



first methodist

DOWNTOWN JACKSON

Who Are We? Who Do We Want to Be? Who SHOULD We Be?

These questions are ones that our church's worship committee is wrestling with. I think they are good questions for us as a church to wrestle with; we are a very diverse congregation when it comes to ideology, theology, expectations, and wants/desires. We are also very far from diverse in appearance: we are very white, very middle- to upper-middle class.

These questions are essential because of the season of change that is around us. We have been changed by a pandemic. We are facing economic and social change as Ford's Blue Oval City and subsequent feeder industries begin to emerge. More and more people worship with us online instead of in person. While some churches are facing a struggle attracting younger people and families, our church has an extraordinary number of families with children 6th grade and under. Unfortunately, our retention rate for children as they grow into youth has not been good, and our next youth director will be working in full-time capacity, tasked with ministering to our youth and recruiting adult volunteers to work with our youth program. We cannot fail in this opportunity that God has given us with so many children.

If these changes were not enough of a challenge, our denomination is going through division. It is not a very "neat" division; before it is over there may be two, three, or more denominations created. Some churches have already chosen to become fully autonomous and independent.

I know this is a serious issue for some people, a nuisance to others, and a non-issue for still others. The issues are complex and are more than just about matters of human sexuality. The reality is that not every person or congregation will choose to remain a part of the UMC, even within the city of Jackson. However, there are more than enough churches in Jackson and elsewhere where people can find a church home. We need to be at peace that some people will want to go elsewhere. We should not only be at peace with that, we should encourage and pray for those who are at unrest, and not allow coercion and undermining to take place among friends and family.

A new denomination, the Global Methodist Church, is set to launch on May 1st – and information is easily found online. I would suggest that you look at their official webpages and

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be wary of social media posts and comments – which are rarely accurate sources of information. The General Conference of the United Methodist Church has once again been delayed until 2024.

As for me, my ordination vows were taken in the United Methodist Church, and unless I surrender my credentials I will continue to serve in the United Methodist Church. I became eligible for retirement over a year ago, so I am here by choice and conviction and not biding my time: I am called to this work. It's also my firm belief that the real choices about this matter rests with people in the pews.

Should anyone, whether an individual or a group, wish to meet with me about these or other issues, I am more than willing to have conversation!

Peace,

Sky McCracken, Pastor
Lent, 2022

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