

Questions and Answers for Discernment Process
Updated February 14, 2023

1. What happens to the leadership team (pastor, children's minister, youth minister, etc.) if the church disaffiliates? **ANSWER:** The church's decision to stay United Methodist (UMC) or disaffiliate is a separate decision from the pastor's. Pastor Steve can decide to stay UMC and, if the church disaffiliates, he will be assigned another UMC by the Louisiana Conference. Employees of the current church may be hired by the new church organization effective July 1. All current and former pastors (and pastor widows) that are currently covered by the UMC retirement plan will remain eligible for pension benefits under that plan.
2. What is the UMC position on homosexuality? Why disaffiliate now when UMC has disagreed with the issue for years? **ANSWER:** The UMC is governed by the Book of Discipline (Discipline). Paragraph 161 (G) of Discipline provides that: "Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth." However, the Discipline likewise provides: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." Similarly, regarding the ordination of clergy and homosexual unions, the Discipline clearly states:
 - Self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
 - Homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.
 - No annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of the UMC "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends."
 - A bishop, clergy members of an annual conference, local pastor on honorable or administrative leave, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged with...(b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies.Despite the language of the Discipline, clergy from the church began to perform wedding ceremonies of homosexuals. And, on July 15, 2016, the Western Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church elected Rev. Karen Oliveto, the senior pastor of Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco as the first openly lesbian United Methodist Church Bishop. These and other actions, combined with the failure by leaders of the denomination to enforce the content of the Discipline, induced division among the denomination's membership. New paragraph number 2553 in the Book of Discipline became effective at the close of the 2019 General Conference. It provides a temporary path for local churches to disaffiliate over issues related to human sexuality. The provisions of paragraph 2553 expire on December 31, 2023.
3. Why are "traditionalists" leaving when "progressives" are the ones who disagree with the Book of Discipline? **ANSWER:** There are some clergy violating the Book of Discipline on marriage and

some Bishops violating the Book of Discipline on ordination. They justify their violations because they believe the rules are unjust. According to the DS, the UMC is a connectional denomination with various views and interpretations of the Bible. She continues to explain that "No pastor and no church in the UMC will be required to perform or allow same-sex marriages."

4. Are our international churches leaving the UMC? **ANSWER:** Unknown
5. Why can't we just stay together in all that unites us (as a denomination) despite theological differences? **ANSWER:** Rick Warren states, "Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle that you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone you agree with everything that they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate."
6. What is next if we disaffiliate? What is next for us if we do not? **ANSWER:** Two thirds of the members present at a special called church conference must vote to disaffiliate according to paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline. If disaffiliation is approved, a new non-profit entity must be formed and title to all church property will be transferred over to the new entity. The church must either satisfy all of its debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign or transfer such obligations to its new entity. The church will cease all use of "United Methodist", the cross and flame insignia, including removal of all signage containing the same. The calculation of financial responsibility for exiting is \$200,787, to be paid by May 31, 2023. A portion of this sum may already be paid because it includes the apportionment amount for the entire calendar year 2023. Look at Question #9 for future church considerations. If there is no disaffiliation, the church will continue to pay apportionments to the UMC, our pastor will be appointed by the Louisiana Conference and resources of the UMC would be available. The General Council on Finance and Administration has submitted a budget for approval at the 2024 General Conference that is more than a third – more than 38% - below the previous denomination-wide budget that the General Conference approved in 2016.
7. I am concerned that only three conversational meetings have been scheduled. The District Superintendent (DS) was very clear in saying that discussion should take place in small groups of 12 to 24 people. With no requirement to sign up for a meeting, there is no way to predict how many people will attend each session. With 3 meetings scheduled, only 72 people maximum should be accommodated. Do you have multiple sets of people prepared facilitate the meetings should more than 24 show up for each meeting? My hope is that there is a plan to split into groups should a large number of people show up for any or all of the meetings. **ANSWER:** The language of the document provided by the DS says "...*should* be limited to 12-25 persons, except in cases where to do so would unnecessarily prolong the process to hit the 65% average weekly attendance (AWA) target." Use of "should" is permissive, not mandatory. Just because 3 meetings are scheduled doesn't foreclose others. (We are working on another meeting at 9 am on February 25.) Also, the informational meeting with the DS counts as a discernment meeting, so we already have a good start on reaching our 65% of AWA target.

8. Why? Do not stop preaching and using the Bible. The number one book I live by. Why mess up a good thing? People can make their own decision, do not rub everyone's face in it. **ANSWER:** Thank you for your compliment that Pineville FUMC is preaching and using the Bible. The entire leadership team, both employees and volunteer lay leaders, want to continue making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We want to continue with the ministry we have already started and serve the central Louisiana community to the best of our ability. The discernment process is intended to allow conversations and learning from one another in a peaceful, Christian atmosphere.
9. If our congregation were to disaffiliate is there a plan for our ministry going forward? Would we join another denomination? What would we look like, what would we become? **ANSWER:** The choice to become an independent church or join another denomination would be another decision if disaffiliation is approved. Due to time constraints, some may suggest that we start out independent, perform our due diligence with other denominations and decide at a later date which direction is in our best interest for the long-term future of our ministry.
10. How do we pay for disaffiliation? **ANSWER:** We have consulted with our bank and have been told that this will not be a problem.
11. Where, When, and How will voting take place? What accommodations will be made for all members and shift workers? **Answer:** The voting will be at PFUMC. The committee is recommending that the date of the voting must be done by April 1, 2023. We must inform the congregation at least 10 days prior to the vote. All church members will be informed as to when the voting will take place and you **MUST** be present in order to be included in vote.
12. Can the Book of Discipline be "amended" like our constitution? Can "Articles" be added? **Yes, amended, added and removed at General Conference. Amending Articles of Religion are a completely different process.**
13. The D.S. in her remarks last Sunday emphatically said that UMC will continue to believe that Jesus Christ is the Way, that Jesus was born of a virgin and that the Bible is the divine word of God. She said that cannot be changed. How did all of these rumors get started that the UMC would believe otherwise? Why were videos shown to the congregation stating items that were not fact? **Answer:** This is the very reason that the Future Church committee was formed, to research and distinguish between fact and fiction and then provide that factual information to the congregation. It should be noted that none of the issues in question above are a part of paragraph 2553.
14. The church is governed by the Book of Discipline. These sets of rules and regulations is what connects all United Methodist throughout the world together. This book establishes our core

