

The Disaffiliation Agreement Webinar (Aug. 11, 2022)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if my church wants to disaffiliate, but I do not?

A: For pastors of churches that want to disaffiliate but the pastor does not, the DS and cabinet will handle this just like any other appointment change and will be in touch about future appointments. Pastors, just get in touch with your DS and make sure they are aware of your situation. For lay persons in local churches that do not want to disaffiliate, we will work with you to find another United Methodist church that is not disaffiliating and help you make connections there.

Q: What if our pastor wants to leave, but the church does not?

A: Processes for clergy withdrawal will be discussed in the next webinar. In short, if a pastor leaves, the DS and cabinet will work to fill that appointment just as they do for other changes in pastors. Churches and pastors do not have to leave together or agree to stay together.

Q: What if our church does not want to vote? Do we have to?

A: Churches that want to continue ministry in the UMC do not have any votes they are required to take. Many churches have been in discussion on the topic of disaffiliation over the last several years, but a church wishing to remain in the UMC just continues in ministry as they are.

Q: What will change if we stay? What will change if we leave?

A: Churches that remain in the UMC will continue in ministry as we are with the normal changes and processes that we are used to in the UMC. Changes come when policy changes are made at the General Conference or Annual Conference, so changes will likely come as we continue meeting and setting the direction for the UMC. Our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world is set through the great commission and confirmed by the General Conference in our doctrine. Local ministries can continue, and we encourage local churches to go on about the soul-saving work of the church, as you have been doing. Churches that disaffiliate will take their next steps after disaffiliation to determine their mission paths. If a church goes to the GMC or a different denomination, they will coordinate with that denomination on the processes and goals of that denomination. Churches that choose to become independent will choose locally how they approach ministry.

Q: If we stay, will our apportionments go up to make up the difference for churches that disaffiliate?

A: The budget is set at Annual Conference, so the remaining churches will be the ones who actually set the budget, which is then allocated as apportionments. The Conference leadership is well aware of the budget implications of disaffiliating churches and has run several scenarios of how ministry will continue after churches that disaffiliate are no longer supporting connectional giving. There is no intention to reallocate the same Conference budget to the remaining churches to cover disaffiliating churches. The churches that remain will approve a new budget at Annual Conference, and that is the budget that will be apportioned.

Q: What is the big difference between the UMC and the GMC?

A: The big difference that has been talked about most between the GMC and the UMC centers around a position on inclusion related to human sexuality. In fact, paragraph 2553 is based on disaffiliation for “reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.” In forming a new denomination, several other differences are written into the new doctrine for the GMC. A chart of the major differences as outlined in the organizational framework of each can be found on [our disaffiliation webpage](#).

Q: What if we can't afford to pay the amounts in the agreement?

A: The financial amounts required in the disaffiliation must be completed prior to the effective date as required in paragraph 2553. If the church cannot afford the provisions of 2553, the church might consider waiting for General Conference 2024 to be held to see if more favorable terms are offered.

Q: Do we have to finish the archives for our agreement to be valid?

A: Yes. All parts of the disaffiliation agreement have to be completed in order for the agreement to become effective. If it is not possible to complete this by Jan. 1, the church might prefer to look to an effective date of July 1, 2023, for approval at the June 2023 annual conference.

Q: If we disaffiliate, will we have to send to the conference all our UMC hymnals?

A: Hymnals have been deemed to be property that will be released from the trust clause under a fully executed Disaffiliation Agreement. As such, hymnals will not be required to be sent to the Conference as part of the agreement. If a church chooses to affiliate with another denomination, they may, however, choose not to continue using United Methodist hymnals.

Q: Hasn't the Council of Bishops already decided that homosexuality will be condoned at the next General Conference?

A: The only body with the authority to set policy for The United Methodist Church is the General Conference. Bishops do not vote at General Conference. While bishops certainly have preferences individually for the future of The United Methodist Church, the General Conference will ultimately make decisions on changes to The Book of Discipline.

Q: What if we do not really disagree on human sexuality, but we just want to be independent? Does paragraph 2553 apply to our church?

A: Paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline states the basis for a church to disaffiliate from The UMC as follows:

Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the

practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

Reasons such as connectional giving or property are not related to the basis for 2553 and would not be applicable to disaffiliation under this provision.

