



Greetings Mt. Comfort Church! I am writing to invite you to an important All-Church Town Hall meeting on Sunday, February 6, 2022, at 7:00pm; this meeting will be held in-person at our Mt. Comfort Campus, but also available via our live stream. The purpose of this meeting is to give an update as to the current state of our church and discuss our future relationship with the United Methodist Church.

At their last meeting, after several months of prayer, discussion, and discernment, our Leadership Team unanimously voted to recommend to you that we disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. While this issue probably would've never come up were it not for the continued debate within our denomination over human sexuality, our Leadership Team was tasked to discern beyond a single theological issue. Instead, the leaders of this congregation simply asked themselves, "Is the United Methodist Church still the best partner for Mt. Comfort Church to live out the mission God has called us to?"

Their answer was "no." While the future of the UMC has yet to be determined, we do know a split is looming. The parameters of that split could come as soon as this fall; however, the current COVID climate is making that reality highly unlikely as the in-person gathering of a global church remains challenging. Instead of waiting, our Leadership Team made the decision to be proactive. Doing so allows us to determine our best path forward as a congregation, as opposed to be forced into a certain direction in the midst of an ugly debate.

The theological conversation around human sexuality is an important one, but no matter one's personal perspective, it is a debate around sin. I firmly believe that when we allow sin to define our conversation and monopolize our ministry then Satan wins. If we were to remain a United Methodist Church, our congregation would be thrown into a painfully dividing dispute about human sexuality that will not help us transform our lives, our community, and our world. Instead, it will be a distraction for our congregation and a derailment from our mission. We do not want this issue of sin to define us internally, and more important externally, throughout our community. Instead, we should be defined by how we, as Mt. Comfort Church, represent and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Steps ahead, beginning with this all-church town hall meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup>, will include small group conversations, another town hall meeting, and finally an All-Church Conference in mid-

March where all professing members of Mt. Comfort Church will be invited to vote on this issue of disaffiliation. We realize there is a lot more information to communicate, questions of Why? What? and How? that remain, costs to consider, and your own season of prayer as you help discern our future. That's why this initial meeting and subsequent conversations are so important.

Please know that your Leadership Team cannot make the decision to disaffiliate from the UMC; they can merely make a recommendation. The ultimate decision is left in the faithful hands of you, our congregation. As we journey together these next few months, and beyond, I invite you to ask the same question your Leadership Team has ultimately wrestled with... "Is the United Methodist Church still the best partner for Mt. Comfort Church to live out the mission God has called us to?"

As your pastor, I believe there is no better foundation to stand upon than our Wesleyan/Methodist heritage, highlighted by the truth of God's Word; it is a legacy that we will continue to build upon and stand up for (no matter our affiliation) as we live into our next season and commitment to transform our lives, our community, and our world through the power and love of Jesus Christ. Please know that I am praying for you, because the season we are entering will not be easy. But I am confident that we will collectively discern the best path forward for Mt. Comfort Church.



Ethan L. Maple  
Mt. Comfort Church | Lead Pastor

*If you have questions regarding the Leadership Team's recommendation to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, please feel free to reach out to me at [ethan@mtcomfortchurch.com](mailto:ethan@mtcomfortchurch.com), or any of our Leadership Team members (listed below). You may also submit questions via our website at [www.MtComfortChurch.com](http://www.MtComfortChurch.com). We are committed to transparency at all levels as we venture forward seeking God's desire for our church.*

#### **Leadership Team Members**

Chris Sexton

Christine Sturgis\*

Deric Roberts

Jim Winter

John Bundy

Kathy Lee

Kristy Willhelm

Mary Ann Crisman\*

Megan Jones

Ron Arthur

Sandi Hudson

Sandy Abel

Tim Waymire

Pastor Ethan Maple\*

\* denotes staff members