



**Frequently Asked Questions about “The Current Landscape
of the United Methodist Church and Options for the Future”
April 2022**

The purpose of this document is to provide clear answers for some of the questions that may be asked following the video and slide presentation from Bishop Mueller

1. Why is there suddenly so much talk about division in the United Methodist Church? What are the reasons that have led to it happening?

- It may seem sudden, but the United Methodist Church has been building towards this moment for 50 years because of significant differences related to the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons in the life of the United Methodist Church.
- The recent cancellation of the rescheduled 2020 General Conference means neither the agreed-upon separation agreement entitled “Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation” that had been negotiated to provide an easy and orderly exit for traditionalists nor any other plan that might be adopted can be implemented until after the 2024 General Conference. With the announced May 1 formation of the Global Methodist Church, some congregations are unwilling to wait any longer to exit the denomination.
- While the presenting issue is whether homosexuality is compatible with Christian teaching, and LGBTQIA+ individuals should be married or ordained, the underlying issue revolves around the interpretation of Scripture, theological differences and concerns about the enforcement of *The Book of Discipline*.

2. I have heard that every congregation in the Arkansas Conference will be required to vote whether to remain in the United Methodist Church or leave by May 1, 2022. Is this true?

- This rumor is simply not true - there is no required vote.

3. In the presentation, Bishop Mueller speaks about having ‘a heart of peace’. What does he mean and why is this important?

- United Methodists are not involved in warfare, but rather are engaged in a time of discernment.
- Embracing ‘a heart of peace’ assumes the best intentions of others, avoids the temptation to attack those with differing opinions, and respects the decisions that congregations and individuals make about their futures. You freely state why you love the United Methodist Church and want to stay or explain why you feel compelled for reasons of conscience to leave. You freely provide information if asked.



- 'A heart of peace' avoids negative, hurtful or divisive statements in public, in the media or on social media that can harm colleagues and United Methodists throughout our state. It does not seek to actively recruit individuals and congregations to leave or remain in the denomination.
- Maintaining 'a heart of peace' enables us to love like Jesus loves, even in the midst of this difficult season. It is also important because people are watching. What will they conclude about Jesus as they watch how we treat each other in his name?

4. How does all of this affect my family and my local church?

- It depends. Nothing may change or there could be a great deal that changes.
- Situations will vary from congregation to congregation and family to family.
- As churches discern their future, some may choose to leave, but all will continue to carry out their mission.

5. What happens if my church leaves, but I choose to remain part of the United Methodist Church?

- Members who disagree with a decision of their congregation to disaffiliate and wish to remain United Methodist will be cared for and offered an opportunity by their District Superintendent to transfer their membership to another United Methodist congregation. In some instances, new United Methodist communities of faith could possibly be planted.

6. What options does my church have right now?

- There are three choices available right now:
 - Do nothing and remain in the UMC - this the default and the one the majority of congregations will likely choose.
 - Wait to see what happens at the General Conference in 2024.
 - Use ¶2553 from the Book of Discipline to disaffiliate.

7. Why are these the only three options currently available?

- They are the options available under the current *Book Of Discipline* since the legislation that was proposed to implement a separation agreement never had the chance to be enacted because General Conference was postponed.

8. Are there other options that might become available in the near future that congregations can use to exit the United Methodist Church?

- ¶2548.2 of the Book of Discipline, which allows a congregation to transfer to a Pan-Methodist or other evangelical denomination, is being explored and will be considered at this June's Arkansas Annual Conference.
- The Judicial Council is reviewing whether individual Annual Conferences have the right to vote to leave the United Methodist Church.



9. What is “disaffiliation” and how does it work?

- Disaffiliation is a process described in ¶2553 of the Book of Discipline that allows a congregation to leave The United Methodist Church under very limited circumstances, namely: “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of The Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.”
- The choice by a local church to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church must be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to its expiration on December 31, 2023.
- Whether or not to pursue disaffiliation is ultimately up to the professing members of the local church. The initial request to pursue disaffiliation must come from the appropriate leadership body of the church. After a minimum three-month period of discernment, which is open to all members of the local church, the leadership will discern whether it is appropriate to hold a church conference (¶248) during which two-thirds of the professing members present must vote in favor of disaffiliation. Finally, a simple majority of members present and voting at a regular or called session of the Arkansas Annual Conference is needed for final ratification of the disaffiliation.
- While disaffiliation, as outlined in ¶2553, is a fair and straightforward process, there are some significant financial responsibilities associated with it. Although the actual costs will differ for each local church and circumstance, they will include the following:
 - Payment of any unpaid conference tithe for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of conference tithe.
 - Actual costs for transfer of title or other legal work.
 - Remaining clergy salary support for the current appointive year (if applicable).
 - An amount equal to the local church’s pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference as determined by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits.
 - Repayment of any district or annual conference grants made in the past ten years, excluding benevolence grants.
 - For a specific financial liability calculation for any local church, the church Trustee Chairperson, Church Council Chairperson or Pastor should contact Todd Burris the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services at tburris@arumc.org or (501) 324-8024.
 - You may click [here](#) if you want a more detailed FAQ about the disaffiliation process.



10. What is going to happen to our pastor?

- The choice of the church does not dictate the choice of the pastor. He or she may choose a different path than the church.
- If your church decides to stay and your pastor wishes to remain in the United Methodist Church, nothing changes. If your church chooses to remain, but your pastor wishes to change denominations, he or she will have to follow the disciplinary process for withdrawing. If your church decides it wants to disaffiliate and your pastor wishes to remain in the denomination, there are two possibilities. Elders are guaranteed an appointment, and so will be appointed to a church. Although local pastors are not guaranteed an appointment, the Appointive Cabinet will still work diligently to find a suitable appointment for them.

11. How will the Appointive Cabinet make sure we have a pastor who is the appropriate match for us in the midst of all that is going on?

- All Arkansas United Methodist Churches will continue to receive pastors.
- The Appointive Cabinet will continue to make every attempt to match mission field and appointment.

12. Will the 2024 General Conference be the postponed 2020 General Conference or the regularly scheduled General Conference that meets every four years? Why does it matter?

- This has not yet been determined and may well need to be decided by the Judicial Council. The most significant issue arising from this is whether new delegates need to be elected or those previously elected for the 2020 General Conference will be entitled to serve.

13. Will the South Central Jurisdictional Conference be held this year to elect and assign new bishops?

- This is in the hands of the Judicial Council and is currently unknown.

14. Will those congregations and clergy that have stated they intend to disaffiliate be allowed to participate in this year's Arkansas Annual Conference?

- Yes. These congregations and clergy remain members of the United Methodist Church until the congregations disaffiliate and pastors surrender their credentials and withdraw from the denomination.

15. Will there be any vote for any local church to disaffiliate during this year's Arkansas Annual Conference?

- No. No church will have met the time requirements before the 2022 Annual Conference.



16. Are there currently any proposals for the Arkansas Annual Conference to leave the United Methodist Church?

- No.

17. What resources are available to help my church if it is significantly divided?

- Contact your District Superintendent.

18. How can I find a list of the churches that have entered the disaffiliation process?

- Contact your District Superintendent.

19. What if I have questions that are not addressed in the video, presentation or this document?

- Contact your District Superintendent.