**DISCERNMENT F.A.Q.** (as of December 19, 2022)

**GLOSSARY**

**Annual Conference** A regional, organizational unit of The United Methodist Church and the yearly business meeting of that unit, both presided over by a bishop. The business session is composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity. At least one layperson from each pastoral charge is a member. There are 56 annual conferences in the United States and 76 outside the U.S. in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. The conference is a time to review ministry, adopt policy and resolutions, and strengthen spiritual life.

**Apportionment** The share each annual conference or local church pays to support international, national, and regional (annual conference) missions.

**Bishop** An elder (ordained minister) who is elected to the office of bishop. Unlike the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox traditions, 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 the responsibility of the bishops to see that the rules, regulations, and responsibilities developed by the General Conference are understood and effectively carried out. The Greek word for bishop is episcopos, which is the root word for episcopal.

**Book of Discipline** A fundamental book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work, and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends The Book of Discipline, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. Often referred to as The Discipline.

**Denomination** The body of persons or the organization formed around a particular set of religious beliefs or structure or type of government. In the United States, various religious bodies, such as The United Methodist Church, are referred to as denominations.

**Disaffiliation** The act of withdrawing from the United Methodist Church. Currently, the only process for withdrawing is Paragraph 2553.

**Discernment** A prayerful and spiritual process of seeking God’s will for our church. The North Alabama Conference requires a minimum three-month discernment process. The Discernment Team chose Bishop Wallace-Padgett’s Principles for Discernment as the model for our congregation.

Bishop Wallace-Padgett’s Principles for Discernment

*1. Deep Prayer.*

*2. Talk with others who have discerned to withdraw from the UMC. Talk with others who have discerned to continue in the UMC.*

*3. What commitments (if any) will I break to withdraw? To continue?*

*4. What values will I compromise to withdraw? To continue?*

*5. How will withdrawal affect me? How will it affect others in this church? In the North Alabama Conference? Around the world?*

*6. How will continuing affect me? How will it affect others in this church? In the North Alabama Conference? Around the world?*

*7. What will my withdrawal communicate to others in this congregation? In the denomination? Those outside the church?*

*8. What will my continuing communicate to others in this congregation? In this denomination? Those outside the church?*

*9. How divisive is withdrawing?*

*10. Do I have a settled spirit about this decision?*

**District Superintendent** An ordained minister appointed by a bishop to oversee the pastors and local churches in a district. A district superintendent may not serve in that capacity more than six years in any consecutive nine years. No minister may serve more than a total of twelve years as a superintendent. The superintendent carries a wide range of responsibilities for the local churches in the district and throughout the Conference as a whole. Primary responsibilities relate to overseeing the work of the local churches, including presiding at Charge Conferences, and supervising the work of the pastors, including participating with the bishop in the making of appointments.

**Free Methodist Church** A Wesleyan denomination that was founded in 1860. Information about the Free Methodist Church is available at <https://fmcusa.org/>

**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 four years to determine the denomination's future direction. It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.

 **Global Methodist Church** A new Wesleyan denomination that officially launched on May 1, 2022. Information about the Global Methodist Church is available on its website: <https://globalmethodist.org/>

**Paragraph 2553** A piece of legislation passed at the General Conference of 2019 that provides the current pathway for disaffiliation should the local church have theological conflicts or disagreements with the conference. In the North Alabama Conference, Paragraph 2553 is the only process by which churches are disaffiliating at this time.

¶2553 outlines the steps the congregation, the district superintendent, and the conference must take to request, meet the criteria for, and complete disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church.

These provisions require, at a minimum, three things:

1. a decision to disaffiliate by a two-thirds majority of the professing members present at a church conference.
2. the payment in full of two years of that congregation’s apportionment commitment as set by the conference.
3. the payment in full of the congregation’s pro-rata share of the conference’s pension liability, based on a formula approved by the annual conference.

Disaffiliation is complete only when all criteria have been met, payments due are made in full, and the annual conference has approved the motion of disaffiliation.

The process for disaffiliation through Paragraph 2553 expires on December 31, 2023.

**Polity** - The organization and practices of a denomination.

**Professing member** A baptized person who has taken vows declaring the Christian faith. Professing members include all people who have come into membership by profession of faith or by transfer from other churches. Have voting rights in the church.

