

# **The Clergy Withdrawal Webinar (Aug. 18, 2022)**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: If I retire from the UMC and then serve a GMC church, can I offer sacraments in that GMC church?**

A: A retired UM pastor remains under the appointment of the bishop: the retiree has the status of "retired," though often they serve local UM churches. At this point, the Council of Bishops has said that no UM pastor will be appointed to serve a GMC local church because that denomination has not been officially organized and so is currently unable to receive recognition as an ecumenical partner to whom a UM pastor might be appointed. As such, at this time in order for a retired United Methodist clergyperson to serve as pastor in The Global Methodist Church, the pastor must withdraw their membership from the NC Conference of the United Methodist Church by submitting a written Request to Withdraw to the Conference Secretary as well as surrender their Certificate of Conference Membership. Officials in the Global Methodist Church evaluate who qualifies to have membership and/or serve in their denomination. Likewise, officials in the Global Methodist Church determine who has sacramental authority in their churches.

**Q: If a retired UMC pastor turns in credentials and joins the Global Methodist Church, how are their pension and benefits impacted?**

A: Pension remains but will be converted to UMPIP as described by Wespath on their disaffiliation information website. The Duke Endowment has confirmed they will no longer receive the Duke Endowment Annual Contribution. Already retired clergy will continue to receive the retiree HRA if they are currently eligible for that benefit.

**Q: If a church chooses to leave the UMC and the current pastor does NOT, will there be a list of pastors who DO choose to leave UMC for those churches to reach out to?**

A: Names of Clergy who withdraw will be reported ONLY to the Executive Clergy Session at Annual Conference as required.

**Q: I serve in an extension ministry and plan to remain UMC. What happens if the church where my charge conference is held disaffiliates?**

A: If the church where your Charge Conference membership resides disaffiliates, you will need to designate a United Methodist congregation in which to place your Charge Conference membership. This is true for those serving in extension ministry as well as those on medical leave or retired.

**Q: If I am a member of another Annual Conference, yet I'm serving in an NCCUMC Church and plan to withdraw, who do I turn my credentials into?**

A: Credentials should be turned into one's "home conference" where one is a member.

**Q: What is the difference between being a pastor in the UMC versus the GMC?**

A: Being a pastor in the UMC will remain the same until new policies are set at General Conference or Annual Conference, just like before. There are no set directions or guarantees of any future action of the General Conference. Clergy considering joining the GMC, any other denomination, or a non-denominational church should contact that denomination or church leadership for information about clergy relationships or benefits in that group.

**Q: If I stay in the UMC, will I be required to perform same-sex marriages?**

A: Just as is the current case, clergy are not required to perform any marriage they cannot perform in good conscience.

**Q: How will the UMC be different for pastors after these disaffiliations are done?**

A: Policies for clergy and clergy relationships are developed by the General and Annual Conference. There will be future changes just as in the past from the normal work of the conferences. There are no set directions or guarantees of any future action of General Conference.

**Q: Can pastors be hired on as staff in a UMC if they also serve a GMC church?**

A: Pastors who are members of the GMC will not be appointed to serve in a local UMC.

**Q: Can I stay in the UMC and go on leave and work at another church?**

A: Requirements depend on the type of leave requested and the type of work to be done at the church. As mentioned earlier, there will be limits to sacramental authority if credentials are surrendered and/or the relationship with the other church.

When approved by the Bishop, DSs, and executive committee of the BOM, clergy may take a Voluntary Leave. Once approved, the clergy on leave designates a charge conference within the bounds of the annual conference to which they shall relate and report. Those on leave may perform marriages, baptisms, funerals, and other ministerial activities LIMITED TO THE CHARGE CONFERENCE IN WHICH THEIR MEMBERSHIP IS HELD AND WITH WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PASTOR IN CHARGE. They are NOT compensated by the church nor the conference.

