

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

Last revised, March 10, 2023, Items in italics are new from the last update.

**Q. With the informational meetings and the publishing of this Frequently Asked Questions document mean that St. Paul's has decided to seek to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church?**

*A. Yes.*

*The leadership team decided it was time to educate our local church about the issues facing the United Methodist church. These meetings and this document are to educate and inform our membership so that a well-informed membership can vote as the Holy Spirit leads them.*

*On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the Leadership team requested a date for the special Church Conference. This was done after many informational meetings and feedback from many church members.*

***The date for the special Church Conference is April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at Montpelier St. Paul UMC, at 7 PM.***

**Q. What is the main issue regarding why those within the UMC decided to create a new denomination?**

A. When the United Methodist Church (UMC) was formed by the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968, the resulting denomination was intentionally formed to allow for a broad spectrum of theological beliefs because those in charge at the time thought that organizational unity was more important than theological agreement.

This thought has been challenged over the last 50+ years as the denomination has struggled to even maintain itself, much less grow, in the United States. When formed, the UMC had more than eleven million members, the vast majority within the United States. The latest membership figures show that there are now fewer than six million members in the US, and right at six million members in the rest of the world. Some observers of this data describe the reason for this decline to be that those within the United Methodist Church have spent more time, energy and money trying to “win” the denomination to a particular theological and cultural viewpoint rather than faithfulness as disciples of Jesus Christ. By not standing for something, the UMC is sometimes better known for not standing for anything.

The presenting battle lines in the church are presumed to be regarding human sexuality. However, the questions about sexuality derive from deeper divides over foundational theological (views about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) understandings:

- Who is Jesus? A man blessed by God.? God incarnates? Something in between?
- Did the resurrection of Jesus really happen? Is it a spiritual metaphor? A physical experience?
- What is salvation? A get-out-of-hell-free card? A surrender of one's will to God? A lifelong pursuit/experience of becoming holy? A fight for justice in earthly experiences?
- What is the Bible? The inspired word of God? An ancient collection of writings? Authoritative (that the Bible does mean what it says, and we are to follow its teachings above all other systems of authority) or influential?

A vocal segment of the church began arguing for acceptance of homosexual behaviors in the earliest days of the denomination because they already had disagreements on the above questions. The UMC *Book of Discipline* has declared these behaviors to be incompatible with Christian teaching and the General Conference *has never officially allowed them to be accepted in the denomination* because of Biblical prohibitions against these behaviors in both

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the Old and New Testaments. But if the Bible is more influential than authoritative, then one can claim new standards by emphasizing certain parts of Scripture over other parts.

The conflict around human sexuality has grown more intense over the decades. In several parts of the denomination, church leaders have decided they will no longer follow this part of the *Discipline*, believing it to be a matter of justice that goes deeper than the *Discipline*. After the February 2019 special session of General Conference voted to retain the current prohibitions against same sex marriage and ordination of actively gay clergy, entire annual conferences declared their intentions to disregard the *Discipline*. Although rebellion against the *Discipline* is a chargeable offense, there are no clear means by which the bishops and clergy within these annual conferences could be held accountable to follow the *Discipline*.

Some church leaders who believe in the current Disciplinary standards believe the UMC has become an ungovernable, autocratic organization and see any attempts to make it governable again impossible. Human sexuality is not why churches want to leave, it is the deeper disagreements and chaos in the UMC causing churches to disaffiliate.

## **Q. What is disaffiliation?**

A. Disaffiliation is the process whereby a church belonging to The United Methodist Church can exit the denomination and obtain direct ownership of all its property and assets.

## **Q. Why would a church choose to disaffiliate?**

A. A church may choose to disaffiliate if it determines that the view of the Bible, of the God Head, and the church are in line with the Bible and not what culture says those views should be. A church may choose to disaffiliate if they see that the current leadership of the church does not hold to the doctrine of the church which God stipulated in the Holy Scriptures.

No church must vote to disaffiliate.

## **Q. Why would a church remain United Methodist?**

A. The United Methodist Church, because of a clause within the Book of Discipline cannot change the doctrinal statements, of which the church has had in the Book of Discipline since the founding of the Methodist Church. Because of this clause, the United Methodist Church cannot change its doctrines. This clause provides stability within the foundational teachings of the church.