**Trust Clause**

The United Methodist trust clause is a statement included in legal documents (deeds) declaring that the property and assets of a local church or United Methodist body are held “in trust” for the benefit of the entire denomination. The trust clause ensures that United Methodist property will continue to be used for the purposes of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline provides the wording of the trust clause in a variety of forms, depending on whether the property in question is a place of worship, a parsonage, intended for some other use, or acquired from another United Methodist entity.

The Book of Discipline requires that such a trust clause appear in all deeds of all United Methodist properties. This requirement is a “fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church

Holding property in trust for The United Methodist Church means the “holder” is required to use the property exclusively for the purposes of and to benefit The United Methodist Church. It also means that if, at any point, it becomes clear the holder can no longer or chooses no longer to function as part of The United Methodist Church, it forfeits all rights to continue to hold the property, and the property itself and all other assets transfer to the denomination. In the case of a local church, the property and all assets of the local church would transfer to the annual conference board of trustees.

When a local church closes or leaves the denomination, the future care of any remaining members of the congregation is a primary concern. The district superintendent is responsible to help those who wish to relocate their membership to another United Methodist congregation.

The trust clause affects what happens to the property and assets of the local congregation. Typically, management of the property and assets transfers to the annual conference. The trustees may put the property and assets to another use or sell the property and use the proceeds, along with other remaining assets, to benefit the mission of the conference.

Occasionally, the United Methodist trust clause may not have been included in the written documents that convey property (such as deeds). The absence of the United Methodist trust clause in writing in these documents does not mean there is no trust clause. The Book of Discipline notes that whether the trust clause is explicitly present in these documents or not, any one of the following constitutes an implied trust clause with the same effect:

1. The property was conveyed to The United Methodist Church or one of its predecessor denominations;
2. The name, use, or customs (including liturgy) of The United Methodist Church or its predecessors was used by it at any previous time so that the community recognized it as part of The United Methodist Church, or
3. The congregation at any time accepted an appointment of a pastor by a bishop of The United Methodist Church (or a predecessor denomination) or an assignment of a pastoral leader by a district superintendent of The United Methodist Church (or a predecessor denomination). (See ¶ 2503.6)

The trust clause itself was not altered by the 2019 General Conference. Instead, a time-limited provision, Paragraph 2553, was approved which allows congregations to leave the denomination with their property and assets “for reasons of conscience” related to *changes* made by the 2019 General Conference regarding homosexuality, after meeting certain requirements which are detailed under “Paragraph 2553.”

**“United” Methodists** The Evangelical United Brethren Church was formed in 1946 by the union of The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Church. Both denominations began as churches serving the German population in the early 1800s. By the time of the 1946 union, these churches had broadened their ministries throughout the eastern and north central portions of the United States. Discussions soon began concerning union with The Methodist Church. A plan of union was approved by both denominations. In 1968 The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church united to form The United Methodist Church.

 **“Stay UMC”** A very specific definition is that “Stay UMC” is the name of a grassroots organization of members of the North Alabama Conference who wishes to remain within the United Methodist Church. “Stay UMC” is not involved in conference administration.

Another way the phrase “Stay UMC” is used in a more general sense is to convey the option of remaining in the United Methodist Church. Due to the disaffiliation of many “traditional” congregations, the composition of the United Methodist Church is changing. Remaining in the United Methodist Church will involve moving forward with the changed composition of traditional and progressive congregations.

See FAQ’s below for the question: “Is the United Methodist Church changing?”

**Way Forward** The Commission on a Way Forward was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church. The Commission completed its work and presented a report with three plans at the called 2019 General Conference.

The 2019 General Conference delegates passed by a 438-384 vote the “Traditional Plan,” which retained restrictions against "self-avowed practicing homosexual" clergy and officiating at or hosting same-sex marriage ceremonies and required stricter enforcement for violations of church law.

The “One Church Plan,” which would have left questions of marriage up to individual churches and clergy, and ordination requirements up to conferences, was defeated.

