

Notes: Kevin

Kevin Burney introduced himself.

Kevin Burden is the Heartland District Superintendent, Assistant to the Bishop, and Director of Ministerial Services for the KY Annual Conference.

Jay Smith is the Superintendent of the Owensboro and South Central Districts

Kevin wanted to meet as soon as possible. The purpose of the meeting was to inform us of the complaints.

We opened in prayer.

Kevin stated, "I'm here because the laypersons filed the complaint against Administrative Council and the senior Pastor, Ismar Alvarez."

He provided the clause in the Book of Discipline referencing that United Methodist Church lay members professing members of the local church can be charged with "disobedience to the order." (Removing Methodist Identity, not paying apportionments, and seeking to Exit the UMC) When letters are written and signed, they are viewed as a formal complaint.

The Process: 1) They have to respond within 90 days of what is called a supervisory response. Nothing judicial about it in this season. Now, after 90 days, Kevin will have to decide whether they will move forward. In regards to Clergy, the Bishop have to decide whether to file the complaint. Kevin commented, "very rarely does it get that far."

2) If charges are pursued, then there's a committee on investigation that would be formed of laity from this district to hear the evidence and hear from both parties. Then they decide whether there's warranting enough facts to move forward with complaint. If they affirm that. Then it goes to church trial.

3) It's a trial court; when I say trial court, we mean basically like a jury. Of laypeople who are active in their churches to hear the case. There's usually someone that comes in and has experience, and through church trials, and again, there becomes much. There's someone who's presiding. Both sides get to present their witnesses and their information. And then, the trial court makes its decision.

Carmen asked when the 90 days began. Kevin replied, "On the 23rd."

Kevin stated, "The Administrative Council and trustees have a fiduciary responsibility not only to the local church but also to the Annual Conference. So it does appear based on the release from admin Council and the complaints that you are in violation of the book of discipline."

We then reviewed a letter signed by David Garvin, the Conference Treasurer, requesting church financials.

Kevin then stated, "That there is no exit and that no conference can develop an exit plan. Disaffiliation no longer exists as a possibility."

I asked Kevin to be more specific on our violations. He replied, " It is in the statement you made about removing signage, branding, not paying apportionments stopping the apportionments immediately and leaving.

I pointed out that we have not violated anything in the book of discipline as actions have not been taken and we have not tried to leave yet.

He stated rebranding was an issue although Kevin could not point us to anything in the Book of Discipline to illustrate that. I asked for Kevin to provide documentation for branding.

Kevin stated that they wanted us to reflect that we were part of the United Methodist community.

Iosmar stated that he inherited a church that was told there would be a way out and then 2024 happened and there is no exit.

We asked Kevin about how transparent we need to be with our congregation. He stated, " I would be as transparent as possible, and that would be better than leaving room for people to fill in the blanks."

Kevin also stated that no judicial process has been initiated.

He then stated, "That we should deliver verbally and also have it in writing."

Kevin stated that he would be meeting with the people who wrote the complaints in the next few weeks.

He also stated that he was not trying to change St John as we have communicated that we are a Traditional church not allowing same-sex marriages or receiving an LGBTQ pastor.

We agreed to get back together after Christmas.

We asked if we needed to prepare a written response. Kevin stated that "It is not necessary, but we could certainly send one."

We discussed signage again and Kevin referred us to the Board of Trustees.

Jay Smith closed in prayer.