

**Statement by Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church  
Regarding North Georgia Conference UMC Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson's Move to Close  
Mt. Bethel UMC's Doors and Seize its Assets  
July 13, 2021**

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church continues to escalate a crisis of her own making at Cobb County's Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church. Originally claiming she wanted to move Rev. Dr. Jody Ray, the church's senior pastor, to a conference position dealing with racial reconciliation, she has since changed her story at least twice, in long, rambling, and defensive videos posted to the North Georgia Conference website.

Last night, Hauptert-Johnson claimed, "exigent circumstances" exist at Mt. Bethel that threaten its vitality and mission, and therefore, she has moved to close the church and "transfer" all its assets to the conference "effective immediately."

Unfortunately, it is Hauptert-Johnson's failure to competently engage in the United Methodist Church's prescribed consultative process that threatens the vitality and mission of the North Georgia Conference's largest congregation, both in terms of membership and average worship attendance.

Instead of following the course of action nearly all United Methodist bishops take regarding pastoral changes at large churches, Hauptert-Johnson hastily initiated an ill-timed and an ill-considered move that not only jeopardizes great ministry and missions at Mt. Bethel but also the health and reputation of her entire annual conference.

She has failed to resolve quietly and amicably a crisis of her own making. Instead, she is now engaging attorneys to go to civil court to seize assets that the faithful people at Mt. Bethel have freely and joyfully given for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed: assets which will become property of Mt. Bethel once it completes a process for disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church, initiated in April 2021. The Bishop is purposely delaying that process.

While she claims she is acting out of "love for the church and its mission," enlisting attorneys and the courts to seize assets is a strange way for a bishop to show her love for one of the healthiest churches in her conference.

The people of Mt. Bethel Church will do all in their power to resist the aggressive actions against their church, and they will do all they can to restore the reputational damage Hauptert-Johnson is inflicting on many local United Methodist churches that simply want to do ministry without the drama of her intrusive and threatening actions.