**Wesley Quadrilateral** The phrase which has relatively recently come into use to describe the principal factors that John Wesley believed illuminate the core of the Christian faith for the believer. Wesley did not formulate the succinct statement now commonly referred to as the Wesley Quadrilateral. Building on the Anglican theological tradition, Wesley added a fourth emphasis, experience. The resulting four components or "sides" of the quadrilateral are (1) Scripture, (2) tradition, (3) reason, and (4) experience. For United Methodists, Scripture is considered the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine. Tradition is experience and the witness of development and growth of the faith through the past centuries and in many nations and cultures. Experience is the individual's understanding and appropriating of the faith in the light of his or her own life. Through reason the individual Christian brings to bear on the Christian faith discerning and cogent thought. These four elements taken together bring the individual Christian to a mature and fulfilling understanding of the Christian faith and the required response of worship and service.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. Why does our congregation have to go through a discernment process in order to consider disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church?**

The steps set forth by the North Alabama Conference Board of Trustees for churches to withdraw from The United Methodist Church requires a discernment process guided by the District Superintendent.

**2. What is the Discernment Team doing?**

The Team has met weekly, often multiple times a week for 2 or more hours each session. They are praying together, discussing scripture, discussing protocol, receiving articles & emails from congregants, listening to people from different perspectives, talking with leaders from other United Methodist Churches, discussing ramifications of various decisions, making plans about best practices and processes, and listening for God’s voice in all that they do.

Each member is committed to putting personal feelings and agendas aside to be conduits of information, while also guiding discussions that will help us to hear God and each other with an openness of heart to love each other despite the difficulties of this time in the church’s life. We are guided by Proverbs 3:56 : Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.

**3. Will the Discernment Team determine what Huntsville First will do?**

No. The Discernment Team has no decision-making authority for the congregation. They will bring a recommendation that has been prayerfully discerned to the Church Leadership Team, based on prayer sessions, congregational gatherings, surveys, meeting with church groups, research, discussion with other churches, and other avenues. The Church Leadership Team is the decision-making body of the church and will make the decision regarding how the church utilizes the information /recommendation provided by the Discernment Team.

**4. How will the voices of Huntsville First’s members be heard?**

The Discernment Team is committed to communicate with as many different people as possible in as many ways as possible. At this time, the DT has organized prayer sessions, congregational gatherings, surveys, offered meetings with church groups, emailed, mailed, reached out to Youth Director to meet with youth, Adult Ministries Director to offer information to small group & Sunday School leaders, have been introduced at church services, started a dedicated webpage, dedicated email address, and have fielded hundreds of emails from church members. All members have conducted research with others who have served on Discernment teams in North Alabama and Birmingham, interviewed pastors, and joined scores of social media pages on all sides of the issues at hand.

Below is a brief timeline of the steps our church has taken to address our denominational issues and engage our members in the process:

Summer 2022: All professing members were mailed and emailed a multiple page Discernment book and 6 videos by our clergy introducing the issues at hand as well as data on the Discernment process provided by the United Methodist Church for churches wishing to Disaffiliate from the UMC while still retaining their church buildings. Church leaders also conducted multiple congregational sessions to discuss the issues personally and to answer questions of church members.

August 2022: Church Leadership Team voted (15 – 12) to enter period of Discernment on August 8, 2022.

September 2022: A Discernment Team was assembled to begin the process of Discerning next steps for Huntsville First. The first meeting on September 27, 2022, involved a discussion of the process, evaluation of the deadlines/requirements established by the North Alabama Conference, and preparation for a meeting with the District Superintendent.

October 2022: The Discernment Team met with Tom Parrish, our District Superintendent on October 17, 2022. The Team presented a model for discernment and timeline to the DS and it was approved. Planning meetings continued, an introductory announcement was made at each service, and the Discernment Team webpage was added to the website with photos of the Discernment Team members.

November 2022: The first Discernment mailer was sent to all professing members detailing what Discernment is and offering to begin our process with a month of prayer. The same mailer was posted to the webpage on church website. Two prayer sessions were held in the chapel with a short survey questionnaire provided at each session. Meetings generally revolved around written communication with the congregation as well as how the DT wanted to structure January meetings, dates that needed to be secured, and how to reach congregants with information while still soliciting feedback from all.

The team interviewed a former HFUMC member who is on Discernment Team of a Birmingham area church to compare experiences, glean thoughts, and gather information.

December 2022: The second Discernment mailer was sent to all professing members, detailing a new prayer plan for December, two more Prayer Meetings in the chapel, as well as dates for our January Congregational meetings. A letter was emailed to leaders of small group leaders, ministries, and Sunday School classes. Letter was also emailed to the congregation in addition to mailed copies and being posted to webpage. Team began scheduling small group listening sessions for January. Survey boxes with survey cards were placed throughout both church buildings and responses are being compiled for future reference.

