



# **MADISON**

**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

## **NEXT STEPS RESOURCE GUIDE**



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## INTRODUCTION

Before we offer information and concerns about issues within our denomination, our Administrative Council would first like to share some of our thoughts behind our decision to enter a season of discernment about the potential disaffiliation from our denomination. Our Council members have a variety of opinions about many of the issues that we will address, and we are pleased to have a good cross section of voices in our committee. But even with that diversity, our Administrative Council voted overwhelmingly to enter into this season of discernment. We created a sub-committee to investigate our many concerns at our June meeting, heard that sub-committee's report in September, and called for an Exploration Meeting in October. After having reviewed the information from that meeting and from the annual conference Zoom webinar from September 25th as well, the Council agreed that we should continue in this discernment process.

Our Council wrestled with our decision to initiate this season of discernment because we do not want to interrupt what God is doing in our church family and through our ministries. We hope to organize this time with great care and with as little interruption as possible so we can continue in our mission. But we feel that it is worth taking this time because the reality is that change is occurring in the United Methodist Church, and so we must look at that critically together as a church family. Having considered our many concerns, it may be that our church will have to make a change so that our church can actually stay the same.

We would also begin by sharing that it has not been our intention to significantly address the issue of human sexuality. All of us have joined a denomination that has not wavered in what it believes about human sexuality. We have all experienced love and welcome in our church family. Our sub-committee believes that love and welcome will continue in our church no matter what our decision will be about disaffiliation. The sole concern in this area has to do with clergy issues such as the actions of bishops, Boards of Ordained Ministry, and pastors, and it is our Council's intention that our church continue to welcome everyone who attends our church and to offer the love of Christ to everyone. Certainly, there is some concern that our denomination's doctrinal standards could markedly change in the future, but the primary concern for our Council is over clergy-related issues.

Lastly, there will be much more information provided here about why we might disaffiliate than about why we might remain UMC. We feel it is important to share those concerns that many in our church may not know about, but we will also share reasons to stay UMC at the close of the document. We want our church family to know why our Council was compelled to vote the way it did and to share that it is much more than just the acceptance of those with differing sexual orientations in ministerial leadership roles.

We will amend the web version of this information packet and reprint it when there are significant updates so please revisit our website ([www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps](http://www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps)) and check the time stamps on our printed materials. Here is the general timeline for hearing your questions and concerns, for sharing information with you, and for our next steps as an Administrative Council:

- 🕒 Next Steps Information Packet and Website – November 14
- 🕒 Coffee & Conversation 5 Meetings November 2022 (13th, 27th, 30th) and January 2023 (8th and 15th)
- 🕒 Sunday School Class Coffee & Conversation meetings – November, January, and February
- 🕒 Churchwide Email Pulse Survey – January 15-22
- 🕒 Annual Conference Bible Study – January 18 (Sanctuary – 6:00 p.m.)
- 🕒 Administrative Council meeting – January 23
- 🕒 Church Conference Vote - March 26

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## SECTION TWO

### QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

#### Q1. What is disaffiliation?

**A1.** For the purpose of the matter currently before Madison United Methodist Church disaffiliation refers to the process of withdrawing from membership in the United Methodist Church denomination.

#### VIDEO RESOURCE

Bishop Scott Jones Window to Exit <https://youtu.be/ydAv7-aS118>

#### Q2. Why is our church considering disaffiliation?

**A2.** There are three primary issues:

1. Disconnection – lack of accountability,
2. Distrust of bishops, seminaries, and more
3. Doctrine - theological beliefs about a variety of issues.

