



# DUTILH CHURCH

## A Loving Community

### Leadership Board Townhall Meeting Summary

On January 30, 2023, the Leadership Board of Dutilh Church hosted a Townhall meeting. The purpose was to provide an overview of recent Board initiatives, provide an update on the church's financial situation, and create an open forum for raising questions, concerns, and ideas. The following is a list of the questions raised and a summary of the Board's responses.

#### Now that Pastor Jim has retired, are there any plans to replace his position?

Our original plan was to create 1.5 positions to cover Pastor Jim's duties: a full-time Director of Facilities and Administration, and a part-time Pastor of Spiritual Growth and Care. When our District Superintendent informed us that there were no licensed local pastors available to fill the part-time pastor role, we decided to cover those duties by promoting existing lay staff. While we believe this is a fine solution to support our ministry presently, we are monitoring the growth of the congregation. As the congregation grows, we are open to adding an additional pastor in the future.

#### Should our church be doing more to address the challenges facing The United Methodist Church?

The Leadership Board is aware that some churches are disaffiliating from the UMC. The reasons for these disaffiliations vary, but are primarily because some parts of the UMC are not following the *Book of Discipline* relative to the ordination and marriage of LGBT persons. The current teaching of the *Discipline* affirms that all people are of sacred worth and welcome in the church, while also prohibiting same-gender weddings and LGBT persons from being ordained/credentialed as clergy.

The General Conference of the UMC is the only body that can change these teachings. It has not met since 2019, and has taken no action to change the current teachings of the UMC. Dutilh Church, along with United Methodists in Western Pennsylvania, continue to conduct ministry in accordance with the current teaching of the *Discipline*. The General Conference will meet in 2024, and will consider some proposals for changing the *Discipline* on these matters.

The Leadership Board believes that it is best for Dutilh Church to remain focused on our mission of making disciples who love God, love others, and love to serve. It would be a distraction for us to drag the congregation into the denominational discord when we do not yet know what the General Conference will or will not do. The Leadership Board's position is that we should wait until the General Conference meets in 2024. If a change in the *Discipline* is adopted, then we owe the congregation the opportunity to be informed and to discern how our local church should respond.

### Is our church paying all of its apportionments to The United Methodist Church?

In 2021, as we navigated the uncertainties created by the pandemic, the Leadership Board asked all ministries to adopt an 85% budget, as a way to control costs. In order to keep our apportionments aligned with our church, we also reduced our apportionment giving to 85%. In 2022, we said that should offerings increase by 5% at the end of the second quarter, we would increase our connectional apportionment giving by 15%. We were blessed with strong giving last year and took this action. In 2023, in an effort to grow back into 100% support of our apportionments, we have budgeted to pay 92% of the apportionment asking. In all these actions we have communicated with and received support from our District Superintendent, and the Conference Treasurer.

### Where is the Leadership Board in the strategic planning process?

In November 2022, the board reviewed the results of the focus groups conducted last fall, received reports on demographic trends in our community, and reviewed best practices of churches across the country. In January 2023, the board used all this data to analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing our church. At our March meeting, the board will begin to formulate strategic objectives based on this analysis. The goal is to have a five year strategic plan to present to the church by the end of June 2023.

### When will we start phase two of the Make Room renovation and expansion project?

It is important to complete the strategic planning process prior to beginning phase two planning. Much has changed since the master plan was developed and we want to ensure that phase two aligns with our goals. We will not begin phase two in 2023, and may begin in 2024.

### How is our church growing and engaging the congregation?

In 2022, weekly worship attendance averaged 392 people. This is 92 percent of pre-pandemic attendance in 2019 and demonstrates that the church has stabilized after the pandemic. Giving increased 4.9 percent in 2022, indicating that members of the Dutilh family are showing continued commitment to our ministry.

In terms of engagement, staff are undertaking initiatives to create more pathways for people to participate in small groups and to serve in the church. Volunteer burnout is a challenge, and we are considering ways that we can promote and get more people involved in service.