

From: gene finnell <genefinnell1@****>

Date: March 27, 2023 at 8:55:36 AM MST

To: sbell@*****

Subject: Status of FUMC Shreveport

Dear Steven Bell, I'm Gene Finnell, a retired elder in the La. Conference. First UMC Shreveport is my home church. My parents were married there in 1943, I was baptized there as an infant in July, 1948, I attended worship and Sunday School there from the nursery through the 12th grade, and my experiences in the youth program lead me to a call to ministry, resulting in me being ordained a Deacon and an Elder in the sanctuary of First UMC. Needless to say, First UMC Shreveport is a sacred place for me. I am aware that First UMC will be voting to disaffiliate from the UMC in April. Quite frankly, the thought that First UMC could be anything other than a United Methodist Church is extremely disturbing to me!

I realize I'm not going to change the course of action taken by current members of First UMC, but I hope the folks who vote are aware that their decision impacts not only themselves, but countless others like myself who throughout their lives have called this church home. If First UMC had not been the open-minded, socially progressive, theologically diverse church that it has been, I suspect the impact of the church on the faith experience of thousands of folks over decades would not have been as profound as it has been.

Honestly, I see no good reason for First UMC not to remain a United Methodist Church, and my hope and prayer is that it will do so! If there are pastors on staff, as well as members of the church who are in disagreement with the United Methodist denomination, I would encourage them to either start a new church or find another church home, but leave First UMC Shreveport as a United Methodist Church!

Thank you, Gene Finnell