

## **March 2023 from the Lillian UMC Lay Leader**

Dear Lillian UMC family,

Since December, I have been calling on the members of the Lillian UMC to pray and seek God over the possibility of disaffiliation from the UMC. This request was made not out of fear, but out of love: love for God and His Word, love for the church, love for the truth and love for people.

Jesus said we are to love, "as I have loved you." Jesus demonstrated His love for three years; loving people enough to tell them the truth. He told them the truth about Himself, and the truth about their sin. Jesus commands us to do the same. Speaking the truth, in love, as Jesus did, is never easy. The truth offends because it does not change with the times. Our culture has changed. Our denomination is changing with it. God's word has not changed. The truth remains the same.

I join many in knowing the internal conflict of having family members and friends come out as "gay." The conflict is not in knowing what the right thing to do is. The conflict is having the will to do it. The right thing is to love as Jesus loved. If I really love them as Jesus does, I must side with the truth of the word of God. To love less than Jesus did is to pretend it is not sin. To love less than Jesus did is to side with the culture and ignore the truth. We must never allow the culture to redefine love. The Bible is very clear: "Love suffers long and is kind....does not behave rudely, does not seek its own...does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth...."

The unfaithful watchman sees trouble approaching and remains silent. The faithful watchman sounds the alarm. As Lay Leader, I have tried to be a faithful watchman. As your lay leader, I will always lead us in reaching out with God's unconditional love to everyone. I will also encourage us to honor, respect and live in obedience to God's unchanging Word. Seek God, search the scriptures, then side with the truth when you vote.

Prayerfully yours,  
Perry Cunningham, Lay Leader