

# DISAFFILIATION FAQ

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## Disaffiliation Timeline

### **Why are some congregations seeking to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church?**

In 2019, a special session of General Conference met specifically to address differences about ministry with and by LGBTQ persons. The result of the 2019 General Conference session was to continue with the current restrictive language about ministry with and by LGBTQ persons and add paragraph 2553 to the book of Discipline which allows congregations who do not agree with the restrictive language or congregations who do not agree with the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to ministry with and by LGBTQ persons.

### **Does a church have to vote by September 2022?**

Church councils wishing to disaffiliate must register their votes by September 1, 2022.

<https://www.epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/>

### **After 2024, will a church be able to disaffiliate under the same terms as are being offered now?**

Paragraph 2553, the paragraph that allows disaffiliation, expires 12/31/23

## Term Sheet and Cost

### **When will the term sheet be made available to the local church?**

A sample term sheet is provided on our website [HERE](#). The actual Term Sheet from the Board of Trustees will not be available until a congregation votes to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. This is because each term sheet is particular to a congregation. But the items to be listed in the term sheet and a preliminary projected cost will be available in the first discernment session. This is a preliminary projected payment by the congregation to EPA because some items cannot be finalized until the vote occurs. The trustees are not charged with setting the "official" terms and conditions until after the church conference vote occurs.

**If this term sheet is so hard to finalize, complicated, and still not finished, how does it make any sense that it is "final" and not subject to negotiation?**

Each Term sheet is developed in part specifically for each disaffiliating congregation related to their pension liabilities, retiree health liabilities, unpaid billings, 12 months prior and 12 months going forward apportionment payments and other payments that are required to disaffiliate. the final terms are set by the annual conference trustees after the church conference vote to disaffiliate and the financial terms are updated based on current data which exists 30 days prior to the disaffiliation date. The final term sheet is not negotiable.

**What is the general framework of the term sheet? How might a church know if it can financially afford disaffiliation before paying to enter the process?**

A sample term sheet is provided on our website [HERE](#). The Term sheet will include both financial and nonfinancial obligations that must be provided in order to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and EPA. Each Term sheet is developed for the disaffiliating congregation related to their pension liabilities, retiree health liabilities, and other payments required to disaffiliate. The projected cost to disaffiliate will be shared in the first discernment church conference meeting so that the congregation understands the preliminary and projected cost to disaffiliate.

**Do we need to request a term sheet for our church to get a better understanding of the financial impact on our church should they choose to disaffiliate? If so, who do we request this from?**

The items in the Term Sheet and preliminary project cost to disaffiliate will be provided at the first discernment meeting. You do not need to make a request for the term sheet so long as your church council opts to participate in the disaffiliation discernment process.

**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.

**The Term sheet seems like a very important part of this process. Is there a formula to get an idea what the result will be earlier in the process?**

The estimated term sheet will be available at the first session of the Discernment Process with your guide. A sample term sheet is available [HERE](#).

**I would like to see a "sample" term sheet. If the conference knows the value of the property, the apportionment, and the retirement responsibility, what else do they need to know?**

The estimated term sheet will be available at the first session of the Discernment Process with your guide. A sample term sheet is available [HERE](#).

**May the Term Sheet payments be paid over several years?**

The financial payments of the Term Sheet must be fully paid by December 31, 2023, for a congregation to disaffiliate.

**What if there are land and/or building deed restrictions on the property?**

All deed restrictions must be followed by the disaffiliating congregation prior to disaffiliation.

**Are you going to charge a percentage of church assets as part of the term sheet? If so, how will it be calculated.**

There are a number of aspects of the Term Sheet that are not formulaic and some will not be known until the congregation reviews any deed encumbrances, purchases, apportionments owed as of the date of disaffiliation, billings owed as of the date of disaffiliation, any and all legal costs for EPA to transfer property or to defend itself if sued by the congregation, The estimated term sheet will be available at the first session of the Discernment Process with your guide.