The United Methodist Church has been, since its conception, as the United Methodist Church, a church that has stood against the injustices of the culture. They have fought for the freedom from institutional slavery, racism, alcoholism, illiteracy, as well as many of the injustices that the world has seen.

The United Methodist Church is a church that welcomes everyone.

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Some churches are in favor of changing the *Discipline's* language regarding human sexuality and therefore do not see the behaviors of leaders against the current standards as being rebellious and dangerous. They disagree that the denomination is ungovernable and reject the idea altogether.

Other churches may be unsure what to think regarding theology and practice and prefer the security of “this is what we’ve always been” and do not want to intentionally go into an unpredictable future. Or they may consider that none of the areas of disagreement are strong enough to cause them to separate.

Finally, some churches are not even aware that there is an ability to exit the denomination.

## **Q. What happened to the “Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace” that was announced with such fanfare and hope in January 2020?**

- A. The Protocol was a negotiated agreement between members of all the major factions within the United Methodist Church following the disarray and ugliness of the 2019 Special Session of General Conference. This agreement provided generous terms for churches to leave the UMC to become part of other denominations. Traditionalists, Progressives, and Institutionalists could follow their consciences into their understandings of God’s will. At the time the Protocol was announced, expectations were high that it would easily pass at the 2020 General Conference scheduled for May that year.

Unfortunately, COVID happened, and General Conference was delayed until 2021. Then it was delayed until 2022. Earlier this year, the Commission on General Conference (the team responsible for making General Conference happen) announced that it had delayed General Conference again until 2024. They cited the continuing complications of COVID cases, limited availability of vaccines and the difficulties in foreign delegates to the General Conference to obtain necessary visas from the US State Department. It should be noted that many other international gatherings, including the United Methodist Women’s Global Assembly, were successfully held.

There is an opinion that this has led some to conclude that the Commission simply had no will to make General Conference happen due to political considerations rather than logistical ones.

Since the delay of General Conference was announced, many progressive and institutionalist signatories to the protocol have rescinded their support for it. While it remains on the agenda for the next General Conference, most believe it no longer have enough support to be approved and implemented.

## ***Q. Is there a timeline for disaffiliation?***

- A. Yes and No. At the 2019 General Conference, a process was approved for how churches could leave the denomination. It is identified as Paragraph 2553 of the current United Methodist Discipline. This process will automatically expire on December 31, 2023. Therefore, any church which wants to disaffiliate must do so by that date.

After 2024 General Conference the general conference may decide to continue ¶2553. They may choose to make a new paragraph that would allow disaffiliation under different circumstances. They may choose to not allow disaffiliation. We simply do not know.

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## Q. Is Paragraph 2553 the only means to exit the UMC?

- A. There are two ways to look at answering this question. In a general sense, there are other ways to exit but each of them has significant drawbacks and risks.
1. A church could vote to close itself under Paragraph 2549 and then ask the conference to sell back their property for a minimal price. However, there is nothing that requires the conference to do so. Churches willing to move forward and abandon their property would become new church starts.
  2. A church could pursue legal action against the annual conference in hopes of negotiating a settlement on different terms than those provided in Paragraph 2553. This is risky because most state and federal courts are highly reluctant to engage in church matters due to First Amendment considerations. Legal fees can become overwhelming, and it could take even more time than through Paragraph 2553 before resolution is reached.

Another paragraph in the *Discipline*, 2548.2, has been in the *Discipline* since the 1940s. It allows for a church to exit the UMC to join another “evangelical denomination” with more generous opportunities to negotiate an agreement. However, the Council of Bishops united to exclude this option and has asked the Judicial Council to make a declaratory decision about it. In the meantime, they have rejected its use.

Some churches may consider waiting for the 2024 General Conference of the UMC in hopes that different terms may be approved. This, too, is risky because the Protocol is viewed as not likely to pass and exit terms could become even more costly and cumbersome with the expiration of Paragraph 2553 before General Conference can meet.

Therefore, many view that the only method which will allow a church to exit, from a practical and pragmatic standpoint, is the Paragraph 2553 process.

