

Vote Schedule in April at First United Methodist Church – Shreveport

A vote is scheduled at First United Methodist Church-Shreveport in April.

Here these words from one former member who left, seeing the church turn from its strong religious roots to one that appeared to be more like a “community church” that was all about the minister, one that appeared to mirror his beliefs rather than those of the denomination.

From a Former Member of FUMC-S:

My heart goes out to this dear church that has been so important in my life and the life our our United Methodist denomination. As I am married to a “recovering Baptist,” I have heard him foretell what I did not want to hear... a straying from the denomination.

I recall a friend who had moved to Texas saying, “I am going to have to join the Episcopal Church.” When I asked, “Why?” she replied that in Texas the Methodist are more like Baptists. She said there was no questioning, no discussion – this is how it is and that’s that – and that they were entitled to vote on everything. She said the Episcopalians in Texas felt more like Methodists to her.

For a disaffiliation vote to be truly representative of the church, a church council should be equally representative of those who are solidly United Methodist and those who question whether this is the right affiliation for them. It is the responsibility of the pastor to assure that equal representation. Leadership should be equally representative.

In previous years, those who did not feel comfortable with the United Methodist position generally left the church to find a congregation where they felt more comfortable. Think of the questioning of church positions regarding issues such as slavery, union with Evangelical United Brethren, women in leadership, ordination of nonheterosexuals, literal translation of the bible, etc.

While the United Methodist Church has learned, grown and developed for 200 years, the minds of some within the church clearly have not. Today, however, those people who do not feel comfortable with concerns seem to feel entitled to assume the property and resources of the UMC. That begs the question, “should they be allowed to take the resources, the assets designated to FUMC-S by members and their ancestors?” Or even take these resources for their own while paying a pittance for what has been known as “The Cathedral of Methodism” in Louisiana.

Thoughtful, loving leaders mended the rift of the Civil War – yet some of today’s leaders choose to support division, they advocate a split within the church. They fail to see that many can be sheltered by a single umbrella of faith. They selfishly think the church is about their beliefs, their rights. They fail to understand the concept of connection – that the church is a trust for the denomination, not for them individually. They choose to split a congregation, to place their own personal concerns above those of the Conference. Support for this is a symptom of weak leadership, on both the conference and local levels.

Church leaders should have aggressively opposed a disaffiliation in the bests in interest of the Conference and in support of the United Methodist Church denomination they joined willingly. If they cannot do this, they should resign and find a congregation that is more suitable to their narrow definition of what it means to follow Christ with “Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors.”

I found true traditional Methodism at another local, loving UMC congregation; yet I have always felt a close connect to FUMC, where many of my family members worshiped over the years. My prayer is that it may remain UMC now – and forever!