**Will the term sheet be provided before the vote?**

Under 2553 of the Book of Discipline, the formal terms and conditions are set by the Conference Trustees after the congregation votes to disaffiliate. However, to assist congregations in estimating the financial impact of disaffiliation, a preliminary and projected cost, a preliminary and projected cost for disaffiliation will be shared in the first discernment session.

**Will the “building cost” be part of the term sheet?**

This is a Conference Board of Trustees decision.

**What percent of assessed value of property and building will be paid to disaffiliate?**

This is a Conference Board of Trustees decision.

**Why isn't there a set % to disaffiliate?**

Each church has unique obligations and potential fees that preclude a set percentage.

**When will a church's share of the unfunded pension liability be given to the local church?**

The Board of Benefits and the Trustees will share the pension liability as part of the term sheet. The initial figure that will be shared in the first discernment session is an estimate and only effective for 3 months. The actual figure will be supplied within 30 days of disaffiliation.

**Since some trust clauses have been deemed unenforceable in other states, how might the trust clause be viewed in Pennsylvania and New Jersey as an enforcing clause and has that been an issue in our region?**

Greater New Jersey courts have upheld the trust clause. The Trust Clause was upheld in a ruling by the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court.

**Why would there be any need for any discussion about real property, assets, or other property contributions/payments when Section 2553(4) could not be more clear that “a disaffiliating local church shall have the RIGHT to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property?”**

The trust clause and what it means – all real and personal property stays with The United Methodist Church if a congregation ceases to be a United Methodist Church.

In 2019, the General Conference suspended the trust clause until December 31, 2023, and that a congregation could take its real and personal property under paragraph 2553.

Paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline requires a term sheet developed by the Conference Board of Trustees. The term sheet indicates what payments must be made to the annual conference for a congregation to leave with its real and personal property. It is the Trustees duty and prerogative to identify and include the payments it feels is necessary. They have determined that each term sheet is unique to the congregation based on the congregation's circumstances that may include but not limited to the following:

- Congregation's share of pension liabilities
- Past billing and other debt owed to the conference or demonization
- Past and future apportionments
- All legal costs including any court costs
- Administrative fees
- Title insurance
- Any percentage of the property
- Clergy support
- Any deed restrictions and necessary payments

Generally, these items are less than the cost of paying for the property.

## **Why are we seeing such great disparities in separation costs across the country, ranging from \$0 to many millions?**

We are not aware of any congregation across the church that has disaffiliated for no cost. There will be different costs because each congregation has different liabilities, unpaid billings and apportionments and other related costs.

## **What is the status of our pension liability?**

The Eastern PA Conference is currently funded at 100%. To maintain 100% funding, EPA is required to make payments each year. Our payments are based on billings and apportionments must be paid. Disaffiliating churches payments as required by The Book of Discipline ensures EPA payments will continue for all present retirees and all present clergy. The calculations for a church looking to alter its relationship with The UMC is based on a different funding target similar to a commercial annuity provider to account for future valuation. For that funding target, the plan is not fully funded.

## **If we are, and remain, 100% funded, does that mean there would be no payment required?**

Payments by disaffiliating churches will pay their portion through the actuarially projected year of 2056 when the Pre-82 Plan will close no more payments will be required.

The Board of Benefits requested an actuarial projection of payments needed to support a 100%, 106% and 110% funding. In all those scenarios, there was only one year out to 2056 where there was a zero-payment necessary.

# Discernment

## **What are the steps to disaffiliation**

### *The Process to Discern Disaffiliation*

If a church would like to explore the process for disaffiliation as laid out in The BOD ¶12553:

#### **Explore (July 1-Sept 1, 2022)**

- The congregation's Church Council/Administrative Board/ Church Leadership Team votes via simple majority to explore and discern disaffiliation.
- Pastor notifies the District Superintendent (DS) in writing (email is acceptable) of the desire to engage in discerning disaffiliation.
- A \$3500 check is to be sent to the EPA conference treasurer to cover the administrative costs of the Discernment Guides to begin the process. If a congregation votes in the first discernment session after prayer, learning about disaffiliation and projected costs not to continue, all \$3,500 will be returned. The \$3,500 is the cost of supplying two guides per church and the administrative work for the discernment process.

