



RICHMOND HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

March 12, 2024

Dear RHUMC Family,

In a matter of weeks, the highly anticipated 2024 United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference will take place, and potential changes to UMC policy regarding the marriage and ordination of LGBTQ individuals will be considered. This has been a divisive issue since the establishment of our denomination in 1968; however, a provision to depart while retaining property is in effect. Richmond Hill UMC (RHUMC), like all UMC congregations, will need to consider how to respond if changes to the denomination's policies are approved.

From the outset, our church's Administrative Board determined RHUMC would wait until the conclusion of General Conference to ensure the congregation has the most accurate information. A Navigation Team of twelve members was appointed and has diligently educated our church about potential policy changes and departure procedures. They surveyed the congregation last fall which showed substantial support for both sides plus a significant percentage of members who are unsure or indifferent. The team is continuing to analyze the various ways departing the denomination could impact RHUMC not only as an organization but also as a church family.

Here is a current timeline of the key upcoming events:

- April 23 – May 3, 2024: United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference in Charlotte, NC
- June 2-4, 2024: South Georgia Annual Conference in Tifton, GA
- June 23, 2024: Rev. Dr. Scott Hagan, our District Superintendent, will hold an informal meeting at RHUMC to communicate departure procedures. All churches are required to meet with the D.S. prior to holding a departure vote.
- June 2024: RHUMC's Administrative Board will lead information sessions for our congregation to provide updates from the conferences and communicate risks and mitigation opportunities associated with becoming an independent, non-affiliated church. Dates are TBD.
- July 31, 2024: Final date a church can vote to depart the UMC
- August 17, 2024: Special called Annual Conference to ratify requests for final church departure
- December 31, 2024: Church departure must be completed (Note: The Annual Conference could require churches to complete departure requirements earlier than this date).

In our February Administrative Board meeting, the following decisions were made:

1. The Administrative Board will invite the D.S. to lead an explanatory meeting in June regarding a potential departure vote as this is required should RHUMC proceed with a departure vote.
2. The Administrative Board will meet in June to determine if RHUMC will hold a departure vote. In making this decision, the board will take into consideration the outcome of the conferences and the congregational survey.
3. If a departure vote is held AND a two-thirds, super-majority of RHUMC members vote to depart the UMC, the church will satisfy all departure requirements. RHUMC will become an independent, non-affiliated congregation until the church has had sufficient time (up to 12 months) to make a deliberate, informed decision on its future.

We know from His Word that the Lord hears our prayers, so please continue lifting up our church and denomination in the coming months. May our congregation always shine His light in our community and beyond.

Sincerely,

RHUMC Administrative Board
Bob Thomas, Chair