



DUTILH CHURCH

A Loving Community

Date: June 23, 2023

To: The Dutilh Church Family

From: The Dutilh Church Leadership Board

Subject: Update on The United Methodist Church

On June 14-17, the Annual Conference of the Western PA United Methodist Church (UMC) met in Erie, PA. Jenn Phillips and Katie Gascoine attended as delegates from Dutilh Church. They are preparing a written report of their experience, which will soon be shared in a Dutilh blog post. We are grateful to Jenn and Katie for their service.

At the Annual Conference session, 298 churches were approved to disaffiliate from the UMC, reducing the number of churches in the Western PA UMC from 766 to 468. Each disaffiliating congregation followed a process that included a congregational vote and negotiated financial terms.

The reasons for disaffiliation vary from church to church, but the primary reason is because some parts of the UMC are not following *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* relative to the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ 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 continues to conduct ministry in accordance with the current teaching of the *Discipline*. The General Conference will meet in May 2024 and consider multiple proposals for changing the *Discipline* on these matters.

As we shared with the congregation in March, our 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. We will wait until the General Conference meets in May 2024 before determining any course of action. If a change in the *Discipline* is adopted, then we owe the congregation the opportunity to be informed and to discern how our church should respond.

In the meantime, the Leadership Board is continuing to move forward with developing a strategic plan for the future of our church. The plan outlines goals that will position Dutilh Church to engage our community, reach the next generation of disciples, and advance the mission of Jesus Christ. We are looking forward to sharing the strategic plan with the entire congregation at our annual church conference, which will occur this fall.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Pastor Tom at tparkinson@dutilhumc.org.

Members of the 2023 Leadership Board:

Brittaney Lucas (Chair), Lori Sedlak (Vice-Chair), Garrick Barnett, Susan Boddy, Jill Easterling, Dale Gold, Kristy Harrison, Ben Murray, Veronica Runyan, Pastor Tom Parkinson (*ex officio*)

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Love God, Love Others, Love to Serve