

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities, and the world.



Important Information About the Church Conference to Consider Disaffiliation

If a District Superintendent certifies that a local church has properly completed the minimum three-month discernment process concerning whether or not to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, the District Superintendent will authorize the church to hold a church conference for the sole purpose of presenting for consideration a single non amendable motion:

For reasons of conscience around issues of human sexuality we, the _____ United Methodist Church, under the authority of ¶2553 of The 2016 Book of Discipline, vote to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, and we authorize the church's Board of Trustees to act on the church's behalf to complete and implement the disaffiliation agreement with the Arkansas Conference Board of Trustees.

The District Superintendent will serve as the Presiding Elder of the conference.

Only the professing members of the church, the appointed pastor, any retired ordained ministers, retired diaconal ministers, or clergy in extension ministry who have elected to hold their charge conference membership in the particular church, and deacons who have named this charge conference their secondary appointment will be allowed to speak during the conference or to participate in the vote. Only these persons may vote in this Church Conference. Others in attendance may observe but may not speak or vote.

The vote will be taken by written ballot, using a ballot printed on colored paper and provided by the Arkansas Conference.

A letter from the District Superintendent to the congregation sharing the date and purpose of the church conference will be distributed by the pastor with the congregation as soon as possible and in as many ways as possible (email, postal mail, online, etc) to make sure everyone is given proper notice. By disciplinary requirement, at least ten days notice of the conference must be given.

The pastor will provide to the District Superintendent the names of the recording secretary and those who will be counting ballots and other votes if needed. The pastor will be responsible for eliciting the help of two ballot counters for each 75 persons anticipated to attend. These persons must not be related to one another and should represent, as best as can be determined, both those in favor of disaffiliation and those in favor of staying United Methodist. In addition to counting ballots these persons will be asked to oversee the registration and ballot distribution in order to help all in attendance feel that the church conference is being conducted by a fair and transparent process.

Before any vote is taken there will be an opportunity for one summary presentation in favor of disaffiliation and one summary presentation in favor of remaining United Methodist. These presentations may be up to 15 minutes each, and must be given by one of the professing members of the church. While it is the pastor's responsibility to furnish the district superintendent with the names and contact information of the two persons who will give these presentations, the DS will then contact them to make sure they understand what is being asked of them and are willing to make the presentations. If the DS senses any concern on their part the DS will have follow-up conversation with the pastor.

The local church will be required to supply the District Superintendent with a complete roster of the professing members and all clergy, active or retired, who relate to that local church as their Charge Conference, to be used to record attendance. In addition, the pastor will have at the registration table a list of all persons who have been removed by charge conference action in the past ten years. This list may be very helpful in resolving disputes if persons show up

claiming to be members but whose names do not show up on the membership list. The District Superintendent will have the final decision on who may vote if any disputes arise.

Tables will be set up where people can record their attendance and receive nametags, and have persons assigned to check their attendance against the roster of professing members.

After the conference the District Superintendent will remain to be available for conversation with those who might wish to speak with him or her, especially those who wish to remain in the UMC if the vote is to disaffiliate.