## Q. What does Paragraph 2553 require? How is the West Ohio Conference implementing it?

- A. *The process outlined in Paragraph 2553 requires the following:*
- *Apportionments must be paid for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments (the latter as a lump sum, not spread over the following year)*
  - *The church's pro rata amount of Unfunded Pension Liabilities as determined by Wespath (UMC General Board of Pension and Health Benefits) and allocated by the annual conference. For West Ohio, this number is determined through the same formula used for general church apportionments. This must be paid prior to the effective date of departure.*
  - *West Ohio is also requiring repayment of any conference or district mission grants made to the local church from February 2019 and forward that accumulate to \$20,000 or more. Equitable compensation grants for appointed clergy salary support are the only exception.*
  - *A church conference must be requested from the district superintendent for the purpose of considering disaffiliation. The district superintendent has up to 120 days to respond to the request, but they are typically responding much more quickly.*
  - *At the duly called church conference, all professing members of the church who are present for the meeting will be allowed to vote. The vote to disaffiliate must receive a two-third (2/3) super-majority of those present to pass.*
  - *With an approval vote, the church must engage in and bear all expenses towards establishing new legal entities, obtaining non-profit status, etc. Further, unless symbols of the United Methodist Church are embedded into the infrastructure of the church*

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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*building, all signs and logos for the United Methodist Church must be removed from the property. This must be completed within three months of the disaffiliation date.*

- *The church must provide archives, historical documents, committee minutes and membership roll to the Annual Conference.*
- *The Annual Conference must affirm the disaffiliation by a simple majority vote for disaffiliation to be finalized.*

*Bishop Palmer, resident bishop of the West Ohio area, has called for two special sessions of the Annual Conference to manage all disaffiliation actions for churches ready to exit the denomination before the end of 2023.*

*The next two Annual Conferences are the regular scheduled Annual Conference in June 2023. As of this writing, there is one additional sessions of the Annual Conference scheduled October of 2023. There may be another called in November 2023, but it is not scheduled at the time of this update.*

## **Q. What are the costs to St. Paul's should we choose to disaffiliate according to the terms of Paragraph 2553? How would we pay for this?**

- A. While we do not yet have a confirmed total cost from the West Ohio Conference Treasurer, we do have estimates based on the terms of Paragraph 2553. *Please note that the amount of the unfunded pension liabilities changes based upon the markets. This amount can be larger or smaller. The below figures are as is of March 2023.*

West Ohio Unfunded Pension Liability	\$76,262
Two years of Apportionments	\$40,138
Legal Expenses – estimated	\$1,000
Additional fees to change documents - estimated	\$2,000
Outstanding grants	<u>\$0.00</u>
Total	\$119,400
<i>Less paid apportionments credit – already paid</i>	<i>unknown</i>
<i>Less paid after July 2023</i>	<i>unknown</i>
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST</b>	<b>\$119,400</b>

***The final cost of the Unfunded Pension Liabilities will be assessed at the time of disaffiliation, and that will determine the exact amount the disaffiliating church will have to pay.***

## **Q. Why are the Unfunded Pension Liability expenses so much? How is that number determined?**

- A. Wespeth is required by action of the General Conference to factor clergy pension liabilities according to a process known as “market value.” Without getting lost in the details of retirement financing, the basic premise is factoring for two variables – the *greatest amount of money required* should clergy and surviving spouses live beyond actuarial table expectations and the *least amount of money available* should there be a terrible economic depression that tanks market values. Whatever is the gap between greatest need and least resources available becomes the Unfunded Pension Liability.

In most situations, the market value forecasting of pension liabilities is simply an exercise in predictive analysis that has no bearing in the “real world.” The probability of such conditions is low. However, this analysis has become a “real world” economic condition for disaffiliating churches because no process exists to allow the

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theoretical unfunded pension liability to be transferred with a disaffiliating congregation into whatever its new denominational status will be. Therefore, this amount is required as an **actual** dollar payment even though it remains a **theoretical** possibility.

Wespath makes these market calculations on a quarterly basis based upon market condition in the previous quarter. The Unfunded Pension Liability amount quoted in the previous question comes from the first-quarter analysis of 2023.

Wespath will release updates every quarter, and therefore, the local church pro rata share may change with the new forecast. The final cost of the Unfunded Pension Liabilities will be assessed at the time of disaffiliation, and that will determine the exact amount the disaffiliating church will have to pay.