Q: Will the disaffiliation agreement change next year or when we get a new bishop?

A: The Conference Board of Trustees has released the following statement regarding the NC Conference's disaffiliation plan:

“The Conference Board of Trustees retains the authority under The Book of Discipline to establish, and change when appropriate, the terms and conditions for churches within the Conference to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. The Board of Trustees hereby confirms, however, that it adopted the Disaffiliation Agreement, in the form in which it was published in May 2022, with the expectation and understanding that this will be the final version of the Disaffiliation Agreement that will remain the path for churches to disaffiliate for reasons described in paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline until December 31, 2023, the time limit provided in paragraph 2553.2 for this process. **The Board does not anticipate or expect any changes to the Disaffiliation Agreement prior to the expiration of paragraph 2553 as outlined in The Book of Discipline, and the Board does not anticipate or expect that a potential change in bishop for the Conference in 2023 will provide a reason or occasion to revisit the terms and conditions of the Disaffiliation Agreement.**“

Q: If we stay in the UMC, will we get a gay pastor? Will we have to hold same-sex weddings in our church?

A: Property ownership for churches in the UMC is not proposed to be changed. Just like now, churches hold their own property in trust for the UMC, and the property is overseen by the local Board of Trustees. Appointment-making uses a core set of values, and the cabinet and bishop prayerfully consider matching the gifts of a pastor with the needs of the local church.

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: Is the amount of the current year apportionment paid the same amount for the additional payment, or is the amount the apportioned amount for 2023?

A: Yes, the amount of the current year apportionment paid is the same amount for the additional apportionment payment. Both amounts change if the disaffiliation date changes to 2023.

Q: What are “professing” members on the Church vote to disaffiliate?

A: *The Discipline* gives the following definition of professing members: Para. 215.2: The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.

Q: Can you please confirm the location of the documents included in this discussion? Perhaps a link?

A: Visit nccumc.org/disaffiliation or click the red circle menu and find Resources - Disaffiliation Information

Q: Does AC have a standard voting ballot for the Local Church use?

A: Yes, there is a standard voting ballot supplied by the District Superintendent, who handles the voting process, which will be by written ballots and an anonymous vote. The motion to be considered is posted on the conference website.

Q: Some churches feel they should disaffiliate but feel they are held hostage by the amounts they have to pay. Would the conference accept a promissory note where the terms extend beyond 12-31-2023?

A: The NCC Disaffiliation Agreement is based on *The Book of Discipline* Paragraph 2553, which requires the specified payments. That provision requires that payment take place “prior to the effective date of departure.” The conference is not allowed to accept a promissory note. Paragraph 2553 provides a limited time for disaffiliation, which ends on 12-31-2023.

Q: If the church council votes not to approve the initial preliminary agreement or votes not to approve to have a special conference chaired by the DS, what happens to the process?

A: The process does not move forward unless each step is completed.

Q: Also, if there is a tie in the vote at the church council, what happens next?

A: Church Councils are encouraged to work toward a consensus and should follow their normal procedures for Council voting, including a tie vote. Per the NCC Disaffiliation Process, churches may not request a Church Conference Call and Vote until the Council has reached a consensus or majority vote.

Q: Would pastors and churches who remain in the UMC be forced to perform same sex unions, and would they be punished if they do not?

A: No pastor ever has been or will be asked to perform a marriage against their conscience. In other words, no pastor will be required to do any wedding, of anyone, in the future. Requiring such action can't be done because it would violate the pastor's conscience, and doing a wedding is always a matter of pastoral judgment.

Q: There is talk around our church that if we don't vote for disaffiliation this year, it will be more expensive next year.

A: An official statement is on the conference website saying that The NCC Disaffiliation Agreement is not expected to be changed next year. 2023 apportionment amounts have been distributed so each church can know if they are more or less than 2022. The Conference Trustees are committed to using the pension liability numbers most favorable to the local church, so that number is more likely to go down than up.

Q: Can you review the steps we need to take to take ownership of our property if we are to disaffiliate?

A: Please review the steps to disaffiliate on the Conference website for details. There is also an option to ask a question if any of the details are not clear.

