



Bristol United Methodist Church

Post Office Box 219 Bristol, Florida 32321

John M. Jackson, Pastor

April 25, 2022

Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Jr.

The Rev. Alex Shanks, Assistant to the Bishop

The Rev. Wayne Wiatt, District Superintendent

Mr. Craig Smelser, Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services

The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church

450 Martin L. King, Jr. Avenue

Lakeland, Florida 33815

Re: Withdrawal from The United Methodist Church

Dear Bishop Carter, Rev. Shanks, Superintendent Wiatt, and Mr. Smelser:

Grace and peace to you in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We are writing to inform you of our intent to withdraw from The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church under ¶2548.2 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (2016)*, as amended in 2019. We will be seeking to align with the Global Methodist Church, an evangelical denomination, after it forms on May 1, 2022.

Our congregation has voted to pursue withdrawal and join the Global Methodist Church because of The UMC's continuing disobedience to and disregard of our doctrines and discipline regarding homosexuality in marriage and ordination. There is no accountability for clergy in our annual conference who perform same-sex weddings or who are even themselves in a same-sex marriage.

The 2019 Annual Conference was a watershed moment for our local church, and it left us feeling that the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church no longer wanted us. In many ways, we felt dejected and unwelcome. We heard that a clergy person, who was currently under complaint for performing same sex weddings, served Holy Communion. Many theologically liberal clergy persons wore t-shirts that used our own baptismal vows, written in rainbow colors, to clearly indicate that we, traditionalists, are evil, unjust oppressors. Moreover, we heard that there was raucous cheering when theological conservatives were shut out of General and Jurisdictional Conference elections. Neither the shirts nor the raucous cheering was rebuked or corrected by anyone, including by the bishop. Since then, the direction of The United Methodist Church concerning LGBT+ issues, including marriage and ordination, has become even more obvious.

We are on two very different paths that are irreconcilable. Our beliefs regarding sexuality are not a matter of mere opinion or interpretation, but are the plain truth of Scripture proclaimed by the wider, orthodox church for two millennia. The Judeo/Christian definition of marriage is over 7,000 years old. Further, we believe that our disagreement with the course of The UMC regarding sexuality is a presenting symptom of a deeper theological divide over biblical inspiration and authority, as well as the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We believe the Global Methodist Church more closely aligns with our orthodox doctrine, theology, scriptural understanding, and missiology.

We bear no ill will toward anyone, even though we feel that we have become outsiders in our own denomination. We firmly believe that staying in The UMC any longer will be detrimental to our mission, and we call upon the Conference leadership to allow us to move quickly through the process, including being included on the agenda of the 2022 Florida Annual Conference meeting. Please advise us of our next steps, and we will do our best to meet every deadline in a timely and expeditious manner. May God bless and keep you.

Grace and peace,

John M. Jackson, Pastor - Bristol UMC

Ron Waterman, Chair of Church Council- Bristol UMC

Julia Hosig, Lay Leader- Bristol UMC