#### Disconnection Concerns:

- John Wesley had a commitment to accountability and commended his societies and class meetings to watch over one another with love.
- Since accountability in our denominational structure is set up within each geographical jurisdiction, there is frustration over bishops and annual conferences not holding to doctrinal standards in them and without experiencing any consequences.
- The Judicial Council ruled that “The consecration of a gay bishop violates church law” and that “It is not lawful for the college of bishops of any jurisdiction or central conference to consecrate a self-avowed practicing homosexual bishop.” The bishops in the Western Jurisdiction have still not reviewed Bishop Oliveto’s election even though the Judicial Council said that her marriage “is a sufficient declaration to subject the bishop’s ministerial office to review” (Source: [https://www.ctcumc.org/JudicialCouncilDecision\\_Oliveto](https://www.ctcumc.org/JudicialCouncilDecision_Oliveto)).
- Twelve of our annual conferences and many bishops have vowed to not follow the standards for pastoral candidates in the Book of Discipline.
- Following the vote at the 2019 General Conference, 26 of our 53 annual conferences condemned the voting for its strong accountability and the passage of the Traditional Plan.
- Many feel that the June 25, 2022, letter from the new president of the Council of Bishops about the recent Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision from the U.S. Supreme Court (which overturned Roe v. Wade) reveals the disconnection that exists with our bishops from many people in our denomination and from the Book of Discipline. The president did not mention the impact on children at all in his letter, and his words certainly frustrated many and did not present the whole understanding of our doctrine on this issue.

- Anywhere from 30%-40% of the annual conferences in the USA are placing additional monetary burdens over and above the Discipline’s established costs for disaffiliation.

That number includes some annual conferences in the south.

One annual conference in the south just reversed their policy on unfunded liability pension requirements and are now demanding three times the amount of money for any church seeking disaffiliation in the future.

There are annual conferences in the south as well that are not allowing any church to disaffiliate even though the Book of Discipline clearly allows for that.

A Southeastern Jurisdiction annual conference recently added a certain percentage of land and financial assets as part of the disaffiliation costs though there is no call for that in paragraph 2553.

#### Distrust Concerns:

- Though progressive, moderate, and traditional bishops, clergy, and laity signed the 2020 General Conference “Protocol” legislation, which would allow for an amicable division of our denomination, all progressive signers of that resolution pulled away from their commitment to still support it in the summer of 2022.
- The General Conference Commission postponed the General Conference that was to be held in 2022 all the way to 2024 and cited concerns over delegates acquiring visas and vaccinations for the event. The Wesley Covenant Association, United Methodist Women, World Council of Churches, and other denominations held events prior to the date for the 2022 General Conference and their delegates were able to receive visas and vaccinations for their meetings. So, there is frustration over why many United Methodists groups and people could attend those meetings and yet we could not call this critical meeting.

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#### **Distrust Concerns:** *Continued*

- There are significant concerns over the handling of appointments that have been made for many Traditional churches.
- There are also concerns over the shrinking pool of traditionalist pastors in our annual conference and throughout the United Methodist denomination.

#### **Doctrinal Concerns:**

- **Enforcement of our doctrinal standards**  
Though it is unlikely that core doctrinal standards would change at upcoming General Conference meetings, there is great concern over the enforcement of those standards with our various seminaries, Boards of Ordained Ministry, bishops, and more.  
  
All 13 people elected as bishops in November 2022 across our many jurisdictions, including the three persons elected in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, are either centrists or progressives and not one traditionalist was elected. This trend seems to show the shifting of our denomination theologically.
- **Clergy concerns**  
The primary concern in the area of human sexuality deals with clergy standards and not with lay persons' activities or beliefs.  
  
These clergy concerns are not just from activities in other jurisdictions of our denomination but are being evidenced also in our Southeastern Jurisdiction.  
  
The Board of Ordained Ministry in the Florida Annual Conference approved and brought up for commissioning two self-avowed, practicing homosexuals in 2022. That conference votes on the entire slate of candidates so 14 other candidates were voted on with those 2 persons. The 16 person slate was voted down for approval since the 2 persons were not within our Book of Discipline's guidelines for candidates. The fourteen candidates, who had not broken any rules, will sadly have to wait another year for commissioning.  
  
Recently the Illinois-Great Rivers Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church unanimously approved an openly gay and a publicly practicing drag queen as a candidate for ordination who (in drag persona) led the children's sermon at a Florida UMC church on October 2, 2022.

#### **Doctrinal Concerns:** *Continued*

Two practicing gay UMC pastors officiated the marriage of two gay men, one of whom was also clergy from the UMC, in October of 2022 in the North Texas Conference.