#### **Discernment and Voting (Sept – January 10, 2023)**

- Two Discernment Guides, appointed by the Cabinet and the Connectional Table, work with the congregation to explore disaffiliation. This process will move at the pace the congregation is prepared to work, but no longer than 6 months. Churches should be prepared for three to five discernment sessions; this work must be completed by Jan. 10, 2023. All meetings are Special Called Church Conferences (SCC). A current professing membership roll will be provided to the guides. Guides are to work with the pastor to determine dates, times, promotion of the meetings, and locations of meetings. Guides will inform the DS of the dates in writing (email is acceptable) so that DS can authorize each SCC. The pastor is to follow the Book of Discipline Guidelines to promote the SCC. All binding and non-binding votes connected to the discernment process will be held within the special church/charge conferences and by paper ballot. Notice of time and place of the church conference shall be given at least ten days in advance by two or more of the following: from the pulpit of the church, in its weekly bulletin, in a local church publication, or by mail (¶246.8). The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum (¶246.6)

- An Estimated Term sheet will be presented and explained to the church conference in the first session. It is essential for the congregation to understand that this is an initial estimate and will change based on any (but not limited to) of the following:
  - The Estimated Term Sheet is for disaffiliating churches as outlined in paragraph 2553. This will only be determined through the discernment process.
  - Unfunded pension liability (Calculation based on market performance)
  - Any encumbrances in the deed.
  - Past billing and other debt owed to the conference or demonization
  - Past and future apportionments
  - All legal costs including any court costs
  - Administrative fees
  - Title insurance
  - Clergy support
  - Any deed restrictions and necessary payments
  - Additional costs are not known until after discernment and due diligence are completed.

**Congregational Votes (Sept – January 15, 2023)**

- There will be a series of votes during the discernment process. Each vote will be by paper ballot and will be recorded in the official minutes of the Church Conference. Voting will be by professing members of the local church, ¶248 BOD at the duly called special church conferences.
- Notice of time and place of each of the church conferences shall be given at least ten days in advance by two or more of the following: from the pulpit of the church, in its weekly bulletin, in a local church publication, or by mail (¶246.8). The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum (¶246.6)
- A 2/3's approval vote is required to disaffiliate (paragraph 2553 and Judicial Council Ruling 1379).
- District Superintendent is informed of each church conference vote.
- Ultimately the church will decide on one of six paths and its reason for choosing that path.
  1. Continue as a UM congregation
  2. Continue as a UM congregation and engage in holy conversation about how we will navigate our differences with one another or with United Methodist polity
  3. Continue as a UM congregation and develop a Ministry Covenant within congregation and with the cabinet about ministry with and by LGBTQ persons
  4. Disaffiliate and become part of the GMC
  5. Disaffiliate and become part of another denomination
  6. Disaffiliate and become an independent non-denominational church
- Churches not choosing to move forward with disaffiliation will be offered support if they wish for the next steps in mission and ministry.

**Connectional Covenant for Disaffiliating Churches with EPA** (*The Connectional Covenant is different than the Ministry Covenant listed above. The Connectional Covenant is developed between the congregation and EPA within a month of a congregation voting to disaffiliate. Must be completed by March 15, 2023*)

- Any congregation that votes to disaffiliate with the support of the Disaffiliation Guides will work through a covenanting process: The Connectional Covenant is between EPA, the disaffiliating congregation, and the receiving denomination. The covenant outlines how all parties will honor God, respectfully disaffiliate and identify opportunities for continued collaborative ministry and missional engagement. The connectional covenant will guide the congregation through the covenanting process about (A) ministries that may be continued to be shared with EPA and (B) communication during the disaffiliation period.

**Due Diligence** (*Up to one month once a congregation votes to disaffiliate. Must be done by Jan 31, 2023*)

The disaffiliating congregation will perform all the necessary research and submit all the necessary documents and information required by the EPA Board of Trustees to draft the Disaffiliation Agreement.

