



February 5, 2025

Congregation of Saint John United Methodist Church
12700 W. Highway 42
Prospect, Kentucky 40059

Dear Congregation of Saint John United Methodist Church,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. Beginning in December of 2024, your District Superintendent, Rev. Kevin Burney, and I began receiving numerous letters expressing concern regarding your Administrative Board and their decisions, communications and future plans for the church. Later, we also received three (3) letters outlining concerns regarding your appointed pastor, Rev. Dr. Josmar Alvarez. Initial readings of these grievances revealed their foundations in the November 22, 2024 email to your congregation which outlined the Administrative Board's stated desire to seek an exit from the United Methodist Church.

Rev. Burney and I have continued to receive more letters stating similar concerns, but they simply do not elevate this matter to the purview of Paragraph 2702.1 in the *Book of Discipline*, as some have suggested. In addition, we have received other letters supporting your pastor, while others are hoping that the Administrative Board can be removed. Additionally, further correspondence was also received firmly stating their desire for a traditional approach to the matter of human sexuality.

In an effort to ensure due diligence, Rev. Burney and I met with Dr. Alvarez and a few members of the Administrative Board.

It is clear that your congregation is conflicted and divided. While some of your members wish to leave the United Methodist Church and attempt to hold on to the property where Saint John UMC is housed, others still desire that your congregation have a more progressive view on matters relating to human sexuality. In the wake of these disputes, some members have made the painful decision to leave your church to join other congregations while others are no longer attending any church.

From my perspective, a just resolution as outlined in the *Book of Discipline* will not be possible.

Therefore, I state the following ruling to the congregation:

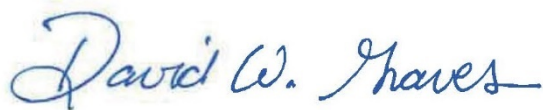
1. The recent General Conference, held in May of 2024, provided space for everyone in the United Methodist Church, including those who hold different theological views and social principles. Local churches have more autonomy to make decisions than they ever have, specifically around marriage and the appointment process.
2. Your pastor has shared with me that he is fully committed to the United Methodist Church.
3. There is no exit plan from the United Methodist Church.
4. Saint John will remain a United Methodist Church and the Conference is prepared to take all necessary and appropriate steps to ensure its continued relationship with the denomination.

5. Several aspects of the communications sent to us pertain to local church matters such as church signage. This is within the right of the local church to address independently.
6. Because issues were raised around the church's finances, we have asked that the church report their finances to the Kentucky Conference Treasurer on a weekly basis. This request has been honored and should continue until notified otherwise.

Therefore, I prayerfully ask that your congregation find a way to move forward together. Because we can live together in our differences, I declare the present matter closed. We will continue to monitor the church's progress and know that my prayers are with you as you work to find peace and reclaim the mission and ministry focus of your church.

My prayers are with you.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David W. Graves". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David W. Graves
Resident Bishop
Kentucky-Tennessee Area