The bishop of the North Georgia Conference preached at the LGBTQ+ Pride worship service at Saint Mark UMC in Georgia on October 9 and said that gay weddings "should be highly encouraged."

- **Concern over the beliefs of many of our bishops**
  - **On Scripture**  
On July 26, 2022, one of the bishops from the Southeastern Jurisdiction said, "and while I believe in our traditional, orthodox faith that's rooted in the scriptures, I also have always believed that we have to adapt our doctrine and our scriptures to changing life circumstances that people have."
  - **On Jesus**  
In writing about Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, one bishop stated that to treat this woman rightly Jesus had to give up "his bigotries and prejudices." This person also said, "Like you and me, Jesus didn't have his life figured out. He was still growing, maturing, putting the pieces together about who he was and what he was supposed to do. We may think of him as the Rock of Ages, but he was more like a hunk of clay, forming and reforming himself in relation to God." And then the bishop warns us "too many people make an idol out of him (Jesus)."  
  
One bishop has talked about his belief that "the virgin birth" is a "myth." He went on to say, "I believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but I cannot believe that his resurrection involved the resuscitation of his physical body..." Lastly, he reported, "I must dissent from Christocentric exclusives which hold that Jesus is the only way to God's gift of salvation."
  - **On diversity of and kindness over differences of opinion**  
At the 2019 General Conference the One Church Plan was pushed by many bishops and it was not passed. Instead, the Traditional Plan was adopted. One of the bishops said about that possibility, "At some point I shifted my own prayers to, 'Lord, please melt the hardened hearts... (to) smite everyone who intends to vote against the One Church Plan.'"

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## QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

### Doctrinal Concerns: *Continued*

One UM bishop said, "Delegates from Africa once again proclaimed that their anti-homosexual stand was what U.S. missionaries taught them. I sat there wondering when our African delegates will grow up. It has been 200 years since U.S. Methodist missionaries began their work of evangelization on the continent of Africa; long enough for African Methodists to do their own thinking about this concern and others." His comment suggests that if you hold to a traditional understanding of marriage you need to grow up and he was willing to juvenilize and demean a whole continent of believers who are poor, who are being faithful in evangelism and disciple-making in a difficult context, and who are persons of color.

- **On human sexuality**

Several candidates who were elected as bishops in the Southeastern Jurisdiction this year promoted their hope for full inclusion for UMC pastors though that position is contradictory to our Book of Discipline.

A current Southeastern Jurisdiction bishop recently commented that gay weddings "should be celebrated."

As earlier noted, the bishops in the Western Jurisdiction have disregarded the Judicial Council's ruling about the election of Bishop Oliveto. The Judicial Council spelled out the process required by the Discipline for such a review, which begins with the filing of a complaint against the bishop. If action is not initiated by the jurisdictional or central conference, it is understood that the president or secretary of that body's college of bishops must take action.

- Concerns over staff and student activities in UMC seminaries and colleges or in seminaries and colleges that are supported by the UMC.

One professor at Iliff Seminary disdains historic American Christianity as "satanic" and as a justification for "white supremacy" while another professor describes himself as a "lapsed Buddhist" and an "atheist." Also, one of their admissions representatives describes herself as a "pagan priestess." Two of their students recently elected to student government are Wiccans and the seminary teaches a class on that subject. (<https://juiceycumenism.com/2022/02/14/united-methodist-iliff-paganism/>)=

Duke Seminary had a chapel service in 2022 in which students described God as "mother, father,...drag queen, and transman, and gender-fluid."

- **Concerns over Jurisdictional Conference voting**

Three resolutions were passed at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, and at all other conferences but the Western Jurisdiction, and they can be found here: <https://www.sejc4i.org/resolutions>. One resolution calls for abeyance of any complaints for clergy breaking church law and requirements though the Book of Discipline has not changed on that. Another resolution calls for the UMC to make the accountability structure of our denomination regional. We have always been a global and connectional church and some feel this stands in contradiction to our Wesleyan emphasis on accountability and that it would quiet the voice of Africa and other global brothers and sisters to the USA church. The last resolution asks persons considering disaffiliation to resign from any leadership in the denomination, regardless of their faithful service. The SEJ basically voted 2 to 1 in favor all three resolutions. These votes, along with no election of a Traditionalist bishop in the SEJ or in any jurisdictional meeting, seem to signal a significant and clear turning point theologically within our denomination and even in the Southeast Jurisdiction.