## **Q. Given how expensive it is to disaffiliate, what is the economic rationale for disaffiliation?**

A. Under the *United Methodist Book of Discipline*, the local church does NOT own its property, buildings, bank accounts, or any other assets, including altar furnishings, decorative items, (pew and historic heirlooms), etc. Instead, they are all held in trust by the local congregation on behalf of the Annual Conference. So even though the members of St. Paul's going all the way back to our date of founding, have paid for every acre of land, every wall for every building, every hymnal and pew – none of it belongs to St. Paul's. **With disaffiliation, all the property will belong to St. Paul's.**

## **Q. With such focus on the Pension Liability, what will happen to pensions currently received by St. Paul's retired ministers if we disaffiliate? What will happen to active pastors' pensions?**

A. All retired clergy will continue to receive their full benefits, no matter what happens with disaffiliation at St. Paul's. The pensions for active pastors who choose to disaffiliate will be changed from a mixture of defined contributions and defined benefits to only defined contributions. Active pastors can elect to leave their retirement funds with Wespath or roll them over to any other retirement account manager. Active pastors will then participate in whatever retirement system is provided by the denomination they choose to join.

## **Q. What happens to our United Methodist Men's and Women's groups if we disaffiliate? What happens to our church mission partnerships?**

A. All of St. Paul's groups, and ministry partnerships would continue after disaffiliation. The names of our men's and women's groups would be changed to eliminate the "United Methodist," but otherwise would move forward under their same leadership and objectives for ministry. Our partnerships with community organizations would continue as well. Youth missions and other activities will remain. However, there are other mission-minded organizations to which we may apply for mission grants.

*As of this update, the United Methodist Women have already changed their name to United Women of Faith, because this is the name chosen by the former UMW international organization. Like several other organizations that were fully United Methodist, they have positioned themselves to serve any church, regardless of denominational affiliation.*

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**Q. Will disaffiliation affect our worship practices, such as singing songs from the United Methodist Hymnal? Will we need to buy new hymnals? What about other worship liturgies from the United Methodist Book of Worship?**

A. Under the terms of agreement for disaffiliation, exiting churches are specifically allowed to keep and use their United Methodist worship resources, including the Hymnal and Book of Worship. At some point, St. Paul's may elect to purchase new hymnals, but this would happen because we thought it time to have new resources and not because we can no longer use what we already have.

**Q. Since disaffiliation requires churches to remove all UM logos, what will St. Paul's lose? Will we keep copies of all our records?**

A. The signage at the city limits, as well as any signs that point to St. Paul's, that currently has UMC or United Methodist Church, will need to be replaced.

The sign at the North Entrance, where we put messages, will need to have any UMC logo removed.

Any other signs, business cards, and marketing materials, will need to be changed to reflect change of status.

*The websites and the Facebook page would need to be changed.*

We will make copies of all records and retain them while also complying with the requirement to give records to the Annual Conference upon disaffiliation. We will still be able to research our membership, baptism, marriage, and death information, as well as minutes of meetings and financial records.

**Q. If St. Paul's disaffiliates from the United Methodist Church, where will it belong denominationally?**

A. There are several potential landing sites for St. Paul's. The most discussed option is the **Global Methodist Church** (GMC). The GMC officially launched on May 1, 2022, and already comprises congregations in Europe, the Philippines, Africa, and the United States. The GMC aspires to restore core Wesleyan Christian practices such as mutual support and accountability for faith development, engagement with communities at the local level to bring new people to faith in Jesus Christ, emphasizing the historic creeds as meaningful and relevant today, and pouring more resources into local churches rather than create complex and expensive bureaucracies such as what exists within the UMC. The GMC currently operates under a Transitional Doctrines and *Discipline* until there can be a Convening Conference, expected to be sometime in 2024. Go to the [globalmethodist.org](http://globalmethodist.org) website for more information.

There are also other Wesleyan denominations that could be a possibility for St. Paul's to join.

- The **Free Methodist Church** ([fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org)) is a theologically conservative denomination based in Indianapolis, IN. There are approximately 68,000 members in the USA and 1.2 million worldwide.
  - Does have a trust clause.
  - Has 10-15% financial support expectations very similar to the current UMC apportionment.
  - This denomination also has a clause for complete abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, as well as any "secret societies" such as Masons, Fraternities, and sororities. Any church leader is forbidden to be members of any "secret society"

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- The **Wesleyan Church** (Wesleyan.org) is approximately 600,000 members strong with members in ninety-nine countries around the world. It was formed as an abolitionist church when the Methodist Episcopal Church could not resolve its differences between North and South regarding slavery.
  - This denomination does have a trust clause.
  - This denomination also has a clause for complete abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, as well as any “secret societies” such as Masons, Fraternities, and sororities. Any church leader is forbidden to be members of any “secret society”
- There are many different Wesleyan denominations not mentioned here. Some do and some do not have trust clauses built into membership.

