

**First United Methodist Church
Cheraw South Carolina**

**General Conference 2024 Task Force
October 2023**

The General Conference 2024 Task Force is a work group created in October of 2022 by the Church Council and tasked with the responsibility to collect, study and organize facts to inform the members of the Church Council regarding the current theological debate within the United Methodist Church over language in the Book of Discipline relating to homosexual lifestyle, same-sex marriage and the ordination of clergy who are self-avowed and practicing homosexuals. These issues have already led some churches to seek disaffiliation from the UMC based upon the personal beliefs of church members and their interpretation of scripture and UMC policy.

This committee is not a decision-making body. Its mission is to evaluate how these issues and pending action by the General Conference 2024 might affect our church's ministries, finances, community and membership and to further provide a thoughtful and reasoned approach for church leadership and the congregation to follow.

The work group is composed of diverse members of the congregation that represent various views, backgrounds, experiences and roles within our church and community. The committee's composition includes Jenny Keefe, Susan Marsh, Sammy Quick, Zenda Rushing and John Wagnon with Pastor Debra Armstrong in a supportive capacity.

The objective of this group is to think broadly about the impact on FUMC of any decision to disaffiliate and to review and share pertinent information in the following areas with the Church Council so that they might make an informed decision on whether to pursue disaffiliation or to remain with the United Methodist Church:

- Learn and share a short history of how this issue has progressed in the United Methodist Church
- Identify credible sources of information that address the issues from a variety of perspectives so that these views might be shared with Church Council members
- Determine the current rules of separation under the Book of Discipline as it now operates and also the proposed legislative changes to be considered at GC2024 and provide the Council members with a straightforward explanation of those rules and their consequences for FUMC
- Determine the functions and missions of our church that may be affected by a decision for FUMC to disaffiliate and what preparations, if any, can be made to mitigate any adverse effects
- Review the impact that a decision by a local church to disaffiliate or to stay with the UMC may have on the property, finances and other resources of FUMC
- Discuss and advise the Church Council how the information gathered might be effectively communicated to the congregation
- Provide information on the process the Church Council and our church needs to follow in order to discuss and be prepared for potential decisions prior to and following General Conference in late April/early May of 2024.

Further, this General Conference 2024 Task Force commits to the following principles:

- Information will be provided in a balanced, fair and transparent manner
- An overview of the topics will be provided but with the understanding that there are, as yet, many unknowns
- Resources will be made available to council members so that they might utilize these to inform themselves more fully on this topic
- A spirit of love, kindness and respect will govern the words and behavior of all participants in these discussions
- Each member will be in prayer for the members of the committee, our church and the process of discernment
- The Holy Spirit will be relied upon to empower and guide the work of the committee
- The information gathered will be shared with the church council prior to being shared with members of the congregation