**Term Sheet Review and Vote** (*Up to one month once a congregation votes to disaffiliate. Must be done by March 15, 2023*)

- The term sheet outlines the terms and costs of disaffiliation has been approved by the EPA Board of Trustees and will be prepared by EPA Chief Financial Officer, Conference Treasurer, Conference Statistician once the Church Conference takes its official vote.
- Congregational acceptance of the final term sheet voted on by the Disaffiliating Congregation's Board of Trustees by March 15, 2023.

**Annual Conference Approval (May 2023)**

- Annual Conference regular session votes on a congregation's request to disaffiliate.

**Fulfill the Requirements of the Term Sheet (May 2023-Dec 31, 2023)**

- EPA will communicate to any congregation seeking to disaffiliate that it must pay for and complete all items in the disaffiliation agreement by the effective date set in such agreement. The disaffiliating Congregation must make all payments and fulfill the requirements of the Term Sheet in order to disaffiliate.

**If there is “no shortcut to the discernment process,” why would a church be permitted to skip the discernment process altogether?**

To disaffiliate, a church must participate in the discernment process. In seeking to align our thoughts with God's. This process is critical to a church discerning both their present and future. The discernment process may vary in length depending on the congregation's needs, but every church will go through a time of discernment as part of their decision making.

**Why are we being asked to go through the discernment process before the general conference in 2024? How do we make a decision when we don't know if the book of discipline will be changed in term s of LGBTQ reconciliation?**

The window for the disaffiliation process is to be completed until December 31, 2023, per paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline which is prior to the 2024 General Conference.

**What is the first session being referenced?**

The first session is the first session of the church conference discernment process.

**Nowhere is Section 2553 does the word “discernment” appear nor is it in any way set forth as a requirement in this section. Your remarks seem to suggest it is mandatory for those wanting to leave. If that is the case, what is your authority for requiring this process?**

Judicial Council Ruling 1425. You may find it by selecting this link. [ResourceUMC | Judicial Council Decision Number 1425](#)

**What is the cost for the discernment process?**

\$3,500. If a congregation votes in the first discernment session after prayer, learning about disaffiliation and projected costs not to continue, all \$3,500 will be returned. The \$3,500 is the cost of supplying two guides per church and the administrative work for the discernment process. This does not cover all of the potential fees and administrative costs associated with the Disaffiliation process.

**Is there a specific judicial council decision interpreting Section 2553 that requires a discernment process?**

The disaffiliation website has all judicial council rulings: [epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/judicial-council-rulings/](http://epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/judicial-council-rulings/). Decision 1425 references the discernment process: [ResourceUMC | Judicial Council Decision Number 1425](#).

**What will the congregation vote on to disaffiliate?**

A congregation that discerns it wants to vote on disaffiliation will vote on legislation based on Paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline which states:

Because of the current deep conflict within The UMC around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination 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 with The UMC under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

The decision to disaffiliate from The UMC must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

### **Can a congregation disaffiliate under paragraph 2548.2 of The Book of Discipline?**

Some have inquired or recommended the use of paragraph 2548.2 of the Book of Discipline which allows church property to be transferred to another denomination. This paragraph was developed in the mid-1940's shortly after the Southern and Northern Methodist Churches reunified after their nearly 100-year split over slavery. This paragraph was developed for a specific time period for a specific purpose, just as paragraph 2553 was developed for this time period and purpose. Paragraph 2548.2 does not provide sufficient clarity to all of the current issues and matters. The paragraph also requires the approval of the bishop and cabinet. The Council of Bishops has reviewed the paragraph and does not recommend using it. The Cabinet has also reviewed this paragraph, and the Cabinet and I have decided that we will not approve 2548.2 to be used for congregations that seek to disaffiliate, because it does not provide thorough guidance; nor does it have Judicial Council rulings to clarify its use in the present matters before us. The Cabinet will only consider Church Conferences for congregations seeking disaffiliation under paragraph 2553.

## **The United Methodist Church stance on Human Sexuality**

### **What is the UMC's current position on human sexuality?**

The United Methodist Church affirms that sexuality is "God's good gift to all persons."

This affirmation begins the denomination's statement on [Human Sexuality](#). It is one of several statements describing the church's teachings on sexuality.