Posters detailing upcoming meetings with QR code to online version of the survey were posted throughout the church buildings.

This Glossary and FAQ’s document has been emailed to church members and posted on our church website.

**A general timeline for the first congregational meetings is provided below:**

**January 8, 2023** (Sun) at 3:00 – First Congregational Session

**January 17, 2023** (Tues) at 6:00 – Second Congregational Session

**January 22, 2023** (Sun) at 3:00 – Third Congregational Session

**5. Will the congregation take a church-wide vote following the Discernment Team’s recommendation to the Church Leadership Team?**

That will depend both on what the Discernment Team’s recommendation is and whether or not the Church Leadership Team approves or rejects the recommendation. Each of the following is a possible scenario once the Discernment Team’s recommendation is given to the Church Council for consideration.

a)  SCENARIO 1: The Discernment Team recommends to the Church Leadership Team that Huntsville First UMC should remain a local congregation of the United Methodist Church.

In the event of this scenario, should the Church Leadership Team vote to accept the Discernment Team’s recommendation for Huntsville First UMC to remain a local congregation of the United Methodist Church, then a church-wide vote would not be necessary and Huntsville First UMC would remain a local congregation of the United Methodist Church.

OR, the Church Leadership Team could vote to reject the Discernment Team’s recommendation for Huntsville First UMC to remain a local congregation of the United Methodist Church, which would then require a church-wide vote to be scheduled for a later date to determine whether or not Huntsville First UMC would remain a local congregation of the United Methodist Church or disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. \*See note about voting requirements below.

b)  SCENARIO 2: The Discernment Team recommends to the Church Leadership Team that Huntsville First UMC should disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and become an independent congregation or join another expression of Methodism.

In the event of this scenario, should the Church Leadership Team vote to accept the Discernment Team’s recommendation, then a vote of the entire congregation would be scheduled for a later date to determine whether or not Huntsville First UMC would disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. \*See note about voting requirements below.

OR, should the Church Leadership Team vote to reject the Discernment Team’s recommendation for disaffiliation, then Huntsville First UMC would remain a United Methodist congregation and a church-wide vote would not be necessary.

It is important to note that church-wide votes are only required by local congregations when a church is seeking to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church. If the elected leadership of the local church (Church Leadership Team) votes in favor of a recommendation to remain a United Methodist Congregation, then a church-wide vote is not necessary as no change is being made.

\*NOTE: If ANY Vote is taken, it takes a super majority to “win” the vote. Therefore, it takes 66.7% for a majority to rule. If the church calls for a vote but the results are 65%, that is not enough to satisfy the UMC’s Paragraph 2553 guideline to disaffiliate.

**6. How will the Discernment Team share the information with the congregation as a whole?**

The Discernment Team remains committed to providing the congregation with up-to-date, relevant, and clear information as it becomes available. We remain committed to this along with full transparency throughout the discernment process.

The aim of the Discernment Team is to reach as many people using as many different avenues as possible.

Regarding the data that we gather during this process, all gleanings will be posted in our written recommendation to the Church Leadership Team at the end of the process with Congregational Meeting videos posted online. We will be assessing statements made during the sessions and survey responses according to the following categories (below) created by a three-member team of United Methodists. The categories represent a progressive viewpoint, a centrist viewpoint and a traditionalist viewpoint. While the statements defining the categories below do not capture the full nuance of how all individuals read, understand, and interpret Holy Scripture, they are helpful in providing United Methodists some context as to how we individually interact with Holy Scripture.

As we get closer to January Congregational meetings, we strongly encourage you to read the statements aligned with each category below and prayerfully consider which one of these bests describes how you read, understand and interpret the Gospel story. Again, these do not capture all the nuances perfectly so please prayerfully consider which one *most closely* describes you and how you approach scripture.

