

ANNE ASHLEY CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

1/15/23

We are called together for a time such as this...

-Please understand, this will NOT be a time when we disrespect each other.

-Please understand, this will NOT be a time when we disrespect the United Methodist Church or any denomination.

-Please understand, this will NOT be a time when we debate what the Bible says about human sexuality.

-This WILL be a time when we talk about what Disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church means.

-This WILL be a time when we talk the future of Anne Ashley UMC.

United Methodist Church Terms

Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church: Contains the rules and laws governing the United Methodist Church. It also contains information about the church's history, some theological/doctrinal statements, the Social Principles, and the Social Creed.

General Conference: The highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference convenes every quadrennium (four years) to determine the denomination's future direction. **It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.**

Jurisdictional Conference: The quadrennial meeting of clergy and lay delegates from the annual conferences within the boundaries of one of five U.S. jurisdictions: North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern and Western. Jurisdictional Conferences convene every four years. The business includes the election and assignment of bishops.

Annual Conference: Meets once a year to represent United Methodists in a particular geographical area. All clergy are members. Each local church or charge elects at least one lay member of Annual Conference so that lay members equal clergy members. The Annual Conference is responsible for accepting goals and approving the budget for the work of the United Methodist Church in its area. It is also responsible for approving persons for ordinations as clergy and consecration as diaconal ministers.

Judicial Council: Nine persons elected by General Conference who rule on questions of constitutionality in church law and practice

Bishop: An elder (ordained minister) who is elected to the office of bishop. \, The United Methodist Church considers the episcopacy an "office" and not a third order of ministry (along with deacon and elder). A United Methodist bishop is consecrated for the office of bishop by other United Methodist bishops. A bishop serves as a general superintendent of the denomination. As such, individually and collectively bishops give general oversight to the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire denomination. **It is a responsibility of the bishops to see that the rules, regulations, and responsibilities developed by the General Conference are understood and effectively carried out.**

Trust Clause: All properties held by the General, Jurisdictional, Annual, and District Conferences or by a local church or by any agency or institution of the denomination are to be **held in trust for the denomination**. The titles are not held by "The United Methodist Church" since it is a connectional structure and not a legal entity in and of itself. In the case of local churches, the deeds to all local churches, parsonages, and other properties must include a trust clause. This clause indicated that the property is to be maintained for the benefit of the local church as this ultimately relates to the ministry and work of the Annual Conference.

“How We Got Here” Powerpoint...

https://www.faithcr.org/_files/ugd/257261_9e86558c7f3c49958d4e6123e1874dab.pdf.

RESOLUTION #5 (NEJ)

- QUEER DELEGATES' CALL TO CENTER JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT FOR LGBTQIA+1
- PEOPLE IN THE UMC
- QUEER DELEGATES' CALL TO CENTER JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
- FOR LGBTQIA+1 PEOPLE IN THE UMC
- RESOLUTION TO THE 2022 NORTHEASTERN JURISDICTIONAL CONFERENCE

Whereas, in a groundswell response to the passage of harmful legislation at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, Annual Conferences elected queer clergy and lay persons to be General and Jurisdictional Delegates in record numbers, for the first time empowering queer delegates to speak and act from our diverse experiences, and

- Whereas, the 2019 Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference passed the Traditional Plan, which increased penalties for United Methodists clergy who are LGBTQIA+ and for clergy who support the LGBTQIA+ community through officiating their weddings, and
- Whereas, in an attempt to address the divide within The United Methodist Church, an abeyance or moratorium was proposed to the General Conference, referenced below,² by the authors of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, and
- Whereas, we understand our call and responsibility as United Methodists to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God, and Whereas, we call straight and cisgender allies to do good by using their voice and vote to support, empower, and amplify the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community in The United Methodist Church,
- Therefore be it resolved that the 2022 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church: Supports and amplifies the queer delegates' call to justice and empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ community in our Jurisdiction, within and beyond our churches and agencies;

Affirms the spirit of the abeyance or moratorium as proposed to the General Conference, as referenced above, until changes can be made in The United Methodist Book of Discipline.

Implores our member Annual Conferences to either not pursue or resolve in an appropriately timely fashion through a non-punitive, just resolution process any

complaints against clergy regarding their sexual orientation or clergy who officiate weddings of LGBTQIA+ persons; through a non-punitive, just resolution process any complaints against Bishops regarding their sexual orientation or those who officiate weddings of LGBTQIA+

Supports the election of episcopal leaders who commit to upholding this resolution and who will further justice for and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ people in the annual conferences where they serve; Commits to a future of The United Methodist Church where LGBTQIA+ people will be protected, affirmed, and empowered in the life and ministry of the church in our Jurisdiction, including as laity, ordained clergy, in the episcopacy, and on boards and agencies.