The Church affirms that all people are of sacred worth and are equally valuable in the sight of God. It is committed to be in ministry with all people. The Church "implores families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends."

Underlying this is the constitutional principle of [inclusiveness of the church](#). Everyone is welcome to worship and actively participate in the life of our churches. Laypersons may become members and [live out their faith](#) through their local church *without respect to sexual orientation or practice*.

The Church deplores acts of hate and violence against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and believes [human rights and civil liberties](#) are due all people, regardless of sexual orientation.

Homosexuality was first openly debated at General Conference in 1972, four years after the formation of The United Methodist Church, resulting in the addition of first statement on homosexuality. While affirming belief that persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth who need the ministry and guidance of the church, the statement added that the church "does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." [Timeline: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/gc2016-tackling-44-year-stance-on-homosexuality>]

Since that time, the church has maintained the position that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." This draws a distinction between orientation and practice, or behavior. Sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of [monogamous, heterosexual marriage](#). The United Methodist Church supports laws that define [marriage](#) as the union of one man and one woman.

Based on these positions about homosexual practice and marriage, the Church has also maintained restrictions regarding clergy. Pastors may not be “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” and may not conduct ceremonies that celebrate same-sex weddings or unions. Such ceremonies also may not be held on church property.

The United Methodist Church has 12 million members globally and have different beliefs concerning human sexuality and have continued to work together to serve God and the world.

**Just to make sure we understand. The UMC is aligned with allowing LGBTQ marriages, and appointments, and the GMC is aligned with the opposite. Is that correct? We thought that is what we heard but want to be sure**

This is not correct. The Book of Discipline does not allow same gender weddings on church property and for self-avowed practicing gays and lesbians to serve as clergy.

**Is the United Methodist conference planning on changing the discipline to include ordination of LGBTQ and also same sex marriage.”**

The use of the term “United Methodist conference” either means one of the almost 100 annual conferences around the world which meet each year, or the General Conference, comprised of delegates from around the Country and world. which generally meets every four years.

An annual conference does not have authority to change the Book of Discipline. Only the General Conference does. An individual, congregation or annual conference may submit legislation to change The Book of Discipline concerning LGBT restrictions. The Eastern PA conference has not submitted any legislation to the 2024 General Conference concerning LGBTQ matters.

General Conference will take place in 2024. We are not aware of legislation submitted to the 2024 General Conference concerning LGBTQ matters. The legislation for the 2024 General Conference will be published in the early part of 2024.

**Can you also address the theological issues within the UMC movement... not just the human sexuality differences?**  
John Wesley wrote that “Methodists [are] a people who pursue...holiness of heart and life.” United Methodists continue that tradition of following Jesus with our hearts and lives. We exhibit our faith through love of God and neighbor, by actively participating in God’s work in our lives and in the world today. To learn more about the theology of the UMC, please visit: [umc.org/en/content/theological-guidelines](https://umc.org/en/content/theological-guidelines) or to read about our social principles select the following link: [Our Social Principles \(umc.org\)](https://umc.org/)

**Is the book of discipline changing to support LGBT marriage and clergy?**

Only general conference can amend the Discipline (every 4 years). The next general conference is 2024.

**I know it does not say it as of now, but is there a plan to change the discipline to include same sex marriage and ordination of the same**

Petitions to change the language of the BOD can be sent to General Conference. The next General Conference is in 2024.

**If the UMC BOD says that homosexual practices are incompatible with Christian teachings, why is the disaffiliation to join the GMC (or other) being considered as it relates to the issue of homosexual practices? It seems that some answers provided indicate this is not a divisive issue. Can this be explained a bit more?**

Paragraph 2553 was submitted and supported by a group of traditionalists within the denomination to provide opportunity for progressives to leave the denomination. Following 2019 General Conference there was significant concern throughout the church about the result and perceived harshness of the 2019 General Conference session. This in part led the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a caucus of traditional members to start the Global Methodist Church so that those who support their caucus views could leave The UMC.