The categories are as follows:

* Progressive Non-Compatibilists: “If others do not share my progressive view of this issue/scripture, I do not know if we can be in the same church. The practices and policies of every church in the denomination should align with my interpretation of scripture.”
* Progressive Compatibilists: “If others can respect different views, including my progressive view of this issue/scripture, we can be in the same church. I can be in a denomination where the practices and policies of other churches may reflect different interpretations of scripture.”
* Traditional Compatibilists: “If others can respect different views, including my traditional view of this issue/scripture, we can be in the same church. I can be in a denomination where the practices and policies of other churches may reflect different interpretations of scripture.”
* Traditional Non-Compatibilists: “If others do not share my traditional view of this issue/scripture, I do not know if we can be in the same church. The practices and policies of every church in the denomination should align with my interpretation of scripture.”

**7. Isn’t the division all about LGBTQ+ full inclusion?**

No. While the issue of LGBTQ+ inclusion is often in the headlines, this division has been building since the creation of the United Methodist Church.  The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, and in the first General Conference in 1972, struggles over power and control quickly became evident. These struggles have continued throughout our existence. Today, some would add concern about Biblical interpretation and theology to the conflicts. Others have concern about what the UMC will look like “post-separation,” both theologically, financially, and practically.

**8. Is the United Methodist Church changing?**

Many congregations who hold predominately traditional views have disaffiliated from the UMC using Paragraph 2553. The overall composition of the UMC is changing.

Although no changes have been made to the United Methodist Book of Discipline after the 2019 General Conference, it is reasonable to expect that the Book of Discipline will be changed at a post-separation General Conference.

During Nov. 2-4, 2022, all five U.S. regions of the United Methodist Church held Jurisdictional Conferences. Our conference, the Southeastern Jurisdiction Conference, and the other four jurisdictional conferences approved three resolutions that are very similar.

While the resolutions' language varied depending on the jurisdiction, the approved resolutions covered the following three issues:

* Endorsement for the Christmas Covenant global regionalization proposal written by international United Methodists, aiming toward greater contextual autonomy for non-U.S. regions; reducing the U.S.-centric nature of General Conference; and establishing the U.S. church as a region along with other geographic areas.
* Encouragement for delegates to work toward full inclusion for LGBTQ persons in the UMC.
* Requests for those who plan to leave the denomination to remove themselves from any further UMC leadership roles.

**9. Is there a cost IF our church disaffiliates from the UMC?**

Yes.  In the North Alabama Conference, a disaffiliating church must pay its share of the Conference’s adjusted average *market*-based unfunded pension liability, any unpaid apportionments for the prior year, projected unpaid apportionments for the current year, unpaid clergy benefit balances, and the repayment of any grant funds received from the Conference since 2017. Our church stays current with paying our apportionments to the North Alabama Conference.

The North Alabama Conference’s market-based unfunded pension liability is calculated by Wespath Benefits and Investments and is valid for 3 months. The Conference’s *average* market-based unfunded pension liability is calculated on a quarterly basis. The Conference’s average market-based unfunded pension liability is then adjusted (reduced) by certain reserve funds which will vary each quarter based on market conditions. Therefore, the amount of HFUMC’s share of the unfunded pension liability is also calculated quarterly and would be determined by the calendar quarter in which a disaffiliation vote occurs.

The total amount that would be due from our church in the event of disaffiliation calculated as of October 1, 2022, was $410,946. Again, this total is subject to change and will vary primarily based on how far in the year a disaffiliation occurs.

The total due to the North Alabama Conference does NOT include other costs that would be associated with a disaffiliation. Additional costs include the following: legal and closing fees for changing documents related to the ownership of our property and related debt refinancing; legal and accounting costs associated with changing our legal name, filings with IRS and Alabama Secretary of State, insurance, and other contracts, costs of changing the church name on signs and the church van, and other similar costs.

**10. What can I do to be helpful to the Discernment Team?**

Several things:

a) Pray for the Discernment Team as a group, and each individual on the team.

b) Pray for our church, our pastors, our staff, and each other, praying that we may have the wisdom and courage to discern and be who God is calling us to be. And that, despite great conflict, we can love one another and do it WELL.

c) Become informed, not just by groups that you agree with, but truly informed, recognizing that human error and sin in the form of gossip and judgment often create pain and division.

d) Pray for our LGBTQ members and their families, because they are in a place of feeling like the church is voting on whether they are welcome in this church.

e) Pray for our traditional members and their families, because they are in a place of frustration with the UMC and feeling like they may not be welcome in the post-separation UMC.

f) Be open to listening to people who think differently than you. This is how we grow in our understanding and community with one another. The ability to respect people who think differently than we do is part of what makes a person and church strong and wise. As we read in Proverbs 27.17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Let’s use this time to grow in faith rather than settling down with only like-minded individuals. Sometimes a challenge to our thinking broadens our understanding and brings us closer to Christ through one another.

g) Pray for unity, not uniformity.

h) Pray that we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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**North Alabama Conference FAQs**

**1. Are many churches in the North Alabama Conference leaving the UMC?**

There are many churches in the discernment process but being in the discernment process does not necessarily mean a church is leaving the UMC.