- 1. As delegates, we choose to describe ourselves using the umbrella term “queer,” but refer to the broader community of persons with the LGBTQIA+ acronym.
- 2. “Effective immediately upon adjournment of the 2020 General Conference, no complaint proceedings (including, without limitation, a bishop’s supervisory response, suspension proceedings, attempts to achieve a just resolution, or referral of a complaint) shall be initiated, and all current or pending complaint proceedings shall be suspended, insofar as the alleged Book of Discipline violation asserted in the complaint is that the respondent is a ‘self-avowed practicing homosexual’ (however that term may be defined, including, without limitation, living in a same-gender marriage, domestic partnership or civil union); that the respondent has conducted, officiated, performed, celebrated, or blessed a same-gender wedding or other same-gender union; that the respondent has certified, licensed, commissioned, ordained, consecrated, or appointed a ‘self-avowed practicing homosexual’; that the respondent has provided ‘funds to any gay caucus or group’ or used funds ‘to promote the acceptance of homosexuality’; or that the respondent has otherwise engaged in conduct that The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church currently states is ‘incompatible with Christian teaching’ as it pertains to LGBTQ relationships. This moratorium on all new and pending complaint proceedings concerning human sexuality provisions applies not only to charges that are explicitly based on ¶ 2702.1b, but also to any charge that the same alleged underlying conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision of the Discipline, including (without limitation) ‘immorality’ under ¶ 2702.1a; ‘disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church’ under ¶ 2702.1d; and ‘dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist

Church' under ¶ 2702.1e. This moratorium is inclusive of charges related to the following paragraphs: ¶ 161, ¶ 304.3, ¶ 310.2, ¶ 341.6, ¶ 613.19, ¶ 806.9, and ¶ 2702.1b. This moratorium does not apply to charges under any of these provisions in which the underlying alleged actions address a different subject matter, including but not limited to sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. This moratorium shall remain in effect until the close of the first General Conference of The United Methodist Church after other denominations separate. Any complaints pertaining to this paragraph filed during this period shall be held in abeyance, and no time limits shall commence until the above-referenced General Conference has concluded.” - From the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation.

Resolution #5 Passed at the Northeast Jurisdictional Conference in 2022

Book of Discipline: ¶2553. Disaffiliation over Human Sexuality

Local churches have a limited right to disaffiliate *because of matters of conscience regarding changes made by the 2019 General Conference to the denomination's requirements or provisions regarding homosexuality.*

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church -- 2019 Addendum

Section VIII. Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality

¶ 2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality.

1. 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.

2. Time Limits.

The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for **the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.**

3. Decision Making Process.

The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶ 248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference. In addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. **The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.**

4. Process Following Decision to Disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church.

If the church conference votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, **the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits**

officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. That agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

a) Standard Terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement.

The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom. Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.

b) Apportionments.

The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.

c) Property.

A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church...*2% of Fair Market Value*

d) Pension Liabilities.

The local church shall contribute withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church's share.

e) Other Liabilities.

The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.

f) Payment Terms.

Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure.

g) Disaffiliating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of

Pension and Health Benefits Plans.

The United Methodist Church believes that a local church disaffiliating under ¶2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.

h) Once the disaffiliating local church has reimbursed the applicable annual conference for all funds due under the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or claims against The United Methodist Church as a result of the disaffiliation, in consideration of the provisions of this paragraph, the applicable annual conference shall release any claims that it may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church commonly referred to as the **trust clause**, or under the agreement.

[Note: In [Decision 1379](#), the Judicial Council clarified that the process of disaffiliation by a local church is not finalized until a simple majority of the annual conference acts to approve the motion for disaffiliation.]

Trust Clause

¶ 2501. *Requirement of the Trust Clause for All Property-1. All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the Discipline. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations or communions and has been a part of the Discipline since 1797.*

Financial Numbers (Approximate) for Anne Ashley UMC

- Unpaid Connectional Apportionments (12 months prior to Diss.)	\$14,600
- Unfunded Pension Liabilities	\$45,842
- Facilities payment	\$23,348
Total Conference cost	\$83,790
Misc. Costs	\$2,500

Possibilities #1

Global Methodist Church

“It is a church committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. The Global Methodist Church is filled with warm-hearted, Jesus loving, and Holy Spirit inspired people. They are grounded in Scripture and the life giving confessions of the Christian faith found in the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds”

(<https://globalmethodist.org/faqs/#1626100740506-fde7674d-c77e>).

