

Disaffiliation Discernment Meetings Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Why are churches choosing to disaffiliate from the United Methodist denomination?

A: There is a movement within the United Methodist Church (UMC) to remove the traditional understanding of sex, gender, and marriage. Some denominational leaders have ignored our rules that exclude gay clergy and gay weddings. Disaffiliating churches are upset that some denominational leadership rejects traditional theology.

Q: If we disaffiliate, will LGBTQ+ people be allowed to participate in our church?

A: We will always invite LGBTQ+ persons to participate in our church activities. The church is a place where all people are welcome to explore the Christian faith. We want to show people God's love so that they have the opportunity to know the truth about God and God's grace.

Q: What is the UMC's official position on LGBTQ+ persons?

A: The traditional view stands unchanged. All people, including LGBTQ+ persons, are loved by God. UMC clergy may neither officiate gay weddings nor be practicing homosexuals.

Q: Why disaffiliate if the official position of the UMC on human sexuality has not changed?

A: Some denominational leaders have ignored the rules and officially declared their intention to remove the rules about gay clergy and gay weddings. The UMC has two bishops who are openly gay and legally married to persons of the same sex. Efforts to remove these bishops have failed because denominational leaders support the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons.

Q: If we disaffiliate, will we have to leave our building and property to the United Methodist denomination? What is the Trust Clause?

A: The Trust Clause is a church law that says the UMC denomination owns all the property and assets of every local church. But there is a new provision in the law of the UMC that allows local churches to keep their property and assets if they disaffiliate before 12-31-23. It's unclear if the 2024 General Conference will make a new way for local churches to disaffiliate and keep their property.

Q: Why the rush? Why can't we wait and see what the future holds?

A: Right now, there is a clear provision for disaffiliating, but it is unclear what the future will hold. Suppose a church has come to the firm conclusion that they do not want to be part of a denomination where some denominational leaders and clergy are practicing homosexuals and where seminaries promote the false teaching that homosexual sex is not sinful. In that case, that church has no reason to stay. These things are already happening in the UMC, and there is no reason to think the UMC denomination will reverse course. Even if the next General Conference does not remove the resistive language about homosexuality, the UMC will continue to be a denomination of dysfunctional in-fighting over human sexuality. Disaffiliating churches have chosen to move on from these unhelpful arguments.

Q: What is the provision for disaffiliating?

A: Here is what is necessary for our church to disaffiliate.

1. They must hold discernment meetings to help church members clarify their opinions.
2. The Administrative Council votes to approve a church conference officiated by the District Superintendent. The purpose of the church conference is to vote on disaffiliation.
3. The District Superintendent sets a date for the church to vote on disaffiliation.
4. Only members of the church are allowed to vote.
5. Only members who attend the disaffiliation vote *in-person* are allowed to vote.
6. The vote will be counted by the District Superintendent and reported immediately. If 66.7% of the members vote to disaffiliate, the vote passes.
7. The church must pay all the disaffiliation fees by May 20th, 2023.
8. The East Ohio Annual Conference must vote to accept the local church's disaffiliation. This meeting is held June 8-10, 2023.
9. The local church legally disaffiliates from the UMC on July 1st, 2023.

Q: How much will it cost us to leave?

A: The disaffiliation fee for our church is \$85,087. This fee covers two years of apportionments and unfunded pension liability for retired UMC pastors. There will be other expenses for changing our name, getting new signs, legal paperwork, etc.

Q: What will happen to our pastors? Will they disaffiliate, too?

A: Each clergyperson makes their own decision.

Q: Will our church join the Global Methodist Church?

A: If our church votes to disaffiliate from the UMC, we will need another vote to decide if we want to be an independent church or join a denomination. Most churches that disaffiliate are choosing to join the Global Methodist Church.

Q: Are there other reasons churches are disaffiliating besides human sexuality?

A: Yes, disaffiliating churches have a variety of other reasons why they think now is the time to leave the United Methodist denomination. Most feel that the real reason for disaffiliating is theology. Disaffiliating churches hold a traditional understanding of the Bible that is questioned or rejected by some of the denominational leaders and seminary professors. Disaffiliating churches are concerned that finding clergy who hold traditional theology has become more challenging. Their goal is to create a better system of calling, training, and supporting traditional clergy so that the future pastors and leaders of our churches will hold traditional theology.

Q: Are there other reasons?

A: Yes. Disaffiliating churches are frustrated with the dysfunctional and political nature of the UMC, the high cost of apportionments, the appointment system, the Trust Clause, etc.