

To:

Rev. Richard Carl Wisdom, Superintendent, Aurora District
217 Division St
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dwisdom@umcnic.org

From:

Al Brunsting, Ph.D.-physics, Chair of Stewardship
Community UMC
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and

Rich Fleming, Chair of Church Council
Community UMC
rflm9308@aol.com, 630-717-5786

July 16, 2015

CC: Pastor Grace, Pastor Sarah, Lynn Pries [Evangelism Chair]

Dear Rev. Wisdom,

In our most recent Church Council meeting (July 15, '15) our church leaders discussed at length our country's general decline of mainstream Protestantism (including the UMC) as detailed in the May '15 Pew Research report. This report received widespread national attention. One of us (AB) has written to you previously about this issue (email dated May 13, '15).

It turns out that these Pew results are very similar to the decline in the NIC average worship attendance over the same period (2007 to 2014). These two sets of results were acquired differently, which is consistent with this interpretation: These two reported declines are caused (at least in part) by current and dynamic cultural drivers within our country and the UMC's response to them.

At the conclusion of our Church Council meeting we wondered what specific actions the NIC is taking to address this negative trajectory that we are now on, how the NIC monitors the effectiveness of its actions, and how the NIC compares with other valid benchmarks. We hope you will be able and willing to provide us with specific encouragement for our concerns.

Sincerely,

Al Brunsting & Rich Fleming

From: Dick Wisdom [<mailto:dwisdom@UMCNIC.ORG>]

Sent: Monday, July 20, 2015 8:19 PM

To: Al Brunsting

Cc: rflm9308@aol.com; Grace Imathiu; smeacham@communityunitedmethodist.org; Lynn Pries

Subject: Re: USA culture in relationship to the UMC

Al,

Thank you for your passion and desire to the church of Jesus Christ expand and impact the culture. The recent Pew Study confirms what we already know, which is the culture has changed greatly in recent years. The bad news is the decline in local church attendance and credibility. The good news is that those who claim a belief in God and self-identify as Christians has not discernibly changed. They are just not

attending churches because they find them irrelevant, unwilling to meet people where they are at in life, or are outright judgmental and rejecting of people who have question of faith and life.

As for what the UMC and NIC are doing about it I would refer you to www.umcdiscipleship.org under resources, or www.umcnic.org under Harvest 2.0, then Congregational Development and Redevelopment. There are all types of resources there as well as many other opportunities at conferences and seminars.

At the end of the day AI, it all comes down to the people in a local church. Amid all the doom and gloom stories are congregations that are thriving and growing. No matter the size or budget of a church today, ministry is hard, and there is no "cookie cutter" way of doing it. There are no programmatic ways to grow a church today. Only relationships grow churches. People only come to churches if someone has invited them and the church welcomes them. The Church is the only institution in the culture that exists for those who are not yet here. Unless a local church lives into this reality it has no chance. So, how is Community UMC doing in this new reality? Community has two of the most gifted pastor's that are not just in the Northern Illinois Conference, but that are in the United Methodist Church. They can lead, coach, equip, and resource but they can't be the church. The congregation has to be the church and when a local church does that it is contagious and it grows.

I'm happy to have further conversation on this topic but not until or without your Sr. Pastor being present.

Blessings,
[Dick](#)

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