A Called Special Session of the North Alabama Conference was held on December 10, 2022, to process requests from congregations for disaffiliation. 198 congregations from the North Alabama Conference disaffiliated. 18 disaffiliating congregations were from the Northeast District including Cove, Asbury, and Latham in Huntsville. Holmes Street UMC voted to remain UMC. Monte Sano, Aldersgate, and Valley have not entered a discernment period at all.

 Another Called Special Session of the North Alabama Conference has been set for May 11, 2023, to process additional requests from congregations at that time, and a third special session could be called prior to the expiration of Discipline ¶2553 on December 31, 2023.

**2. Are all the churches that are leaving joining the Global Methodist Church?**

No. Some are joining other expressions of Methodism and some are becoming independent churches. Below are links to other expressions of Methodism and a comparison chart compiled by Tom Lambrecht with *Good News Magazine.*

Global Methodist Church – [globalmethodist.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fglobalmethodist.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3slXI-ucMZRLEF2NptuPCx_b3eB2F2ma4IR6PBmkq_wm_a4iNcGoKk6Yk&h=AT2MaTEwxkPmVEzLbzMT9JyS1G1z-xLkatNpLOPjos-kqliRTtCSP33aNzb0SkeR50pqwhR1rjvWC5ZfaBxf-o7pGdebwdD24kcAfw-WJI71fTYFa6wdTQ5jS-90ioaBvg24Va5MQb_ckKvxMUv2G6IUmA&__tn__=-UK-y-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1MPuuKbvpu0_RtAIn65yKOEfAk7yKz4SLLS0pAAZGyzZB_bS6RLIUqYoHW0WgvSKjBfhIKZiHduhPQswVWvPca6EEcYm0SL9Po7un1R5cL9199ts1d4yT3aLK8VQnpvrKJvC3DWn02DsIauAX6j2f-2uTCLZqZYRIyZNxlLxJIIX7L8ezBc1Npa4LFeoA)

Free Methodist Church – [fmcusa.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Ffmcusa.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR2J4ix7kUn_wErx_mok381TDm7qvAKsRlOfudyrP-bMzEKUeYXGhPA_Wzo&h=AT02Mgbh69nQ2Oo9iG3qmSY7xZODTyLkO7vchJipd42O4MVz8vQaGXAvjUgE9D1TKCOkrd2ZaMmIZ-JZiEqOLpblsApt61WMZ_Ie5eF5BX04lfDL1klKcujG3JhA22XfipkP4NlgbDarurUD8JmWcPq4KQ&__tn__=-UK-y-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1MPuuKbvpu0_RtAIn65yKOEfAk7yKz4SLLS0pAAZGyzZB_bS6RLIUqYoHW0WgvSKjBfhIKZiHduhPQswVWvPca6EEcYm0SL9Po7un1R5cL9199ts1d4yT3aLK8VQnpvrKJvC3DWn02DsIauAX6j2f-2uTCLZqZYRIyZNxlLxJIIX7L8ezBc1Npa4LFeoA)

Wesleyan Church – [Wesleyan.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2FWesleyan.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR0iZwyPOZ280ZTtnyc7eNqK_vdFwJK042SifoF4wi8ekkL2SsesN3q4lyA&h=AT2CKcky_ZtsN-pw60TPhdOAmst98ZXN_tkYTDl8FpGPID4hebVe2PZVzZauRzcLFiJOcdjKEJ60PPyV1K46SgL0Aw74Lyv9GkCHuGqh_kH6ey39QLcyi88hZrV-dK2lvrO1DUG4jKRF7_tp1ObEKK_SEA&__tn__=-UK-y-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1MPuuKbvpu0_RtAIn65yKOEfAk7yKz4SLLS0pAAZGyzZB_bS6RLIUqYoHW0WgvSKjBfhIKZiHduhPQswVWvPca6EEcYm0SL9Po7un1R5cL9199ts1d4yT3aLK8VQnpvrKJvC3DWn02DsIauAX6j2f-2uTCLZqZYRIyZNxlLxJIIX7L8ezBc1Npa4LFeoA)

