



Discernment

Huntsville First United Methodist Church

Quick Review

Discernment Process

1. Prayer

2. Study

3. Conversations

PRAYER

The Discernment process began and ended with prayer, led by our guiding principle from Proverbs 3:5-6

Prayer sessions were our first activities and all congregational sessions featured prayer labyrinth sponsored by Stephen Ministers

STUDY

- **We studied Biblical passages, all aspects of UMC doctrine, read all documents sent to us from congregants, watched videos, and read websites/social media postings of Discernment proceedings all over the country**

CONVERSATIONS

- **Surveys, posters, cards**
- **Small group & Sunday School meetings**
- **Multiple mailers and emails**
- **3 Congregational meetings with small group meetings after each**
- **Youth Ministry, Sages, UMW, & Chapel Church conversations**
- **Pastor & Discernment Team conversations**
- **Congregational announcements**

CONVERSATIONS

- email address & webpage dedicated to communication with congregation
- emails & topics were replied to and logged into a spreadsheet
- 95 links added to resource page for congregants to read and 27 page FAQ/Glossary added to site
- 195+ emails received to date

Congregational Meetings: by the numbers

Congregational Meetings:

first session -

150 attendees / 184 YouTube views

second session

120 attendees / 111 YouTube views

third session

85 attendees / 131 YouTube views

Total

355 attendees / 426 YouTube views

Approximately 200 members attended at least one of the 3 congregational sessions

Meetings/Research

- 9/27 Original organizational meeting
- 10/16 Team meeting to prepare to meet with DS
- 10/17 Meeting with Tom Parrish, DS. for approval of covenant, timeline and process
- 10/23 Work session - 2+ hours
- 10/30 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 11/6 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 11/16 Team fellowship and work session
- 11/20 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 12/4 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 12/11 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 12/19 Team work session - 1+ hours
- 1/5 Team work session - 1+ hours

- 1/8 Team meeting after 1st information session
- 1/11 Team work session - 1+ hours
- 1/15 Team work session - 2+ hours
- 1/17 Team meeting after 2nd information session
- 1/22 Team meeting after 3rd information session
- 1/26 Team work session - 1+ hours
- 2/2 Team work session - 1+ hours
- 2/5 Team work session - 2+ hours (Steve Smith, CLT chair visited at beginning)
- 2/9 Team work session - 1+ hours
- 2/12 Team work session- 2+ hours
- 2/19 Team work session and meeting with pastors - 1 hour
- 2/22 Team work session - 3 hours

Meetings/Research

In addition, smaller teams have met and worked to develop:

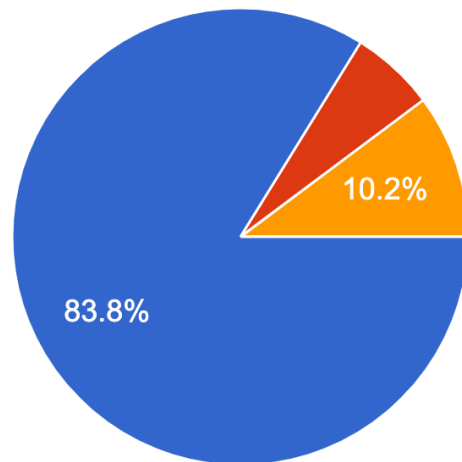
- prayer plans
- youth plans
- communications
- congregational session plans
- participation plans for shut-ins
- Research, reaching out
- talking with members from other churches, including interviews with discernment teams from other churches and pastors from other areas.
- The team also read the letters that had been sent to the CLT by members of our congregation before voting to enter discernment.

The Survey

Have you reviewed Discernment materials?

Did you review this Summer's videos & booklet?

235 responses



● YES

● NO

● Need to revisit them (all are posted on our website at huntsvillefirst.org/discernment)

What were in the Discernment website resources?