St. Paul’s could also become a self-contained, **independent congregation**. However, there are many potential pitfalls in doing so, and it would be contrary to the spirit of connectionism that was core to John Wesley’s perspective of the Christian life.

## **Q. If St. Paul’s disaffiliates, will we continue to pay \$20,000 or more per year in conference and district apportionments?**

- A. No, once disaffiliation is completed, there will be no additional apportionments paid into the UMC. Future apportionments would be determined by what denomination St. Paul’s would choose to join. For example, if St. Paul’s chose to join the Global Methodist Church, that denomination has capped its apportionment expectations to 6% of the local church’s annual budget. This compares to the 10-11% that current UMC apportionments take. During this transition period, the GMC is requesting just a 1% apportionment, and it has agreed to waive even that amount until the convening conference can be held. It is doing this in recognition of the greater expenses disaffiliating churches face to exit the UMC.

## **Q. When and how will we decide on where to go should we no longer be United Methodist?**

- A. The Church’s Leadership Team is still evaluating the various options as described in the previous questions. Members of St. Paul’s are encouraged to research each of these possibilities and provide feedback to the Church Leadership Team. By the time we are holding the Church Conference on disaffiliation, the Church Leadership Team expects to have a recommendation for the congregation.

Assuming the two-thirds vote to disaffiliate is obtained, a simple majority vote in an *additional* all members of the church meeting will determine the next step for denominational affiliation.

## **Q. Are their costs to join any of these other denominations? Will we retain ownership of our property in another denomination?**

- A. For some of the options listed above, the answers are unknown as of this writing (which is why we need to carefully research them more!). If St. Paul’s joins the GMC, there are no costs to do so, and St. Paul’s will retain ownership of its property.

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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## **Q. Is there anything that we can use to compare what is expected from the UMC and GMC as each denomination moves forward?**

A. Yes. A comparison of the UMC, and GMC based on what each church has published or publicly stated. If you would like a copy of this document (which was shared initially in the information sessions led by Pastor Kevin in the summer of 2022), please contact the church office. We can give you an electronic version or make a printout, if needed.

## **Q. What happens if we choose NOT to disaffiliate?**

A. First, we are not required to vote. If we do not vote we will remain United Methodist.

If a Church Conference vote fails to achieve the two-thirds + 1 super-majority, or if the church fails to complete the checklist for disaffiliation after the vote, then St. Paul's will remain United Methodist. If the vote receives a majority, but not the required super-majority, then the church would need to determine whether it would pursue another method for exiting the UMC. It is unclear whether the congregation would be allowed to attempt another disaffiliation vote the next year if it fails.

If the majority vote is to remain United Methodist, then there will be no further efforts towards disaffiliation, at this time.

## **Q. *What can I do if St. Paul's votes to disaffiliate and I want to stay a part of the United Methodist Church? What if I decide to stay with St. Paul's but do not desire to become a member of the church?***

A. *All current members of St. Paul's United Methodist Church will become non-members of the newly formed St. Paul's church.*

*Anyone can continue to worship with St. Paul's as non-members.*

*Those who want to become members of the new St. Paul's church, a process will be put into place to facilitate new membership.*

*Those who prefer to remain United Methodist can choose to find a United Methodist Church to transfer their membership to. If a transfer is requested St. Paul's will expedite the request. If needed, referrals can also be provided.*

*We hope the outcome of this vote will allow everyone to move into the worshipping community to which they sense the Holy Spirit guiding them, and to release one another in Christian love.*

## **Q. Are there any resources that I can use to do further research and/or stay up to date with what is happening in the denomination?**

A. The most complete resource is the "UM Compendium" maintained by Dr. Chris Ritter at <http://peopleneedjesus.net>. He has attempted to collect all electronic transmissions regarding the UMC, GMC and other Methodist and Wesleyan news and continues to update it multiple times weekly.

Other resources include the website for both the UMC ([www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)), and the The West Ohio Conference of the UMC can be found in the previous link, there you will find Bishop Palmer's Town Hall and various videos expressing the benefits of remaining UMC.