Church of the Nazarene – [Nazarene.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2FNazarene.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR1Rmdp_4rOC7S4PgBJ897YnIJBxEGGjbU6y4SzcI1tdBL7Ewvf8VZQ-LKw&h=AT1Re2Pk0HdNrJPo_OXLuTLlcbLWVPie_nGBK8UIGSx1wqtZV84ruP2vB4hUGFNUXVOhwPaQ1FfoLTafhksX-0Jqwgdn-6x30s6bItSGwJd1rWIe_EQ3XEm7BI9UPlEkHGriB1i7TH5pZ-xaHx2FavPf8g&__tn__=-UK-y-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1MPuuKbvpu0_RtAIn65yKOEfAk7yKz4SLLS0pAAZGyzZB_bS6RLIUqYoHW0WgvSKjBfhIKZiHduhPQswVWvPca6EEcYm0SL9Po7un1R5cL9199ts1d4yT3aLK8VQnpvrKJvC3DWn02DsIauAX6j2f-2uTCLZqZYRIyZNxlLxJIIX7L8ezBc1Npa4LFeoA)

Congregational Methodist Church – [cm-church.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fcm-church.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3n_B1l8Ovk1PvH3HJEmwv_Tid2_Px5wP_4XupYa_HzGE_R46QpTSJ4Olk&h=AT0piypydNkF_HUBlYQcjwWPm8qAI0MYb5rtNNJX93b6K0tdS8-2rHbYAbR_qvgQPBBtZwl5eoG19DBn0VQRHsyXu13x8iQWheVOBkV-zos4dqsmrZzESdaRomkIISMLiAZXIG8g-ko8-Lpcuellwe3Gpw&__tn__=-UK-y-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1MPuuKbvpu0_RtAIn65yKOEfAk7yKz4SLLS0pAAZGyzZB_bS6RLIUqYoHW0WgvSKjBfhIKZiHduhPQswVWvPca6EEcYm0SL9Po7un1R5cL9199ts1d4yT3aLK8VQnpvrKJvC3DWn02DsIauAX6j2f-2uTCLZqZYRIyZNxlLxJIIX7L8ezBc1Npa4LFeoA)

​​​​​​​A chart form of the above comparisons is available HERE: [https://tomlambrecht.goodnewsmag.org/wesleyan-methodist.../](https://tomlambrecht.goodnewsmag.org/wesleyan-methodist-denominational-comparison-chart/?fbclid=IwAR24bu0DYi9dk-F-iOQHD7kgndbk1oQE7wzS7DNSDcifmV4bUxd0kB6tHF8)

**3. What decisions are being made within the North Alabama Conference at this time to insure a healthy environment for all churches?**

The North Alabama Conference has committed to the following leading up to the 2024 General Conference:

a) We continue to follow our polity as defined in the Book of Discipline.

b) We will not demonize one another over differing beliefs.

c) We will never seek to punish or coerce, financially or otherwise, for a spirit-led decision to disaffiliate or remain.

d) We will respect existing convictions and views, including during the appointment process.

Here is a video that you may find helpful:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCW60ZZ8P2E>

**4. What can I do IF our congregation votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and I want to remain a United Methodist?**

If our congregation votes to disaffiliate and you wish to remain with the United Methodist Church, the North Alabama Conference is excited to continue in ministry with you.

There are two ways you can remain a United Methodist in North Alabama if our church disaffiliates:

1. You may transfer your membership to another local United Methodist Church.
2. You may transfer your membership to the Northeast District’s Membership Roll.

Additionally, the Conference Leadership Team is actively developing plans to start new congregations and ministries in areas where current United Methodist congregations vote to leave the denomination. These will include new churches, house churches, fresh expressions and more.

You may visit [www.umcna.org/umc-membership](https://www.umcna.org/umc-membership)  for more information.

**5. What happens IF our pastor decides to leave The United Methodist Church, but our congregation wishes to continue as a United Methodist church?**

The Bishop will appoint a new pastor to our congregation.