Francis Asbury was one of two preachers initially sent by John Wesley to America. In 1805, he addressed the Virginia Conference and said that their preachers were to "preach the same doctrine, (and to) approve and enforce the same discipline."

### VIDEO RESOURCES

**Rob Renfroe**

**The UMC is Dividing and Is Divided**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g48onYSqg0>

**Bishop Scott Jones**

**Will the UMC become more progressive?**

[https://youtu.be/8rc8Nt\\_Ub-g](https://youtu.be/8rc8Nt_Ub-g)

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### QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

**Q3.** Why would traditionalists leave the denomination and not those who are progressive and who do not like our doctrinal standards?

**A3.** Albert Mohler, a Southern Baptist preacher and leader, wrote a helpful blog post on that concern in January 2020 (albertmohler.com/2020/01/06/briefing-1-6-20). He reported that conservatives are always the group that has left their denominations when there is a split in a mainline Protestant denomination (Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians). In the context of our denomination, the events during and after the 2019 General Conference establish that any meaningful attempt to bolster and/or enforce traditional doctrinal standards as to clergy will be fiercely resisted by the Council of Bishops both during General Conference and before the Judicial Council. Even if clergy reforms are passed by the General Conference and approved by the Judicial Council, those reforms will be ignored by the Council of Bishops, as has been done concerning the clergy-related portions of the Traditional Plan passed in 2019. Given the structure of the United Methodist Church, there is no realistic path to holding disobedient bishops accountable for their failure to enforce existing doctrinal standards.

#### VIDEO RESOURCE

Rob Renfroe Why It's Time for Traditionalists to Leave  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw5Y4fMRJtQ>

**Q4.** Why should we not wait until the 2024 General Conference to see what is voted on and to see if there is new disaffiliation legislation passed to replace the earlier process that will expire at the end of 2023?

**A4.** There are several concerns about waiting until 2024.

- Waiting until 2024 will guarantee that we pay at least one more year of apportionments (\$270,000) and possibly add an additional year of apportionments to that.
- There is no guarantee that a disaffiliation process will be voted in or that it will be as favorable to churches economically as the current legislation that will expire on December 31, 2023.
- The 2019 General Conference was chaotic and unproductive. Many of the delegates present for that conference are slated to be delegates in 2024 so we can expect much of the same. Many traditionalist delegates have left the UMC and so the voting margins should be tighter and the conversations potentially more frustrating for the 2024 General Conference.
- There is a strong concern that many of our traditionalist church members might leave our church if we wait that long.
- If there is no replacement disaffiliation process enacted, disaffiliation after 2023 may require that the church to give up all its real property. This has occurred in other Protestant denomination splits. Given the actions of many liberal bishops in other annual conferences, this is a real risk.
- Our annual conference Trustees announced on October 20, 2022, that they had voted to extend the disaffiliation process until the end of 2025 and under the same "fair and equitable" standards of paragraph 2553. They said that the "intent of this plan is to allow churches time to learn the outcome from legislation adopted at the 2024 General Conference."

#### VIDEO RESOURCE

Bishop Scott Jones

Why not wait until the 2024 General Conference has occurred before exiting the denomination?  
<https://youtu.be/naElCH9Z5eg>

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### QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

**Q5.** What is the process for disaffiliation?

**A5.** “Disaffiliation” was only adopted by the General Conference as a concept in 2019. Under Paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline, a church has “a limited right,” to disaffiliate 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 actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues.” If the local church determines they have a reason of conscience around these matters, they have a right to leave and take their real estate and property with them, through an established process, and this entire passage is time limited. No disaffiliations under these provisions will be allowed after December 31, 2023.