The Global Methodist Church launched on May 1, 2022.

“United Methodist Church leaders have failed to make timely arrangements for holding a General Conference in 2022, and so have postponed it for a third time. Therefore, the *Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation*, a plan that would have resulted in an amicable and orderly separation will not be adopted until at least 2024. The Transitional Leadership Council determined it must launch the Global Methodist Church this year so local churches, annual conferences, and central conferences wanting to join it could do so as soon as possible.

For approximately 12 to 18 months, the Global Methodist Church will be a church in transition as it prepares for its convening General Conference. During the transitional period, the Global Methodist Church will operate under the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*”

(<https://globalmethodist.org/launch-information/>).

**We will still need to file the needed IRS paperwork to be considered a church (see possibilities #2).*

Chart detailing UMC and GMC

https://www.faithcr.org/_files/ugd/257261_c4a33078cec34468994fbb4248e9e19c.pdf.

-The GMC has partnered with the Wesleyan Investment Foundation to offer low interest loans to churches joining the GMC. <https://www.wifonline.com>.

-The GMC has partnered with the National Center for Life and Liberty to provide low-cost legal services for Disaffiliating congregations, \$1,000 retainer fee.

<http://www.ncll.org>

Possibilities #2

Become an Independent Church

- (1) Make a plan (Mission, Values, and Core Beliefs).
- (2) Select a church name
- (3) Select Board of Directors
- (4) Prepare/File Articles of Incorporation
- (5) Bylaws (Your organization's statement of faith, The regular order of what takes place during worship services, Evidence that services are open to public and how they are advertised to the public, and a description of the facility where the worship services are regularly conducted.)
- (6) Organizational Meeting
- (7) Apply for an EIN
- (8) Obtain Federal Tax-Exempt Status
- (9) Open Bank account in church name

Next Steps...

- (1) Starting 1/1/23, we will begin a 30-day discernment process bathed in prayer.
- (2) On 2/19/23, immediately following service, DS Deb will convene a Church Conference where we will have the first vote regarding if we will as a congregation disaffiliate from the UMC. Only registered professing members will be allowed to vote. A 2/3 majority vote is needed to pass. All those voting must be present.

If we vote to Disaffiliate...

- (3) A group designated from Anne Ashley will meet with WPA Conference Trustees to agree upon finalized financial number.
- (4) Once number is agreed upon, the DS will convene another Church Conference to have the congregation vote again.
- (5) The WPA Conference will confirm each disaffiliating congregation at Annual Conference 2023.

If we stay United Methodist...

WPAUMC Intentional Missional Alignment

The 2022 Annual Conference adopted the *Actively Waiting Task Force Petition for an Intentional Missional Alignment Process*, a resolution calling for establishment of three households within the Western PA Annual Conference:

- **The Centrist Household** will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field with members of differing perspectives on human sexuality. This household aspires to: remove sexual orientation as a consideration for fitness for ministry; allow each clergy person to discern if they will or will not officiate for same gender marriages; allow local churches to independently decide whether to host same gender marriages or not; and invite the bishop to use these considerations when making appointments.
- **The Traditional Household** will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field with members having a more traditional perspective on human sexuality. Therefore, this Household would aspire to: maintain ordination standards pertaining to human sexuality, including prohibition of homosexual practice, and prohibit all clergy and churches from celebrating same-gender marriages.
- **The Progressive Household** will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field with members who have a progressive perspective on human sexuality. Therefore, this household would aspire to have the full inclusion of, full affirmation of, and full participation by all people in all aspects of the life of this household and in the lives of its churches, including the ordination and appointment of persons without respect to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, it would have the celebration of same-gender marriages by all clergy and in all churches in this household.

Issues:

- What if there are little/no Traditional Pastors available?
- Will a congregation be open to having a gay/trans/non-binary pastor?
- Will a more progressive pastor be able to perform gay/trans/non-binary at the church?
- What if a new bishop does away with the Intentional Missional Alignment.
- If the Book of Discipline changes towards full inclusion (marriage/ordination), what happens to the Traditional Household?