- FAQ & Glossary (27 pages)
- Letter from Bishop & protocol for Discernment
- Photos & names of all Discernment Team members
- Link to Survey/Discernment Questionnaire
- Articles/videos submitted by Congregants
- UMC materials on Book of Discipline
- UMC materials on Paragraph 2553
- Copy of November & December letters that had been mailed to congregants
- Discernment booklet from Summer 2022
- Videos from Summer 2022 (Pastor Vance, Johnnie Hargrove, UMC)
- Videos from Congregational Sessions 1, 2, 3

Videos: by the numbers

As of February 20, 2023, the videos views were as follows:

- **Video 1**- Theologically Progressive vs. Traditional -1,394 views
- **Video 2** - General Conference - 498 views
- **Video 3** - Paragraphs from the Book of Discipline - 654 views
- **Video 4** - A Man, a Plan, a Vote- 414 views
- **Video 5** - Reviewing options - 636 views
- **Video 6** - What's Next? - 540 views
- **Video 7** - Entering Discernment – 3,070 views

Thoughts from Congregants: *by the numbers*

- **174 Remain United Methodist**
- **16 Wait**
- **65 Disaffiliate**
- **34 Vote**
- **75 survey responses and emails did not specify a clear desire** (28 revealed potential viewpoints/47 simply asked questions and helped form content.)

What do you love about your church?



What do you wish for your church's future?



**A Resolution of the
Huntsville First United Methodist Church
Discernment Team**

February 27, 2023

Resolution 1

Whereas, on August 8, 2022, the Church Leadership Team voted to enter discernment by a vote of 15 yeas and 12 nays, with 6 abstentions and 6 not voting;

Whereas, the clergy and lay leadership selected and recruited a 12-member Discernment Team (which was reduced to 11 through one resignation) tasked with leading our congregation through a process to discern God's will for our church and making a recommendation to the Church Leadership Team regarding whether our congregation should disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church;

Whereas, the Discernment Team first met on September 27th for an organizational session and formally entered the Discernment process by notifying the District Superintendent on October 17th ;

Whereas, the Discernment Team met 25 times over the ensuing months and prepared two paper mailers which were each sent to over 1,500 physical addresses, as well as numerous e-mail messages and verbal announcements delivered during the worship services;

Whereas, the Discernment Team held three congregational meetings with a combined attendance of 365 attendees to answer questions and provide information;

Whereas, the Discernment Team met with 24 small groups and Sunday School classes to receive their feedback and provide opportunities for members to share with and listen to each other;

Whereas, the Discernment Team led opportunities to pray, including: inviting the entire congregation to participate in daily fixed-hour prayer at 3:56 based on Proverbs 3:5-6, the prayer team providing weekly scripture to guide prayer for the months of November and December with a different focus each week; organizing four Chapel prayer times for congregational prayer, and Stephen Ministers staffing a prayer room during each of the congregational sessions;

Whereas, the Discernment Team provided content that was posted with the help of FUMC Staff including:

Team Information and photos to help church members identify the team, the exact wording of Paragraph 2553, a Letter from our Bishop with North Alabama Conference Discernment Process requirements, supplemental information and FAQs (25 pages), November letter to the congregation, December letter to the congregation, Glossary and FAQs as of December 19, 2022 (27 pages), Resource Library of articles and videos emailed by members to Discernment Team, CLT video from Johnnie Hargrove, 6 informational videos from Pastor Byron Vance about the current situation and process;

Whereas, the Discernment Team conducted a survey of the congregation to advise our recommendation. 364 surveys were completed with 174 being in favor of remaining in the United Methodist Church, 16 desiring to wait, 65 in favor of a church-wide vote to disaffiliate, 34 in favor of voting, and 75 unspecified.

Whereas, the full metrics collected by the Discernment Team will be attached to this resolution;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Discernment Team recommends to the Church Leadership Team that Huntsville First United Methodist Church

NOT disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church at this time.