**Q6.** What is our church doing about the issue of disaffiliation?

**A6.** In June 2022, the Administrative Council appointed a sub-committee to study the advisability and process of remaining UMC, waiting until 2024 to make a decision about disaffiliation, and pursuing disaffiliation. In September 2022, the sub-committee made their report and our Administrative Council voted to have an Exploration Meeting with our Conference Treasurer and District Superintendent. This meeting is a required first step in the disaffiliation process. The Administrative Council met on October 16, 2022, to review the information from the Exploration Meeting and from the annual conference Zoom webinar and made a decision to continue in the disaffiliation process.

This process was held over several months and there were opportunities throughout it for the Administrative Council to pause that process. We have a new webpage that provides timeline information, concerns about doctrinal, disconnection, and distrust issues, and what our denomination has also stated about those issues. Our Administrative Council asked Sunday Schools, small groups, and individuals to invite our pastor and members of our sub-committee to visit with them and we had Coffee & Conversation events for more discussion. For the annual conference to approve a church’s disaffiliation at their June 2023 meeting, a church wide vote about disaffiliation must occur before March 31, 2023.

**Q7.** Why shouldn’t we wait until the General Conference meets in 2024 and pursue separation under the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation?

**A7.** A group of progressive signatories to the Protocol announced withdrawal of their support for the protocol in early June 2022. Additionally, ¶2553 will sunset on December 31, 2023 – before the General Conference convenes. There is no assurance the Protocol or any other similar piece of legislation will be on the agenda for the 2024 General Conference and be approved. The longer a church waits to leave, the riskier it becomes. The actions taken by some liberal bishops in other annual conferences against traditional churches and clergy has been extremely discouraging in this regard.

Lastly, the Judicial Council recently ruled that the 2024 General Conference will be the postponed 2020 General Conference. African delegates will not be given their full voting numbers as they were to have been granted in 2024. They will be stuck at 32% of the voting delegates. At our Exploration Meeting it was suggested that Africa would consist of 47% of the delegates and have more influence but that will not be the case. Also, traditionalist delegates continue to disaffiliate so their influence is dwindling.

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### QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

**Q8.** What would be the timeline for disaffiliation for our church?

**A8.** Here is a general timeline for the disaffiliation process:

- September 1, 2022 – The Administrative Council voted to have the required Exploration Meeting.
- October 16, 2022 – The Administrative Council voted to continue the process of discernment about disaffiliation from our denomination.
- By February 1, 2023 - Any Administrative Council would have to vote by a 50% or more margin and inform the District Superintendent to begin the process of disaffiliation by this date to be allowed to leave the UMC by the time of the June 2023 annual conference meeting.
- A church would have a discernment period over many weeks to fast, pray, and go through a Bible study before any vote would be taken on disaffiliation.
- A church would need to have a church wide vote (church conference) by March 31, 2023, to be allowed to leave the UMC at the June 2023 annual conference meeting. A vote of 2/3rds majority of full professing members present at the church conference meeting is required to allow disaffiliation to continue.
- If a 2/3rds majority votes to disaffiliate, then a disaffiliation agreement must be approved by the Annual Conference in June 2023.
- A special-called Annual Conference to support churches that require more time before their voting was approved at the 2022 Annual Conference meeting. Our new bishop has scheduled that meeting for December 9, 2023.
- The Board of Trustees for the Mississippi Annual Conference recently revealed that it is their intention to honor the disaffiliation procedure through 2025. There are some concerns and potential roadblocks about if that will happen, but this decision is currently and graciously being offered to churches that desire more time to discern their future. Again, it would cost our church one to two more years of apportionments and cause several concerns that we have already mentioned such as a potential loss of members who will not wait two more years, continued discussion about disaffiliation and more.

**Q9.** What will it cost our church to disaffiliate?

**A9.** Presently the annual conference has established our cost at approximately \$1,200,000 (final cost will be calculated on April 1, 2023). This amount is subject to being adjusted based on market conditions associated with the calculation of the unfunded pension liability portion of this amount. Paragraph 2553 specifies disaffiliating churches to pay any unpaid apportions for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments. In addition, churches shall pay an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension liability. These costs are reasonable costs associated with a separation and are monies that we have covenanted to pay and would have paid anyway with the exception of them having to be paid up front.

