



Greenwood United Methodist Church Discernment Plan

On October 20, 2022, GUMC’s Leadership Team voted unanimously to begin the 90-day discernment process. On October 21, the District Superintendent’s office was notified of the vote and provided a copy of the meeting minutes. Information concerning the Leadership Team’s decision to begin the formal period of discernment concerning disaffiliation was communicated via email (Shelby NeXT) to the professing members titled “Important Notice to Members.” The Notice was also printed and made available in the Narthex to those professing members who do not use email. The congregation was notified that the Leadership Team would be available after the Sunday service to answer questions and to pick up a copy of the notice if they had not received it via email.

The Greenwood United Methodist Church’s plan of discernment is as follows:

1. The purpose of the minimum 90-day period of discernment is to engage in a time of prayer, study, and honest and open conversation among the laity and led by the laity to determine whether God is leading the congregation to remain in the United Methodist Church or to consider disaffiliation from the denomination.
2. The discernment team of GUMC will be the current Leadership Team. The discernment process will be led by the following.
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3. GUMC will create a link from the front page of the current website titled “GUMC Discernment.” On this webpage will be the documents, updates, and detailed information that is determined appropriate for public viewing regarding GUMC’s process, and the links to the conference’s public resources regarding discernment and disaffiliation. The GUMC discernment page will be live by November 1, 2022.
4. GUMC has scheduled the following dates for the three listening sessions:
Session #1—Wednesday, November 16, 2022, at 6:30 pm.
Session #2—Sunday, December 4, 2022, at 4:00 pm.
Session #3—Sunday, January 8, 2023, at 4:30 pm.
(inclement weather date for Session #3 - January 11, 2023, at 6:30 p.m.)

These sessions will be held in the Sanctuary of GUMC. The dates and structure of each meeting will be sent out via email, printed hard copy in the Narthex, and published on GUMC's website discernment page. GUMC will promote a fair, open, and balanced discernment process. All parties, including those in favor of disaffiliation, impartial, and those against disaffiliation, will all have equal access to all church facilities and communication platforms to share information regarding their positions. GUMC will not allow for any audio/video recordings or live streaming during any session, at the request of the Annual Conference, to always maintain an open, safe, and protected environment for ALL to speak freely.

Each session will provide a period of time when professing members present can ask questions about the process or matters relating to disaffiliation or staying United Methodist. GUMC will encourage professing members to share their opinions about what they feel God is leading them to do.

All attendees of each session will be accounted for upon arrival by members of the GUMC Leadership Team. Counts of professing members and non-members will be noted, and professing members attending will be listed. Sessions #1, #2, and #3 will be open to others that are not members of GUMC. GUMC feels that this is a "family matter" and will only allow professing members of GUMC to interact with the speakers in sessions 1 and 2 and vote in session 3. **Non-members can only observe and listen.** As well as being published on the GUMC's website's discernment page, all session agendas will be sent via email one week prior to each session. Hard copies will be provided in the Narthex the Sunday before each session and available in the church office during church office hours. When they arrive at the session, hard copies will also be handed to the attendees.

- I. Session #1 will be led by the District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Blake Bradford. Dr. Bradford's knowledge and clarity will be beneficial as GUMC continues in this time of discernment. Dr. Bradford will discuss why we are here, share a presentation about the current landscape, and discuss details of disaffiliation and options going forward. Dr. Bradford will have a time for open discussion with professing members and answer questions they might have.
 - II. Session #2 will include two speakers. In the interest of fairness, GUMC will host a speaker that is for disaffiliation and a speaker that feels the importance of staying United Methodist. Each speaker will only speak for their stated position with an equal amount of time allotted per speaker and refrain from negative talk about the other party's position. There will be an opportunity for each professing member of GUMC to participate in a question-and-answer session with the two speakers at the conclusion of the two presentations.
 - III. Session #3 will be the straw poll. This will be handled by a check-in process consisting of members of the Leadership Team. Once membership is verified, a summary of the first two sessions will be provided, and professing members will be given a straw poll ballot supplied by the District Superintendent. Time will be allowed to hear from professing members that might not have been available for the prior sessions. The Leadership Team members will address any final questions for clarity before a straw poll vote is taken. The results of the straw poll will be recorded for the District Superintendent's office.
5. The rolls of GUMC are available in the church office during church office hours. There will also be copies of the church rolls in the Narthex on Sundays, starting November 6th. There will be a

section in the weekly newsletter requesting attendees to check the roll for clarification on their membership status.

6. The Leadership Team will meet shortly after session 3 to develop a statement that summarizes the findings of the three meetings and the outcome of the straw poll. That statement will be sent via email; hard copies will be available in the GUMC church office and published on GUMC's discernment webpage. The statement will also be transmitted to the District Superintendent requesting certification of the outcome of the proceedings. Upon completion of the review of the findings, a decision based on the information presented will then be made on whether to pursue a congregational vote on disaffiliation for reasons of conscience or to end the process and remain a United Methodist Church. If the majority of professing members present at the straw poll vote to call for a church conference to vote on a motion to disaffiliate the Leadership Team of GUMC will request that the District Superintendent call a church conference for a future date of the professing membership of GUMC. If a decision is made to continue the process and a church conference date is set by the District Superintendent, the congregation will be fully apprised of the date, location, and time. The motion to disaffiliate must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the professing members present and voting at the church conference. Votes will be counted following the Arkansas Conference guidelines for a voting team, who will review and count votes held at listening session three and at the church conference if one is held.
7. Should the outcome of the straw poll result in the calling of a church conference by the District Superintendent, the agenda provided by the Arkansas Conference of the UMC will be the official agenda for the church conference. Organizational rules, as outlined by the Arkansas Conference, will govern the proceedings and the voting process.
8. Greenwood United Methodist Church is aware that once the Appointive Cabinet approves a discernment plan, any changes to GUMC's church discernment plan requested by the church must be approved by the District Superintendent. GUMC is also aware that the District Superintendent will certify completion of the discernment process and will authorize a church conference by contacting the pastor to set a date for the conference only if the District Superintendent is satisfied that all aspects of GUMC's discernment plan have been properly followed and completed.

As Greenwood United Methodist Church discerns God's will about the future of our church, hope is that the community, the conference leaders, and Christians throughout the world will pray for peace and unity alongside our congregation.

Phil Bunch, Chair
Gabe Roberts, Vice-Chair

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you." Psalm 32:8