



DISCERNING THE WAY FORWARD TOGETHER

Website: <https://madisonfumc.com/discern>

Email: discern@madisonfumc.com

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

One Body but Many Parts

¹² There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body. It is the same with Christ. ¹³ We were all baptized by one Holy Spirit. And so we are formed into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts.

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

¹⁵ Suppose the foot says, “I am not a hand. So I don’t belong to the body.” By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And suppose the ear says, “I am not an eye. So I don’t belong to the body.” By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? ¹⁸ God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. ¹⁹ If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body?

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

²⁰ As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body. ²¹ The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you!" The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² In fact, it is just the opposite. The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are the ones we can't do without. ²³ The parts that we think are less important we treat with special honor. The private parts aren't shown. But they are treated with special care.

1 Corinthians 12:1-27

²⁴ The parts that can be shown don't need special care. But God has put together all the parts of the body. And he has given more honor to the parts that didn't have any. ²⁵ In that way, the parts of the body will not take sides. All of them will take care of one another. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honored, every part shares in its joy. ²⁷ **You are the body of Christ.** Each one of you is a part of it.

HOUSEKEEPING

- Goal tonight is to provide unbiased facts
- Small groups will meet over several weeks
 - Please email to host or schedule
 - Look for signup forms soon
- Another church-wide meeting in November
- Website: <https://madisonfumc.com/discern>
- Email: discern@madisonfumc.com

Questions

- Please submit all questions and comments by email to discern@madisonfumc.com. A member of the discernment team will reply
- Or drop a written question in our “Question Box” and include your name and phone number if you would like a reply
- The discernment team will use these to create a FAQ document and post to our webpage <https://madisonfumc.com/discern>

DISCERNMENT PURPOSE

As a church, discern the path God is leading
Madison FUMC and seek **consensus** to either:

- **Remain a United Methodist Church**
congregation

or

- **Hold a vote** to disaffiliate from the United
Methodist Church

ARE WE REQUIRED TO GO THROUGH THIS PROCESS?

- **No**, this is an intentional lay-led conversation.

HOW TO REMAIN A STRONG CONGREGATION

- Remember we were a healthy, loving congregation before discernment started.
- Use the process to examine **who we are** and seek **how God can use our strengths** .
- Demonstrate love and respect for everyone especially those with whom we may disagree.
- Whether we stay or leave, we do it together.
- Continue to outwardly focus on ministry. Don't allow this process to distract us.

WHO IS ON THE DISCERNMENT TEAM?

The Team



Katie Anderson



Jason Brown



David Burbach



Bob Dickson



Katie Duvall



Shannon Jones



Melissa Martin



Deborah Mosley



Grady Mosley



Sonny Pennington



Scott Webb

BACKGROUND & KEY TERMS

HISTORY

- 1739: Wesley Methodist Movement
- 1784: Methodist Episcopal Church
- 1845: Methodist Episcopal Church South separates
- 1939: The Methodist Church (3 churches united)
- 1968: The United Methodist Church (Methodist + Evangelical United Brethren)

STRUCTURE

- General Conference
- Jurisdictions
- Central Conferences
- Annual Conferences
- Districts
- Church Conference
- Administrative Council (Local Church)

KEY TERMS

- **Book of Discipline:** a UMC book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures of the UMC
- **Trust Clause:** means that all our property and assets are held “in trust” by the United Methodist Church
- **Apportionments:** Our contribution to UMC’s budget and ministry
- **Connection:** The worldwide global ministry including Churches, missions, outreach, camp ministries etc.

3 SIDES OF THE DEBATE

- **Traditionalists** : (those who welcome LGBTQ persons but who wish to prohibit marriage and ordination of persons in same sex relationships)
- **Progressives** : (those who advocate for full inclusion, including marriage and ordination of persons in same sex relationships)
- **Centrists** : (those who allow for differences of opinion)

WHAT BROUGHT US TO THE POINT
OF DISCERNMENT?

WHAT BROUGHT US HERE?

- Methodists have been debating language regarding human sexuality since it was introduced in the Book of Discipline in 1972.
- **However, we do agree that we welcome all into the life of our church.**
 - ¶ 161.G includes: *“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends”*

- Our 2016 Book of Discipline **does include** restrictions on ordained clergy. The debate centers around these two.
 - ¶ 304.3 *The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.*
 - ¶ 341.6 *Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.*

Legislation to remove such language has been proposed at General Conference **8 times** over the last **50 years**.

These proposed changes have never passed.

Some are choosing to defy the Book of Discipline:

- In 2016, Karen Oliveto from the Western Jurisdiction was elected the first openly lesbian bishop
- Some bishops have ordained openly gay clergy and/or allowed clergy to perform same sex weddings

In February 2019, a special session of the General Conference was called specifically to address this issue.

Ultimately the “**One Church Plan**” (a plan that would have changed this language and allowed local churches to decide for themselves) was voted down in favor of the “**Traditional Plan**” where language remained unchanged

Also at the 2019 General Conference, a “Paragraph 2553” was added to the Book of Discipline to allow Local Churches to disaffiliate if they meet its requirements and in doing so will **be released from their Trust Clause.**

This provision **expires on 12/31/2023.**

Decisions at the 2019 General Conference did little to resolve the debate. In fact, tensions escalated.

Leaders hoped to propose a way to peacefully separate at the 2020 General Conference.

However, Covid 19 postponed that Conference till 2024.

