

April 13, 2023

Dear Church Family,

Madison First United Methodist church continues to focus on what is most important to all of us - Sharing Life, Sharing Christ, and doing this for others. Our ministries are vibrant and our church family continues to come together to focus on spreading the Word and nurturing one another.

As you are aware, Madison FUMC joined a group of more than 190 churches to engage the National Center of Life and Liberty (NCLL), a non-profit legal ministry, to negotiate on our behalf and to prosecute litigation should that option become necessary. The NCLL presented a proposal on behalf of the participating churches to Mr. Harold Buckley, Chancellor for the North Georgia Conference, seeking a fair and just resolution to the current issue. The proposal would allow churches whose congregation votes to seek disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church to leave the denomination with property and assets intact after the payment of the unfunded pension liability and the equivalent of an extra year's apportionments. This proposal includes the same financial arrangement afforded the 70+ churches in North Georgia who have already disaffiliated as well as all the other Georgia churches who have voted to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church.

On Friday March 24, we were notified that the trustees and cabinet failed to reach an agreement on the proposal from the North Georgia Block (the group of 190 North Georgia Churches). As a result, a lawsuit has been filed against the North Georgia Conference. The lawsuit was filed in Cobb County where the North Georgia Conference offices are located. The lawsuit is asking that the North Georgia Conference allow churches to have a vote on disaffiliation under ¶2553 as approved by the General Conference in 2016. We are asking for an injunction from the presiding judge to stop the pause and that the judge act quickly on this injunctive request. It is anticipated that the hearing will take place in late May or early June. In the meantime, we continue to be open to negotiations should the Trustees and Cabinet come together to offer the participating churches an acceptance to our proposal on lifting the pause or make a counter proposal.

Please continue to pray for our church, the other churches in North Georgia, and the leadership of the churches and the Conference. These are challenging times in the life of our churches, but God is faithful and will provide a way.

Blessings,

Tommy Richardson, Chairman of the Administrative Board