**6. What happens IF our congregation votes to disaffiliate from the UMC, but our pastor wants to remain in The United Methodist Church?**

Once our congregation’s disaffiliation is complete, we will no longer be appointed a pastor by the North Alabama Conference. Our pastor(s) will receive a new appointment and it will be up to our congregation to secure our congregation’s pastoral leadership. If our church decides to unite with a different denomination, we will work with the leaders of that denomination to determine pastoral leadership.

**The United Methodist Church worldwide FAQs**

What is listed below is from an article entitled, Is the United Methodist Church Really…from the UMC.org website regarding The United Methodist Church worldwide…

**Is the United Methodist Church Really….**

**1. Splitting at this time?**

No. The term “split” applies when there is a negotiated agreement within the denomination to divide assets and resources. No such agreement has been made in The United Methodist Church. The earliest point at which such an agreement could be made would be at the next General Conference to be held in 2024.

A more accurate term, as suggested by the Rev. William Lawrence, retired dean of Perkins School of Theology and former member of the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, is “[splintering](https://www.umnews.org/en/news/the-church-is-splintering-not-splitting).” What is happening is that some traditionalist leaders have decided to create their own denomination (the Global Methodist Church). Leaders of that denomination and other unofficial advocacy groups, such as the [Wesleyan Covenant Association](https://wesleyancovenant.org/), which created it, are encouraging like-minded United Methodist congregations and clergy to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join their denomination instead.

**2. Asking traditionalists to leave the denomination?**

No. The requests for disaffiliations are coming largely from traditionalists. Keith Boyette, former president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and now leader of the Global Methodist Church, describes the reasons he and other leaders are asking traditionalists to leave [beginning at 13:32 in this video](https://www.umnews.org/en/news/um-news-to-interview-protocol-developers).

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**3. About to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus?**

Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?
No. All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, more specifically in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These cannot be altered without a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths aggregate approval of all annual conferences of The United Methodist Church worldwide. There is no basis to conclude such majorities can be achieved to alter the Articles and Confession for any reason.

Here is what the Articles and Confession say on these matters.

Virgin Birth and Divinity of Jesus
Articles of Religion, Article II:

“The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.”

Confession of Faith, Article II:

“We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Resurrection of Jesus Christ:
Articles of Religion, Article III:

“Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.

Confession of Faith, Article II:

"Jesus Christ... was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return."

Salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ
Articles of Religion, Article IX:

“We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith.”

Confession of Faith, Article IX:

“We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**4. Intending to change the Bible?**

No. The United Methodist Church has no official translation of the Bible and has never sought to alter the Bible at all. United Methodists have always had a variety of views about how to interpret specific passages of Scripture and likely always will.

**5. Allowing congregations that exit the denomination to continue to offer the same pension and health benefits programs to their clergy and staff?**

No. The Book of Discipline does not permit non-UMC entities to be plan sponsors of the Clergy Retirement Security Program. Only a General Conference can change this. Churches that disaffiliate will face changes to the benefits they can offer their clergy. Individual congregations and clergy that join the Global Methodist Church (GMC) will be eligible to participate in a retirement plan offered by the GMC, which will be a Wespath defined-contribution retirement plan similar to a United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP).

Elders and deacons who withdraw under Discipline ¶360 will have all assets accrued in CRSP and previous programs in which they may have participated (defined benefit and defined contribution) converted into a cash equivalent and placed into their United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP). Future retirement plan contributions may be made to the new retirement plan described above which, like UMPIP, is a personal retirement account subject to the effects of the stock market and other investments on its value.

Nor, at this time, is it possible for individual congregations (whether in the Global Methodist Church or in the UMC) to be plan sponsors for the HealthFlex health insurance programs Wespath offers unless a congregation has more than 50 eligible employees. United Methodist annual conferences are the plan sponsors for congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees. This means individual congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees currently participating in these programs that exit The United Methodist Church at this time can no longer offer these benefits to their clergy and employees effective with the date of disaffiliation. Clergy currently covered by HealthFlex, whether they disaffiliate or not, are eligible to continue on the health insurance plan by paying 100% of the costs themselves for up to 18 months. At that point, the HealthFlex plan is no longer available to them. Individual congregations and clergy who join the Global Methodist Church may participate in the health benefits selected by the Global Methodist Church, which may include HealthFlex.