Q: What if a church wants to wait until after General Conference 2024?

A: A church certainly may wait to decide whether to seek disaffiliation until after General Conference 2024. At this point, of course, we cannot predict what decisions and legislation may be enacted at that time.

Q: Where can you read the actual changes that has been passed?

A: This question needs clarification before it can be answered. You may submit the clarified question on the conference website page for disaffiliation.

Q: If a church fails to get a 2/3 vote this fall (before Oct 10 deadline) but has a majority of congregation who desire disaffiliation, can the church go through the disaffiliation process in 2023?

A: If a church does not have a church conference to take a vote prior to the Oct 10 deadline, the church can follow the steps of the disaffiliation process in 2023. If a church has a church conference that does not receive the required 2/3 vote to disaffiliate, the church will remain United Methodist and will not use the paragraph 2553 process to disaffiliate. The process was followed and the vote did not meet the requirements, so the church will remain United Methodist. Repeated church conferences will not be called to revote on the same issue and process.

Q: Are county tax records sufficient documentation for the disaffiliation agreement?

A: This question needs clarification before it can be answered. You may submit the clarifying question on the conference website page for disaffiliation.

Q: We do not have a full-time pastor why are we being told to pay a amount in #4?

A: Unfunded pension liability is addressed in the FAQ section of the conference website page for disaffiliation. This question may need clarification before it can be fully answered. You may submit the clarified question on the same website.

Q: If a new bishop is installed in 2023, can any of the parts of the disaffiliation agreement be changed? Most importantly, the cost of buying out of the church property. As I understand the current agreement, there is no buy out of the church property.

A: The conference website FAQ contains an official statement from the Conference Board of Trustees that answers this question.

Q: Are the UMC approving LGBTQ+ as pastors?

A: The ordination standards are provided in the Book of Discipline and have not changed since the last edition of the Discipline.

Q: Can "unofficial information" -- that is not from the Annual Conference -- be good information? Or is all "unofficial information" "misinformation?" If the Annual Conference spots actual misinformation in circulation, why not simply correct it -- rather than assume all "unofficial information" is "misinformation?"

A: Without trying to provide a definition for the quoted terms in this question, the North Carolina Conference believes the most accurate source for information about the Conference's disaffiliation process is the Conference itself. If you receive information from another source that causes you concern or confusion, please feel free to reach out to us through the inquiry form on our website or contact your District Superintendent, and we will do our best to respond in an accurate and timely way.

Q: What if a church chooses to disaffiliate and then discovers they made a mistake and want to come back?

A: The UMC will continue to seek to be united in our mission to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world, just as we are now. If a worshipping body or individuals who seek to serve Christ in the UMC want to explore being part of the connection of The UMC, there is a process to explore that relationship. There is no language specific to this question in paragraph 2553 that would relate only to disaffiliating churches.

Q: If our congregation has made the inquiry and the information sent to leadership, council voted no...is the information available to laity?

A: Church Council meetings are open to the congregation unless a particular matter is handled in a closed or executive session. We recommend transparency and good communication.

Q: Is the 2/3 vote for members at the meeting - or all affiliated, professing members?

A: The vote is by all professing members present. See the conference website for details.

Q: Please speak to the definition of voting members & share that it is MORE than just the attending members.

A: The vote is by all professing members present. *The Discipline* gives the following definition of professing members: Para. 215.2: The professing membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.

Q: Didn't this happen several years ago with the formation of the Free Methodist Church? Why are we doing this again?

A: The NCC Disaffiliation Agreement and the conference website address the reasons why this process is made available at this time.

Q: I want to make sure I understand your answer...SO if the church chooses to stay with UMC, a gay pastor would not be forced on a church, and if a pastor wanted to marry a same sex couple, the church trustees approval would be required?

A: The Cabinet does not force appointments on churches, and all appointments are made with the needs of the local church as paramount, so if a local church expresses needs in regards to these matters, or any other matter, that need(s) is attended. Pastors would want to honor their congregation's feelings in regards to these questions as well as, again, other topics of deep concern.

Q: Where will the Nov 19th meeting be held

A: This will be announced in the next week or so.