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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There are also the GMC ([www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org)) and the websites for the other potential denominations referenced above.

It is important to keep in mind that every source of news is coming from a particular perspective – some highly encouraging remaining UMC and others highly encourage exiting the UMC, and so on. Keep this in mind as you gather information and ask God to help you discern what is the best path forward.

*There are videos recorded by the Rev. Rob Renfroe. They are very pro-GMC, so please beware of this slant. However, they would be of a benefit to watch. They can be found at the following internet address: [Good News - YouTube Channel](#) [Methodism's Division Six-Part Video Series - Good News Magazine](#), from Rob Renfroe. These videos help to show the issues facing the UMC, the benefits and what he considers negatives to staying UMC, and introduction to and the expectations of the Global Methodist Church.*

*There are six rebuttal videos recorded by the Rev. Adam Hamilton, which can be found here: [Adam Hamilton Responds to Rob Renfroe: Human Sexuality - Bing video](#). They are also very informative and will help you to see the differences of beliefs.*

The United Methodist Church website [The United Methodist Church \(umc.org\)](http://The United Methodist Church (umc.org)) has several articles, mentioned in this FAQ. Stay UMC, Ask UMC, Be UMC, and many other pages with excellent information.

## Q. I understand that when we do vote, only members can vote, is this true?

A. Yes, according to the Book of Discipline, we still must abide by, only members of the local church can vote at Church Conferences. Please note that those members wishing to vote must be **physically present**, so there will be no “mail-in” votes or “Zoom” votes.

If you would like to become a member of St. Paul's, please contact the church office and we will add you to a membership class.

## Q. Is the United Methodist Church in a true process of splitting?

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. There is no negotiated settlement, such as in 1968 when the last major change took place. In 1968 two denominations joined together, however some of the original Brethren churches and Methodist churches decided not to join with the UMC. At that time, a negotiated settlement was finalized, resulting in a peaceful and grace filled process.

Currently, it is more of a splintering or fracturing. No negotiated settlement has been made, so those who want to disaffiliate are having to go to different avenues to do so. Paragraph 2553 is the only way to legally do this, more on Paragraph 2553 is found below.

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church able to change the doctrinal teachings of the UMC?**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. The doctrinal statements of faith are protected in the United Methodist Book of Discipline and cannot be changed. Some of those statements are the virgin Birth, divinity of Jesus, and means of salvation.

However, and this is one of the reasons many of the churches are disaffiliating is that the General Conference can pass legislation or decide not to enforce these foundational doctrinal statements.

## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church intending to rewrite the Bible?**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. The UMC has no official translation of the Bible and has never sought to alter the Bible. United Methodist pastors have always had a variety of views about how to interpret specific passages of Scripture, and always will.

## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church intending drop all prohibitions related to human sexuality, now that the Global Methodist Church has been officially started?**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. The policies of the UMC are set by the General Conference. The General Conference is the only body that can change them. The next meeting of the General Conference is in 2024.

## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church intending drop all prohibitions related to human sexuality at the next General Conference.**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. As stated above, the General Conference is set to meet in 2024, and only this body can determine the positions of the UMC. The General Conference **MUST** consider all legislation presented to the body.

These items could authorize clergy to choose to preside at same-sex weddings. There are several proposals to drop the statement “the practice of homosexuality is compatible with Christian teaching.” Some proposals would remove the current policy that forbids committees and boards of ordained ministry and clergy sessions to approve and bishops to license, commission, ordain, or appoint self-avowed, practicing homosexuals as clergy. Another would drop the prohibition on annual conferences and general agencies to provide funding for any activity or publication that promotes “the acceptance of homosexuality.”

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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The key words are considered and proposal. The General conference must consider all legislative items it receives. All legislative items before a General Conference are proposals only. They have no force unless the General Conference approves them. All these kinds of proposals have come before the General Conference in the past and all have been defeated.

As of December 2022, there do not appear to be enough shifts in the makeup of the delegations to the General Conference in 2024 to conclude that any of these proposals will pass.

(However, any church that disaffiliates will not be able to send delegates to the General Conference, and the makeup of the delegations will change depending upon the total number of disaffiliating churches. At the time of this update to the FAQ, it is estimated that up to 1,000+ churches in the United States are in the process or have already disaffiliated, and most of these are traditionalist churches, meaning that it is possible that the makeup of the delegation may change.)

## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church ordaining drag queens and supporting the worship of a Queer God?**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...?” Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. However, both things have actually happened. NO United Methodist bishop has ever ordained, commissioned, or licensed a drag queen.

The Vermillion River District of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, voted to unanimously approve the certification of Mr. Isaac Simmons as a candidate for ordained ministry in 2021. The Book of Discipline prohibits “self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being certified as candidates for ordination. Mr. Simmons identifies as a gay man, but not as a practicing homosexual. He also performs under the drag name, Pastor Penny Cost, for the purposes of evangelism in audiences made up of people of many sexual and gender identities. Nothing in the Book of Discipline disqualifies persons who are gay but not practicing or who perform in drag from consideration or certification as a candidate.

The vote of the district committee to certify a candidate is one of the earliest steps in a process toward ordination. The process typically takes 5-8 years to complete.

Being approved by a district committee for candidacy is not being named clergy in the UMC. That can occur only after substantial work toward completion of seminary educational requirements, ongoing supervision over a period of years, and approval for commissioning by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote of the clergy session of the annual conference. Until that time, if assigned by a district superintendent to serve a local church, candidates cannot preside at sacraments or at weddings.

The reference to supporting the worship of “Queer God” comes from a chapel service at Duke Divinity School sponsored by an LGBTQI+ group that sponsored the service in question, as that service has been described in some publications. Exactly one of the students named is identified as United Methodist, and that student is, at this point, a candidate, not yet clergy in the UMC. Further, such “group sponsored” services represent the views of the sponsoring organization, not the Divinity school, nor its faculty. Such services are not a basis for making any statements about the beliefs or views of the UMC. General conference establishes the official statements of the UMC and its ritual. Chapel services do not.

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

Last revised, March 10, 2023, Items in italics are new from the last update.

## **Q. Is the United Methodist Church changing its statement on abortion from life-centered to pro-choice?**

The following is taken from “is the United Methodist Church Really...? Documents printed by the UMC and can be found on the UMC official website.

A. No. It is true that revised social principals are being taken into consideration at the General Conference of 2024, there is no guarantee that this will be approved.

## **Q. Are apportionments optional?**

A. According to the UMC Book of Discipline “payment in full of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church (UMCBOD paragraph 247.14 2019 version). However, this has not been enforced by the UMC.

Note: In the Global Methodist Church. Transitional Book of Doctrine and Discipline states the following:  
¶349.6 Each month the local church shall remit one-twelfth of the annual sum of general connectional funding and annual conference connectional funding to the Transitional Leadership Council or its designee. In ¶349.9 The failure of a local church to remit connectional funding in full as calculated annually may result in the Transitional Leadership Council or designee proceeding under ¶354 to involuntarily disaffiliate the Local church from the Global Methodist Church.

## **Q. *What about our current pastor, will he/she continue to serve us?***

*A. This is a question that is determined based upon the vote of the church, as well as the choice the pastor makes around the question of disaffiliation. The pastor has their own disaffiliation decision to make, and it is not tied to the church's decision.*

*If the church and the pastor are in the same denomination, then there will be no change needed. However, if the church and the pastor make different decisions, then there will be changes made in the pastoral appointment.*

*Neither the UMC nor the GMC will allow pastors from the other to serve. For example, a UMC pastor cannot serve in a GMC church.*

*For the pastor, they must weigh the pros and cons of staying UMC, going independent, or going with another denomination, such as the Global Methodist Church.*

*There are many decisions the pastor must make, for if they leave the UMC they will lose their ordination status as bestowed upon them by the UMC. The receiving denomination will evaluate the status of the incoming pastor's education and time in service, to determine what status they will bestow upon the pastor. If they go independent, then there is a very different process the pastor must undergo.*

*This is a complicated process for both the pastor and the church, there are no simple answers.*

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Disaffiliation

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*Q. I have more questions, who do I ask for help?*

*A. Contact Paul Ruble, Ric Michael, and Fran Geesey, email the church office [shema402@gmail.com](mailto:shema402@gmail.com) and or call the church office: 419-485-3519). If they do not know, they will help find the answers. Our goal is to let each member have sufficient information to be able to vote with a clear conscience and confidence in what God is leading us to do, no matter the decision made in the Church Conference.*