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### QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

**Q10.** How will we cover these costs?

**A10.** The church would have to refinance its current building loan if we were to disaffiliate because we would change our incorporation information. The costs of disaffiliation could be added to that loan. Our church has also kept some monies in reserve to cover a significant part of these costs.

**Q11.** What are some of the benefits of disaffiliation?

**A11.** Here are several advantages:

- We will own our own building and property.
- We will be able to focus on our mission more fully without distraction.
- We will have greater input in the selection of our future pastors.
- There would be a significant reduction in apportionments.
- Bishops will have less administrative power and will not have life-time appointments.

**Q12.** What if a Madison UMC member wishes to remain in the United Methodist denomination if our church votes to leave the UMC?

**A12.** Members wishing to remain United Methodist may do so and, if they wish, may attend another Methodist Church. Our hope would be, if our church is to disaffiliate, that everyone would go with us because we are a church family and because we would hopefully be going to a denomination with the same doctrines and polity that all of us have joined under when we all joined Madison UMC.

**Q13.** What happens to real estate and other assets if Madison UMC disaffiliates?

**A13.** If all requirements of the Bishop and the Mississippi Conference are met, all assets will be transferred to our church.

**Q14.** What can church members do during this process?

**A14.** Pray. Earnestly pray and seek the Lord in what you believe He would have us do. Search the scriptures. Fast as led by the Spirit. Helpful information on fasting may be found here: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/biblical-fasting.html>. Search the scriptures for yourself. God reveals His will through His word. Meditate on His word to discern what He is saying to you. Please stay informed. Read all communications shared on this topic as information can change over time and we want to make sure everyone has the latest available information as we move towards decision-making. Plan to participate in determining our church's future by voting at the Church Conference, when it is scheduled. Finally, be gracious to all. Some of us may hold different perspectives and viewpoints initially. Some of us process information differently. Let us seek to honor, respect, and be loving in all interactions throughout this discernment period. If you find you have more questions, please ask!

You may send questions to [nextsteps@madisonumc.org](mailto:nextsteps@madisonumc.org)

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## SECTION THREE

### WHERE TO AFFILIATE IF WE DISAFFILIATE FROM THE UMC

**Q1.** If we vote to disaffiliate, what is the process for deciding which denomination we will select?

**A1.** The sub-committee is reviewing information available from many Methodist denominations, with some study being given as well to becoming an independent church, to make a recommendation to the Administrative Council which would then be presented to church membership at a church-wide gathering. In the meantime, members are encouraged to review information at [www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps](http://www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps) on these denomination options that they can review individually if desired and send any questions or comments to [nextsteps@madisonumc.org](mailto:nextsteps@madisonumc.org) for consideration by the sub-committee.

#### VIDEO RESOURCE

Bishop Scott Jones    Denominational Options  
<https://youtu.be/nnF8JfRK2eM>

**Q2.** Are other denominations being considered for our church if we disaffiliate?

**A2.** Possible options are to become a part of another denominations such as the Global Methodist Church, Free Methodist, some other Methodist denomination, or join a network of like-minded churches. Our church is most familiar with the Global Methodist Church and their transitional Book of Doctrine and Discipline is very much like the UMC's Book of Discipline. It contains significant accountability measures, it would be a more seamless transition for our church, and we would be aligning mostly with former and like-minded United Methodists who have joined with the GMC. The Administrative Council will continue to study the options and make a recommendation in the future. This would be a matter subject to a church vote and will be held after the church conference vote on disaffiliation.

