



EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE

The United Methodist Church

Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Additional Questions 7/6/2022

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General Questions

Are all congregations expected to go through the disaffiliation discernment process?

No. Only congregations that are seriously considering leaving The United Methodist Church (UMC) and EPA.

I understand that we as the EPA approved the One Church Plan. Must this be approved at General Conference as well?

This was aspirational legislation by EPA. We want to be a conference that will include traditionalists and progressives and seek not to harm anyone regardless of their theology, beliefs, understandings and commitments, particularly those of the LGBTQ community.

There is a perception in my church that the conference is moving too slowly in providing information and the process takes too long. I was asked if the deadline could be extended.

All of the information has been on the website for two months at <https://www.epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/>. Also, Bishop Schol sent three letters from March through May about disaffiliation. An information session will be held August 1, 2022. The timeline will not be extended. You may find all the information on the webpage.

If a congregation chooses to disaffiliate, will there be any financial remuneration required from the congregation to reimburse/"purchase" the building and property back from the denomination?

This is a decision of the Board of Trustees.

Our Lay Delegate has the understanding that there is some deadline of September 18, 2022 for the congregation to decide something about disaffiliation. I can't find that information in any of this, nor do I remember anything about that in the Annual Conference sessions. I have no indication that this congregation is moving in that direction at all.

The outline and seven steps is found in Bishop Schol's third letter found on our web page. The FAQ's also provide information pertaining to timeline and deadlines: <https://www.epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/>

What happened to "Pathway VI" -- Disaffiliation? It was presented at Annual Conference, and has now been removed from the description of the various pathways available to churches. I find this to be disingenuous to the local churches, and clearly tilts the agenda of the conference... I understand that the information is available at other portions of the EPA website, but to remove the subject as one of the pathways described at Annual Conference sends a very, very clear message. What was this Pathway removed as a viable option? It has not been removed. It may be found here: <https://www.epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/>

As a church which is expecting to disaffiliate, we are trying to get a handle on the costs we would incur to go down this path. Any thoughts you can share, would be very helpful.

Costs are developed by the EPA board of trustees. Estimated costs will be shared in the first session.

Our pastor has chosen to remain with the UMC, and we realize that the disaffiliating church is required to maintain financial support for the pastor's salary and benefits, until their next appointment. However, is there any sort of time limit on how long the disaffiliating church must maintain these benefits, if the pastor cannot be reappointed in a timely fashion?

Up to 18 months.

Related to BSA abuse claims

Hypothetically speaking, suppose a local church was named as a defendant in the Boy Scout suit and is now included in that settlement process. If that church decides to pursue disaffiliation, will there be any consequences for them in terms of liability or legal issues?

We have negotiated releases for United Methodist Churches, and not releases for churches of any other denomination or independent congregation.

How would disaffiliation affect churches involved in Boy Scouts abuse claims

This is a matter for the courts to resolve. A disaffiliating congregation would have to represent themselves and only United Methodist congregations are included in the release paid by United Methodist in the settlement.

Guides

The first [FAQ document](#) from Bishop John Schol, says one of the Guides is a "clergy elder" from the church. Please explain if this is a person from our own congregation or somewhere else? If it's a person from our own congregation, must they be paid the \$500 per session stipend, if they choose not to be paid?

The guides will not be from the congregation and the \$500 must be paid.

Does each guide get \$500 per session?

Yes.

What are the specific tasks these Guides are expected to do?

The facilitate the process with a local church, gather from the church all necessary information and present to the EPA board of trustees.

What is the approximate number of sessions that a church may be expected to go through (over the 6-month period)?

2-3 sessions.

Term Sheet Review & Vote

When a church reaches Step 5 (Term Sheet Review and Vote) of the seven steps: Who is the "disaffiliating congregation's representative body"?

The local church board of trustees.

How quickly/soon will the Eastern PA Conference Board of Trustees be able to share the Term Sheet information/criteria for the purposes of disaffiliation? (We understood that by the end of May, 2022, it would be available. It is now July 2022).

The estimated term sheet will be shared at the first session of the discernment process.

The 2/3 vote of professing members is not completely clear as to whether it is 2/3 of all professing members or 2/3 of all professing members who choose to vote?

As in all United Methodist polity, it is the voting requirement of those in attendance at any duly called meeting.

Is a "mail in" ballot acceptable if church council approves the process by which the votes would be received with a ballot with no identifiable information inside of an envelope which identifies the person. That way the vote is anonymous but able to be checked to be sure each person can vote once and only once?

There are no mail in ballots and votes will be by ballot to provide anonymity during the voting.

Annual Conference Approval

What happens if a church votes after the deadline of March 31, 2023, but before the May 2023 Annual Conference Approval (Step 6), are they disqualified or unable to disaffiliate?

They will not be able to disaffiliate under The Book of Discipline.

Is there any reason why a church would be denied its ability to disaffiliate presuming everything is in order upon reaching Step 6 of the disaffiliation process?

The annual conference must approve all disaffiliations at the May 2023 annual conference sessions.