# Voting

## **Does the church vote about participating in the discernment process?**

The church council is to vote and if it votes to participate in the discernment process, the pastor is to send an email to the DS by September 1 indicating that the church would like to participate in the discernment process.

## **Do we send out letters to non-attending members to let them know when we are voting?**

Instructions about church conferences, notifications and additional information will be provided when the pastor emails the DS requesting to participate in the discernment process for disaffiliation. A church conference is needed to pursue disaffiliation as a result of the discernment process. At the church conference all professing members will be entitled to vote.

## **Who do I tell the results of the vote?**

Instructions about church conferences, notifications, voting, voting results and additional information will be provided when the pastor emails the DS by September 1, 2022 requesting to participate in the discernment process for disaffiliation.

## **Would there be a possibility of holding a vote of professing members both physically present and also over zoom?**

We will investigate this possibility. For now, all professing members need to be physically present to vote.

## **If a Church Council votes to remain in UMC without exploring discernment, but individual members still want to explore discernment is there a path to challenge the Church Council vote?**

Individual members cannot request the discernment process. It could only be through the Church Council or a Charge Conference.

## **Can a church decide to vote on disaffiliation in 2023 instead of now?**

General Conference ruled that the disaffiliation process must be completed by December 31, 2023, so the discernment process must begin this fall so that the Board of Trustees can finalize Term Sheets to be approved by the May 2023 annual conference session. Congregations would then have until December 31, 2023, to complete the terms of their term sheet.

## **Do those present for the vote need to be members?**

Yes, you must be a professing member to cast a vote. A professing member is 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.

## **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.

## **Do regular attendees have a vote?**

Only professing members have a vote. A professing member is 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.

**Do we mail letters to all members and when can we vote?**

Your guides/facilitators can help you with this. The vote will happen at the end of the discernment process.

**If a professing member of the church cannot physically attend a church conference, can they vote by mail?**

No, they must be physically present.

**We have several tithing attendees who are not "official member" Paper wise ...may they vote.**

No. Only professing members may vote.

**May a Church Council make the decision to remain with the denomination without taking it to a congregational vote?**

Yes, a congregational vote is only needed to pursue changing the local church's relationship with the United Methodist Church. If no action is taken, the connection remains intact.

**If there is a 50/50 response to a congregation vote does that mean that the church stays in the UMC?**

Yes. The church must have a 2/3 majority to disaffiliate.

**If the Admin Board votes to disaffiliate and then the church votes to disaffiliate, what challenges will be made at Annual Conference? Meaning, if the Local Church goes through the process and wants to disaffiliate, what happens if AC declines the church from disaffiliating? It doesn't seem fair that AC would decline a church if the church has already voted.**

An Admin board can vote to explore disaffiliation through discernment process but has no authority to vote to disaffiliate. The Book of Discipline provides that a Local Church may not sever its connection to the UMC without the consent of the Annual Conference. In decision no. 1379, the Judicial Council clarified that a simple majority vote of the annual conference is required to permit disaffiliation to proceed. The annual conference will not be encouraged to vote against disaffiliation by the bishop or cabinet.

## 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.

**How much is the stipend for Guides who lead the disaffiliation discernment process?**

Each Guide will receive \$500 per session; and an additional \$500 will be paid to Guides who receive, review and ensure all documentation is in order for the creation of the congregation's Term Sheet.

**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.

# 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.

## General

**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 [epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/](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.

**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.

**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/>

**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.

**What if the church wants to stay with United Methodism but does not agree with changing the discipline to include ordination of LGBTQ and they disagree with same sex union?**

Congregations are welcome to work with their guide or District Superintendent to write a covenant based on their convictions that will help their congregation thrive. This covenant will be used as part of the consultation process when the cabinet makes appointments so that the appointment helps your congregation to thrive.

**When does a disaffiliating congregation officially end its relationship with The UMC and EPA?**

When all seven steps of disaffiliation are completed and the church makes all required financial payments. This must occur no later than December 31, 2023, for the congregation to disaffiliate.