#### VIDEO RESOURCES

Rob Renfro    Where Should We Go?  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzAVdE9wqY0>

Bishop Scott Jones    Global Methodist Church  
<https://youtu.be/koXAv1Vf2ml>

Bishop Scott Jones    Advantages of the GMC  
<https://youtu.be/jnqJorgli4o>



#### ARTICLE RESOURCE

Tom Lambrecht "Considering Methodist Options"  
<https://goodnewsmag.org/considering-methodist-options/>

Comparative Chart of Multiple Wesleyan Denominations  
<https://www.madisonumc.org/sites/default/files/wider%20comparison%20chart-pdf.pdf>

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## QUESTIONS REGARDING DISAFFILIATION

**Q3.** If we were to vote to disaffiliate, I have more questions about which denomination we should join. I am leaning toward the Global Methodist Church, but are there other mainline denominations we should consider? What are the advantages/disadvantages of joining a very new denomination that is still being established?

**A3.** There are many Wesleyan related denominations. In fact, almost all holiness and Pentecostal denominations trace their roots back to the influence of the early Methodists. The two denominations being most strongly considered by the vast majority of UMC churches considering disaffiliation are The Free Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church. Our church is gathering information concerning both of them, as our deliberations move forward. There are definitely advantages and disadvantages to joining either of the denominations. One disadvantage of the GMC is that everything is not firmly set and settled. But that can also be an advantage, so you do not move into a long-established structure, and you get to be a voice in helping to establish the structure, if you join before all is firmly settled. It is both more messy and more exciting to be a part of anything new. In the case of the GMC, there is the very real possibility that it will be a larger denomination, with a more comprehensive global footprint than many or even most non-UMC Wesleyan denominations, within a brief period of time. The advantage of an established denomination is that there are no (or at least less) unknowns. Being part of something new carries with it some excitement and momentum that may not be as significant with an established denomination. There are pros and cons for both, but ultimately the right answer is determining the best fit for us so we can most fully glorify God, treasure Jesus Christ, love others, and make disciples of all peoples.

**Q4.** How are pastors selected in Global Methodist Church and the Free Methodist Church?

**A4.** Both denominations have a consultative process within an appointment system. The GMC transitional leadership team has indicated they are open to additional changes to this process. The FMC leadership has indicated that they do not move pastors for the sake of moving; appointments within their system are more long term assuming the pastor and the church are aligned on the health and effectiveness of that appointment.

### VIDEO RESOURCE

Bishop Scott Jones – How pastors are appointed in the GMC

[https://youtu.be/\\_7b5fi-UGPU](https://youtu.be/_7b5fi-UGPU)

**Q5.** I need more detailed comparisons of GMC, Free Methodist, and Independent Church.

**A5.** It is understandable to want more information. The comparison chart listed below was created to provide an overview of the similarities and differences between the denominations. If there is a specific area of interest, please send that to [nextsteps@madisonumc.org](mailto:nextsteps@madisonumc.org). Otherwise, [www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps](http://www.madisonumc.org/nextsteps) has presentations from the Global Methodists and Free Methodists available for you to hear directly from their representatives.

Below are the websites for the Free Methodist Church ([fmcusa.org](http://fmcusa.org)) and the Global Methodist Church (<https://globalmethodist.org/>).

This comparison chart highlights many of the similarities and differences of the United Methodist Church, the Global Methodist Church, and the Free Methodist Church. <https://wesleyancovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/A-Comprehensive-Comparison-Chart.pdf>

**Q6.** Does Global Methodist doctrine allow women in leadership positions/pulpit?

**A6.** Yes. See GMC FAQ site <https://globalmethodist.org/faqs>

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## SECTION FOUR

### Why We Should Consider Remaining In The UMC

**Q1.** I would like to see in writing what the UMC officially says about why churches should not disaffiliate.

**A1.** Below are links that will take you to information the UMC is sharing around disaffiliation:

#### ARTICLE RESOURCES

Is The United Methodist Church really...? - Part 1

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-1>

Is The UMC really...? - Part 2

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-2>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 3

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-3>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 4

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-4>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 5

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-5>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 6

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-6>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 7

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-7>

Is the UMC really...? – Part 8

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-is-the-umc-really-part-8>

North Alabama Annual Conference “Why Stay UMC”

<https://www.stayumc.com/about/>

The North Alabama Annual Conference shared an article about their many reasons to remain UMC and several of them fit well with our annual conference. Some of the reasons that they shared are:

1. The UMC has been our home, 2. We do not all think alike and yet we have lived and served together well, 3. Many wonderful things are happening through our conference, 4. The Cross & Flame symbol means much to our church and our community, 5. Our conference has a great and needed commitment to rural ministry, 6. Our support for campus ministry is substantial and critical, 7. Our important connection with our denominations and ministries, and several more.