beliefs and sets forth guidelines for all to follow. Doesn't this book state that marriage is between a man and a woman? Doesn't it also state that "homosexuality is incompatible to Christian teachings? But yet hasn't the church allowed at least 2 homosexual bishops to be appointed and allowed or affirmed into marriage in the Church? Has the church ignored these provisions of the Book Of Discipline? [Answer: Refer to question #2](#)

15. What does Section 2553 actually say? [Answer: The response was in the mailout sent to all church members as well as a hyperlink that has the text in full. In short, it provides a temporary path for local churches to disaffiliate over issues related to human sexuality. The provisions expire on 12-31-23.](#)

16. What are the timelines to implement this provision? [Answer: Churchwide vote must be done by April 1, 2023 and all financial obligations must be met by May 31, 2023. If the annual conference approves, disaffiliation would be effective July 1, 2023.](#)

17. Are there any assurance from the conference that we could disaffiliate at a later date and take our church property with us? [Answer: No](#)

18. If the church votes to disaffiliate, can the older members still have their funerals at the church? [Answer: YES](#)

19. If we vote to disaffiliate, what denomination would we become? How does this work? [Answer: This is uncertain at this time of the process. It was the charge of **this** committee to research and provide factual information to the church congregation regarding Paragraph 2553.](#)

[These 4 questions we believe should be for all church members to explore as they continue in their own personal discernment.](#)

20. What would we gain by leaving the UMC?

21. What would we lose by leaving the UMC?

22. Do you have to be a part of a denomination where everyone believes the same thing?

23. What is God speaking to you right now?

Questions and Answers for Discernment Process

Updated: Meeting 2/15/23@ 10am

24. Will all of these meetings be the same? [Answer: Yes, we want to be consistent with our messaging and format](#) Do we need to attend all of them? [Answer: No, you don't have to attend any or you can attend them all. We will take attendance for each meeting, you will be marked for the meeting that you attended first to be counted towards our necessary count.](#)
25. Will the church wide voting will be anonymous? [Answer: YES](#)
26. Is it true that the changes that we are currently discussing with human sexuality would be just like the changes made to the Book of Discipline in the past such as gender, race, divorce? But Articles of Religion have never changed. [Answer: True](#)
27. Does this vote have to happen? [Answer: NO, however as a committee we recommend that everyone in the congregation have a voice to vote for this important matter not just the 23 members of the church council.](#)
28. How was this committee formed? [Answer: The church council requested that the committee be formed. The lay leaders chose the members of the committee.](#)
29. Are we a Bible believing church? [Answer: YES](#)
30. Why didn't our UMC conference address the openly gay practicing clergy? [Answer: The DS stated that there was a complaint filed against Bishop Oliveta in 2016. The complaint was investigated, and the findings turned over to the Council of Bishops for that conference. Since these proceedings are secret, the findings are not available. However, the Bishop still holds her position in the UMC.](#)
31. Will disciplinary action be taken for those clergy who are openly gay? [Answer: The DS stated that they do have closed sessions to deal with disciplinary action.](#)
32. If we disaffiliate, the word United would not be used in our name and all UM items that have the flame would be removed from the church. [Answer: That is correct.](#) Is there a requirement to stay Methodist? [Answer: NO](#)
33. Clarify what we have to pay in order to disaffiliate? [Answer: We have to pay our apportionments of \\$200, 787. This is not based on membership, this is based on salaries, programs, etc This list is located on the general conference website. Do we have to pay?](#)
[Answer: If apportionments are not paid, UMC will not allow for disaffiliation and can seize the property.](#)

34. Where do our apportionments go? [Answer: To the general conference and to pay for UM programs, such as Methodist Children's Home.](#)

35. If we become an independent church, what will happen? [Answer: This is not a task to be answered by this committee.](#)

Questions and Answers for Discernment Process

Updated: Meeting 2/15/23 @ 6pm

36. What is next for the church council? [Answer: The Council will decide whether or not to allow a churchwide vote.](#)

37. Is this the first time for a split in the UMC? [Answer: The Methodist church has been split many times over hundreds of years over issues such as race, divorce, women clergy for example.](#)

38. Is the Methodist denomination declining? [Answer: YES](#)

Email questions 2/18/23

39. For sake of argument- assuming the congregation votes to disaffiliate with the UMC. Will the church remain under an episcopate structure (i.e., hierarchy with bishop, some type of annual conference that assigns apportionment and appoints minister) or do we become like a Baptist or non-denominational church where the local congregation has complete autonomy? [ANSWER: This is uncertain at this time of the process. It was the charge of this committee to research and provide factual information to the church congregation regarding Paragraph 2553.](#)