENT	15 Pray for FAITH	16 Pray for OBEDIENCE	17 Sing PRAISES to God all day
18 Pray for UNITY	19 Pray for CONTENTMENT	20 Pray the LORD'S PRAYER	21 Pray for our CHURCH MINISTRIES	22 Pray for GRATITUDE	23 Pray for PROTECTION	24 Pray for WISDOM
25 Pray for our CHURCH LEADERSHIP	26 MEDITATE on a Bible Passage	27 Spend time CONFESSING	28 Pray for brotherly LOVE	29 Pray for HOPE	30 Pray for CLARITY	1 OCTOBER Pray for TRANSFORMATION
2 Pray for JOY	3 Pray for PEACE within our church	4 ABIDE with God	5 Pray for TRUST	6 Pray for INSTRUCTION	7 Outwardly REFLECT God's grace	8 Pray for a GENEROUS spirit
9 Pray for UNDERSTANDING	10 Pray for RESTORATION	11 MAGNIFY the Lord	12 Pray for FOCUS	13 Pray for REDEMPTION	14 Pray for our DECISION-MAKING	15 Pray for SURRENDER 16 Give THANKS

Our Discernment Process

Education

- Education: The Discernment task force will be hosting a series of educational meetings
 - Discernment Introduction- 9/7, 9/8 & 9/11
 - Discernment Summary & Conclusion – 10/12, 10/13 & 10/16
- Worship & Exploration: A series of 4 Wednesday Church Nights will be devoted to Congregational Worship followed by Exploration of a Discernment Topic at which the Task Force along with staff will answer any pre-submitted questions from the church members.
 - Worship & Exploration Meeting Dates: 9/14, 9/21, 9/28 & 10/5
- Conversation Circles: Opportunities for 12-15 people to gather for conversation, guided by a professional facilitator, around the issues challenging the UMC. Congregation members are invited to participate in one circle.
- Web Resources: The Taskforce and Church staff have developed an informative website to provide every member with the information and resources needed to fully and fairly review and understand the issues being discerned.
 - <https://firstshreveport.com/discerning-our-future>

Our Discernment Process

- Congregational Alignment –

- The Taskforce will reconvene to make an official recommendation to the Church Council at the end of the 40 day period.
- The Church Council will then vote to determine the path forward for First United Methodist Shreveport.
 - Option 1: Remain in the UMC and wait for the General Conference in '24
 - Option 2: Elect to invoke Paragraph 2553 and begin the Disaffiliation process.
 - If Disaffiliation is elected, Dr. Bell would then notify the District Superintendent. The DS would then inform FUMCS of any further procedure necessary to complete and set a date for a Congregational Vote. This vote will take place anywhere from 10-120 days of notifying the DS.
 - The Church Congregation must approve the motion to Disaffiliate by a 2/3 majority.
 - The Louisiana Annual Conference votes in **June 2023** to approve disaffiliation.