RESOLUTION 2022 – 8

RESOLUTION to the 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSION Relating to Clarity and Transparency for Congregations Transferring or Disaffiliating in the Eastern PA Conference

Presented by: Rev. Nelson Alleman

WHEREAS, The 2019 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist church contains options for a local church to either transfer or disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church: 1) Paragraph 2548.2 relating to release of the trust clause to join a church “represented in the Pan-Methodist Commission or another evangelical denomination;” or 2) Paragraph 2553 which grants the limited right, originally until December 31, 2023, for United Methodist congregations to disaffiliate for reasons of conscience over the practice of ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals; and

WHEREAS, the *Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace through Separation* offers a proposal to restructure the United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences, and allow each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect for every person; and

WHEREAS, prolonged uncertainty regarding if and when General Conference will meet, and whether the Protocol will be enacted, as well as limited information about requirements in Eastern PA Conference for congregations desiring to transfer or disaffiliate continues to create anxiety and distraction in United Methodist congregations; and

WHEREAS, clarity and transparency about transfer and disaffiliation process and requirements will reduce anxiety and empower local churches to make informed decisions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2022 Session of the Eastern PA Conference directs the Board of Trustees of the Annual Conference and all officials of the Annual Conference to be governed by the following principles, policies and processes in engaging congregations desiring to transfer to “one of the other denominations represented in the Pan-Methodist Commission or to another evangelical denomination” (Paragraph 2548.2), or to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provision 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” (Paragraph 2553).

1. Congregations transferring to one of the denominations represented in the Pan-Methodist Commission or other evangelical church may, at their sole discretion, choose to transfer under the provisions of Paragraph 2548.2.
2. The EPA Conference recognizes both the Liberation Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church, once they are formally launched, as legitimate denominations to receive transfers under the terms of Par. 2548.2.
3. Only congregations disaffiliating to an independent status shall be required to use the provisions of Paragraph 2553.
4. Any required payments for unfunded pension liability shall be based on Wespath calculations of the aggregate unfunded liability of the Annual Conference. Allocation of a proportional share of that liability to the local church shall be determined using the Eastern PA Conference apportionment formula.
5. Eastern PA Conference Trustees and officials shall adhere to the following policies in administering Paragraph 2548.2, which states:

“With the consent of the presiding bishop and of a majority of the district superintendents and of the district board of church location and building and at the request of the charge conference or of a meeting of the membership of the local church, where required by local law, and in accordance with said law, the annual conference may instruct and direct the board of trustees of a local church to deed church property to one of the other denominations represented in the Pan-Methodist Commission or to another evangelical denomination under an allocation, exchange of property, or comity agreement, provided that such agreement shall have been committed to writing and signed and approved by the duly qualified and authorized representatives of both parties concerned.” (United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2019);

1. Any allocation, exchange of property, or comity agreement shall include the following requirements. No additional sums shall be required.
2. The local church retains all its assets and liabilities.
3. The local church shall be current in apportionments for the period of 12 months preceding disaffiliation. Payment of unpaid amounts for the 12 months preceding transfer shall be made preceding the effective date of the transfer. All other past-due apportionments from periods previous to those 12 months shall be forgiven.
4. The local church shall repay previously documented loans from the Annual Conference.
5. The local church shall either remain under Wespath and carry its unfunded liability forward with it, or repay the Eastern PA Conference for the local church’s proportional share of the unfunded liability. The liability shall include unfunded obligations related to The United Methodist Church’s pre-1982 pension plan, the Ministerial Pension Plan, and/or the Clergy Retirement Security Program.
6. Payment of any unpaid sums shall be made by the local church prior to the date of separation/transfer.
7. No additional sums will be required to obtain release of all the congregation’s property and assets from the trust clause.
8. The local church shall make the decision to transfer under 2548.2 at a charge conference or a church conference duly called according to the provisions of The Book of Discipline. The Church Council (or its equivalent) shall determine whether a charge conference or church conference is called, and whether a simple majority or a two-thirds supermajority shall be required for approval of the motion to transfer.
   1. The District Superintendent, with the consent of the Bishop and a majority of the district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, shall approve the request of the Church Council, and shall preside or choose another elder to preside at a charge conference or a church conference, to take place no later than sixty (60) days after the request by the Church Council is made.
   2. The Annual Conference session immediately following the charge or church conference shall approve the transfer request by a simple majority and immediately direct the board of trustees of the local church to deed its property to the transfer-receiving denomination. Any additional terms of transfer of the receiving denomination shall be the responsibility of that body.
9. The Eastern PA Conference Trustees and officials shall adhere to the following policies in administering Paragraph 2553:
   1. In the case of a disaffiliation request under 2553, the district superintendent shall approve the request of the Church Council (or equivalent body), and shall preside or choose another elder to preside at a church conference to take place no later than one hundred twenty (120) days after the request by the Church Council is made.
   2. No additional sums shall be required for release of the local church’s property and assets beyond those defined in Paragraph 2553.4 b – h, and defined by Eastern PA Conference Resolution 2021-6, passed at the 2021 Annual Conference, except that,
      1. The required apportionment payment (Paragraph 2553.4b) shall be for the twelve months immediately preceding the effective date of separation, plus twelve times the most recent month apportionment amount prior to separation.
      2. Apportionments in arrears from periods before the 12 months prior to separation shall be forgiven.
      3. Payment of any unpaid sums shall be made by the local church prior to the date of separation.
   3. No additional terms, standards or otherwise, shall be imposed by the Annual Conference on the disaffiliating local church.

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