**If a congregation stays with the Methodist church, will they be required to accept a LGBTQ pastor and perform same sex marriages in the church?**

No. The cabinet uses a consultation process and makes appointments to help congregations thrive. Congregations are welcome to work with their guide or District Superintendent to write a covenant based on their convictions that will help their congregation thrive. The appointment process will use the covenants as part of the consultation process.

**Can you explain further what the Covenant might look like to develop with LBGTQ persons? Can Conservative Congregation still use their present liturgy?**

Congregations are welcome to work with their guide or District Superintendent to write a covenant based on their convictions that will help their congregation thrive. Covenants may include language about the church's convictions in matters related to human sexuality.

**If a church decides to disaffiliate, and the church pastor desires to go with their church, may the pastor do so, or are they compelled to remain with the UMC?**

A pastor may leave with a disaffiliating congregation. If the pastor elects to go with the disaffiliating church, they will be required to surrender their credentials with The United Methodist Church. Clergy persons who continue with The UMC and are appointed to a congregation that continues as a UMC congregation will maintain membership in The UMC as a clergy person and participate in the appointment process as in the past. The cabinet will work to identify a new appointment and will require financial support from the disaffiliating congregation to maintain salary and benefits until the next appointment for Clergy from a disaffiliating congregation who wish to maintain their membership in The UMC. Clergy persons who leave The UMC on their own accord or with a disaffiliating congregation, must surrender their membership credentials and join another denomination or serve an independent congregation and the clergy person will need to be credentialed by the denomination or independent congregation.

**How do you become a facilitator to help churches with the process? Is there an application?**

We have established a team of facilitators who will be trained and ready to help guide churches in discernment. There is no application currently.

**Why was the General Conference moved from 2022 to 2024? Instead of 2023?**

The General Conference Sessions Committee met and prayerfully made this decision considering the current health climate due to Covid.

**How many churches have already asked to exit in some way?**

Currently, we have one church that disaffiliated in 2021. Any other churches who may be considering disaffiliation are in the discernment phase, so we do not have a number at this time. Request to disaffiliate must be made by September 1, 2022, to meet the process and approvals for disaffiliation.

**Have any churches requested discernment?**

Yes, we currently have churches who have requested guides for the discernment process. We are aware of one church at this time.

**If retired, must a pastor turn in his or her orders to go with a disaffiliated church?**

Yes. A pastor may not be a member in The United Methodist Church and another denomination or independent church at the same time.

**Can you foresee any scenario where in the future a conservative church could be appointed a homosexual pastor against their desire?**

The cabinet uses a consultation process to understand the needs and desires of a congregation. Churches may develop a covenant with the Cabinet regarding appointments that will be used as part of the consultation process.

**If the book of discipline is upheld in terms of human sexuality in 2024, can a church devise a covenant that differs from that decision and remain in the UMC?**

Congregations are welcome to work with their guide or District Superintendent to write a covenant based on their convictions that will help their congregation thrive.

**Based on the number of churches that choose to disaffiliate, will that require that those churches that remain in the UMC will face increases to their apportionment fees due to less churches contributing?**

First EPA will review its budget and make any reductions. At this time, we do not anticipate any increase in apportionments because of disaffiliation.

**Since the book of discipline is considered a contract with the churches and specifically states that members of the LGBTQ will not be allowed to be ordained and pastor a church, could it be argued that there is a breach of contract by allowing this to continue?**

Paragraph 2553 provides a method for congregations to disaffiliate because they either do not agree with The Book of Discipline policies or their annual conference practices. The General has suspended the “contract” of the Trust Clause up until December 31, 2023, for congregations to disaffiliate.

**Can a GMC representative be invited to participate in the discernment process?**

No. Lawyers who are not professing members, non-United Methodists and non-professing church members have no standing in a church conference. Only professing members of the congregation and those appointed by the District Superintendent may lead and participate in a church conference session.

**What services do churches lose if they disaffiliate?**

Churches who disaffiliate will lose the property and liability insurance, health & welfare benefits and all the resources of the General Church and EPA. Churches will no longer receive appointed clergy and may have to find their own clergy. The United Methodist Church is engaged in mission and ministry around the world. As a global, connectional body, The United Methodist Church is transforming congregations and communities.