**Q: Can I leave the UMC and go somewhere besides the GMC? What if my church wants to become non-denominational - does that change what I can do with the UMC?**

A: If not going to the GMC, there may be differences in the ability to serve sacraments depending on the relationship between the different denominations and the UMC. These will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, so we encourage you to be in discussion with your DS, the Conference Secretary, and/or the Office of Clergy Life.

**Q: Do you think the UMC will start to ordain gay pastors? Who decides that?**

A: There are no set directions or guarantees of any future action of General Conference. The General Conference sets the wording and policies of *The Book of Discipline*.

**Q: If I stay in the UMC, will I be allowed to perform same-sex marriages?**

A: There are no set directions or guarantees of any future action of General Conference. The General Conference sets the wording and policies of *The Book of Discipline*.

**Q: Can I wait until General Conference 2024 to decide?**

A: Yes. It is our desire for clergy to remain in relationship and ministry with the UMC.

## **Questions Submitted During the Webinar**

The following questions and answers are listed in the order they were asked during the webinar and are included as entered by the participant.

**Q: Please address those retired clergy options.**

A: Issues around benefits for retired clergy are described in the clergy withdrawal FAQs at <https://nccumc.org/disaffiliation/#faq>. Please see the questions listed above for responses on service in retirement.

**Q: The GMC has officially formed.**

A: The GMC launched in May 2022. In matters of serving a GMC as a retired UMC, the appointment issue becomes if the GMC has had the opportunity to be recognized as an ecumenical partner to whom a UM pastor might be appointed. At this time, that has not been able to happen.

**Q: If a clergy person's church disaffiliates, and the retired clergy who is appointed to serve the disaffiliating church wishes to continue in serving an appointment in the UMC as a retired clergy, how will that work for the retired clergy who remains in the UMC.**

A: The retired clergy should speak to the DS to discuss future appointment opportunities.

**Q: What is the process for local pastor leaving?**

A: Licensed clergy can withdraw

Your license should be surrendered to the District Superintendent for deposit with the Conference Secretary, Rev. Gray Southern. The effective date of withdrawal is the date of the letter of withdrawal. If you can not locate your original license, you shall submit a written request to withdraw to the District Superintendent, noting that you can not locate your license. Additionally, complete and submit a notarized Substitute Annual Conference Membership Form to the Conference Secretary, Gray Southern. The form may also be requested from The Conference Secretary's Office.

**Q: Please speak a bit more on what happens if I retire at year end and then choose to serve a disaffiliating church until they can find an acceptable pastor.**

A: Retirement benefits questions are addressed in the clergy withdrawal FAQs at <https://nccumc.org/disaffiliation/#faq>. Please see the question above regarding sacramental authority in retirement.

**Q: If I am a Licensed Local Pastor in UMC, and if I want to disaffiliate from UMC, can i become a local licensed pastor in the Global Methodist church.**

A: The GMC or any other denomination or organization will set their requirements for service. Please contact that organization for more information.

**Q: Could Beth tell about the timing for local pastors again?**

A: Please see the question above, "What is the process for local pastor leaving," for that information.

**Q: an Associate Member ordained deacon the same process as full connection Elders?**

A: Yes.

**Q: What happens to my retirement funds if I retire from UMC and become pastor of my current church, which disaffiliates to become? a non-denominational church.**

A: Wespath Benefits and Investments manages pension benefits for the UMC and has provided [frequently asked questions](#) about the continuation of benefits for clergy who withdraw from the UMC. All questions about pension benefits (except the Transition Fund for NC Conference participants) should be directed to Wespath.

**Q: withdrawal on membership does that equate loss of ordination?**

A: There are two processes to cover withdrawal from conference membership and withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office. Processes for each of those are defined at <https://nccumc.org/disaffiliation/#clergy>.

**Q: you mentioned earlier that no clergy would be required to preform a same sex marriage in the church they are appointed, how about civil law suits?**

A: While we are not able to provide legal advice about particular situations, our general understanding is that a pastor operating in a church setting and the church itself normally should be protected from civil liability under the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment for refusing to perform a wedding ceremony for a same-sex couple on religious grounds.