#### VIDEO RESOURCES

Additionally, you can view the Annual Conference Zoom webinar from September 25th here:

<https://www.mississippi-umc.org/important-connection-conversations-webinar>

Rev. Adam Hamilton A Future with Hope for the UMC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbNchQ-V4GE&amp;t=97s>

Rev. Adam Hamilton Why remain UMC?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62qtzyBVCv8>

A word of encouragement from UMC pastors in the North Alabama Conference

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyOMJOz5kkw>

Staying: A Conversation with Van Stinson (Louisiana Annual Conference)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwCkvSn6Sdo>



# JANUARY 2023 ADDENDUM

**Q1.** What concerns are there from the recent Arkansas annual conference meeting?

**A1.** Like Mississippi, their annual conference votes one-by-one for each church seeking disaffiliation. They called a special annual conference a few weeks ago to solely vote on churches seeking disaffiliation, and their delegates voted to not allow three churches of the many churches seeking disaffiliation to leave even though the churches had fulfilled the requirements for disaffiliation. There are concerns that if our church does not disaffiliate by this summer, there will be less traditionalists to vote at the called annual conference in the fall and it could be that enough delegates would vote to not allow our congregation to leave.

**Q2.** What are other annual conferences around us doing about disaffiliation?

**A2.** Most of the annual conferences in the Southeastern and South Central Jurisdictions are seeing significant numbers of churches disaffiliating.

- Northwest Texas Annual Conference had 70% of their churches disaffiliate in December 2022
- Texas Annual Conference had 50% of their churches disaffiliate in December 2022
- North Alabama recently had 30% of their churches leave and those churches represent 39% of the worshipping attendance of that conference
- North Carolina Annual Conference also had over 30% of their churches recently disaffiliate

These disaffiliations took place at specially called Annual Conference meetings so these and other annual conferences could see even more numbers leave at their regular summer annual conference meetings. The reality is that churches in the Bible Belt are leaving in large numbers and that should give us pause about the current situation in our denomination. The Mississippi Annual Conference has had several churches already disaffiliate and well over 270 of our churches are currently in the discernment process about disaffiliation.

**Q3.** What does it mean that the North Georgia Annual Conference has “paused” all churches in the disaffiliation process?

**A3.** The cabinet, board of trustees, and appropriate conference leadership recently decided to not accept disaffiliation requests until 2024. They cited concerns about misinformation and defamatory statements by some organizations and individuals and so all North Georgia churches, even those who have properly followed the set process, cannot disaffiliate until 2024. Paragraph 2553 will twilight at the end of 2023 so there may not be a mechanism for those churches to use to exit in the future or, at least, to leave with similar financial terms. The bishop of the Kentucky Annual Conference recently canceled their special called conference for the fall as well.

## VIDEO RESOURCES

**Sarah Kreutziger “Report from Jurisdictional Conference”**

In the section about Doctrinal Concerns we shared about worry over the voting trends at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference and at the other Jurisdictional meetings. Here is a video of a lay delegate reporting to their home church (Munholland UMC in Louisiana) about what occurred at the South Central Jurisdictional Conference meeting. She addresses their bishop elections and shares additional information about the resolutions that were passed at their Jurisdictional Conference. Those resolutions were also passed by an overwhelming majority at our Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, too:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vVvaOA1BwM>

## ARTICLE RESOURCES

**Rev. Maxie Dunnam “Methodist By Choice”**

<https://www.christchurchmemphis.org/umc-blog/letter-from-maxie>

**Rev. Maxie Dunnam “Let Me Say That Again”**

<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2022/10/24/let-me-say-that-again/>



Our mission is to build faithful disciples and to serve Jesus Christ.

The vision of our church is that we are "to be a Family of believers in harmony with God's Word that glorifies God."