**What if the congregation wants to surrender its property too?**

It may do this. We will work with each congregation and its unique circumstances.

**What happens to a loan from a conference to a church that disaffiliates?**

All conference loans must be repaid to the Conference prior to disaffiliation and will be part of the term sheet.

**How are pastors impacted by a church that disaffiliates?**

If the pastor elects to go with the disaffiliating church, they will be required to surrender their credentials with the United Methodist Church. Clergy persons who continue with The UMC and are appointed to a congregation that continues as a UMC congregation will maintain membership in The UMC as a clergy person and participate in the appointment process as in the past. Clergy who are appointed to a congregation that disaffiliates, but the clergy person continues with The UMC, the cabinet will work to identify a new appointment and will require financial support from the disaffiliating congregation to maintain salary and benefits until the next appointment. Clergy persons who leave The UMC on their own accord or with a disaffiliating congregation, must surrender their membership credentials and join another denomination or serve an independent congregation and the clergy person will need to be credentialed by the denomination or independent congregation.

**Information was received that GMC is only asking for 1 percent of budget for apportionments. Will EPAUMC be making any further assistance or adjustments for those congregations that will choose to remain?**

We are hearing many promises and rumors of what the GMC will do. They have also stated that they will not accept all clergy and/or congregations. It is not easy to operate a denomination or annual conference. To operate a denomination there are pension programs, health care plans, pastoral support, ministries, mission projects, financial and administrative staff, and many other things that must be provided. For example, based on 10% of EPA churches of different sizes calculated on an average budget, a conservative estimate is that 1% of their churches' budget would result in a total apportionment (not per church) of \$80,000 if the GMC collected 100% of the apportionments at 1%. Clearly this does not even pay for one district superintendent salary, benefits, office, and administrative support let alone a global mission, retiree health care, support for urban, rural, and ethnic ministries and a finance and benefits department to handle the financial and benefits needs of those congregations that disaffiliated. Further we do not anticipate that 10% of EPA will leave EPA and the UMC.

**How will you build trust with churches that seek disaffiliation and then cannot follow through?**

We would like all congregations to stay with EPA and The UMC. You will find in the discernment process we will not seek to change minds but help congregations discern God's desire for the congregation. We pledge to honor and work with all congregations regardless of the outcome of disaffiliation.

**At annual conference will each church be brought forward for vote individually as we do with church closures?**

Each church must be approved for annual conference vote by the conference sessions committee, but the actual vote on disaffiliation will be one large omnibus resolution approving all churches listed for disaffiliation.

**If a local church votes now to disaffiliate because they want to be more liberal supporting LGBTQ+ and then the General Conference vote decides to support LGBTQ+? Can the local church re-join the UMC?**

Yes, any congregation may re-join the United Methodist Church. Also, through covenants, we will work to honor the needs and commitments of any congregation.

**Is there a printed format which fully describes the 6 areas?**

Yes, please see the EPA website for disaffiliation which outlines the full process: <https://www.epaumc.org/disaffiliation-discernment/>

**Will those helping us with discernment, if we choose to entertain that help, be available for the process so we don't miss the December 31st expiration of 2553?**

Yes. Their job will be to help facilitate the process in a timely manner. This is why a church council must act now and the pastor communicate by September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 that they want to participate in the disaffiliation process.

**If a congregation decides to remain, will they be required to go through all three steps?**

No. But if a church would like help discerning ministry within The UMC, we are prepared to work with you.

**I am pleased to see that there is a plan with milestones to get this work done to move forward. Is this process for just the EPA or is it global or domestic?**

This specific process was developed for EPA.

**Is the discipline changed or are we still under the 2019 book of discipline?**

We are still under the 2016 Book of Discipline that was modified in 2019 to allow congregations to disaffiliate.

**If a clergyperson doesn't agree with same sex marriage, will they be required to perform them if they are reassigned?**

No, they would not be required to perform same gender weddings.

**Will the churches that disaffiliate have the opportunity to vote in the 2024 general conference?**

No, only delegates from United Methodist Churches have a vote.