In the absence of a General Conference, some local churches have decided to exercise ¶ 2553 and disaffiliate now.

At the North Georgia Annual Conference in June of 2022, **Seventy local churches** disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church.

They represented about **10%** of congregations and a **3%** of Conference membership.

Many others have started the process.

MAJOR INFLUENCERS IN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

UMCNext (<https://umcnext.com>)

A progressive caucus that seeks to eliminate the language, restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons.

Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA)

(<https://wesleyan covenant.org>) A traditional caucus advocating separation and are the founders of the Global Methodist Church.

HOW DOES THIS AFFECT US?

In the short term, very little. The Book of Discipline can only be changed at General Conference. The next one will be held in 2024.

However, the opportunity to disaffiliate under Paragraph 2553 expires 12/31/2023 and General Conference is the only body that can extend that date.

We need a clear consensus to move forward with disaffiliation now as it requires a 2/3 vote.

WHAT IS DISAFFILIATION?

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Disaffiliation is the process for a local UMC church to **separate** from the United Methodist Church denomination.

2021 North Georgia Annual Conference established/approved the Paragraph 2553 process:

- Must pay current year +1 additional year of apportionments
- Must pay unfunded Pension Liability
- Estimated costs range **\$100,000-\$200,000**
- Requires **2/3 majority vote** of professing church members

Church assets are **released from the Trust Clause**

WHY THE URGENCY?

- 2553 Expires **12/31/2023**
- Disaffiliation requires approval by vote of the Annual Conference in **June of 2023**
- This requires **2/3 vote** from a Church Conference in **March-April 2023**
- Request for a Church Conference must be made between **Jan 1 – Feb 28, 2023**
- Our Administrative Council plans to meet in **late November** to decide if our church will request a Church Conference

IF WE LEFT,
WHERE WOULD WE GO?

IF WE LEFT, WHERE WOULD WE GO?

Disaffiliation opens a new set of decisions with both benefits and challenges:

- Become an independent church
- Join the Global Methodist Church (a prevailing option)
- Join another form of Methodism or another denomination

INDEPENDENT CHURCH

- We would own all our property (no more Trust Clause).
- We would not have to pay apportionments.

INDEPENDENT CHURCH

We would have several administrative tasks:

- Decide on a new name
- New Incorporation
- New 501c3 Status
- New website email name
- Retitle all property and bank accounts
- New organizational structure and new bylaws

INDEPENDENT CHURCH

- Draft and agree on our new statement of faith
- Remove the Cross and Flame and any reference to United Methodist Church
- If we became an independent church, we must **recruit and retain our own pastors**
- Create our own pension plan

We lose our “connection” with a worldwide global ministry.

GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

- This new Methodist Denomination formed May 1, 2022 and has emerged as a prevailing option
- They are operating under a “Transitional Discipline” until their first conference in 12-18 months
- We would own all our property (no more Trust Clause)
- We would still pay apportionments
- They would provide assistance in securing a pastor
- They offer some “connection”

OTHER OPTIONS:
JOIN ANOTHER FORM OF
METHODISM/DENOMINATION

- Free Methodist Church
- Wesleyan Church
- Other branches of Methodism
- Another denomination

**WHY ARE SOME
CHURCHES LEAVING?**

WHY ARE SOME CHURCHES LEAVING?

- Uncertainty over possible changes to Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality
 - Ordination of practicing homosexuals
 - Allowing the ordained clergy to perform same sex weddings
- Fear that changes would 'require' a pastor or church to perform same sex weddings

WHY ARE SOME CHURCHES LEAVING?

- Fear that future pastoral appointments will not match the needs of the Local Church
- Lack of enforcement of the Book of Discipline
- Disagreement over Interpretation/Authority of Scripture
- Desire to be released from the Trust Clause and/or Apportionment responsibilities
- Perceived urgency over ¶ 2553 disaffiliation deadlines

MISINFORMATION CLOUDING THE PROCESS

There is a **false claim** there is a movement in the UMC to alter our historic core Christian beliefs including:

The virgin birth

The divinity of Christ

The physical bodily resurrection of Christ

The atonement of the cross

Christ is the only way of salvation

The UMC's core Christian beliefs stated in the Book of Discipline are **unchangeable**.

MISINFORMATION CLOUDING THE PROCESS

The **narrative** that if we don't act now to disaffiliate there will be no way to do so in the future if the Book of Discipline is changed.

- North Georgia Conference **claims** there are other ways to disaffiliate
- UMCNext's **proposed legislation** to remove LGBTQ language also **includes a deadline extension**

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE
DISCERNMENT PROCESS?

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS?

The **entire congregation** is invited to enter this period of discernment to seek God's will for our future.

OUR DISCERNMENT TEAM WILL FACILITATE THE PROCESS BY:

- Updating our webpage
<https://madisonfumc.com/discern> with
 - Relative Facts
 - Ongoing frequently asked questions
 - Useful links
 - Accurate information
- Fielding questions and comments sent to discern@madisonfumc.com.
- Holding small and large groups for Q&A and conversations.

OUR DISCERNMENT TEAM WILL FACILITATE THE PROCESS BY:

- Making ourselves available for 1-on-1 conversations.
- Hosting polls and surveys to help quantify the views of the congregation.
- Draft a written report based on your feedback for the Administrative Council by late November .

BASED ON CHURCH FEEDBACK,
ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL WILL
DECIDE TO EITHER:

Request a called Church Conference for the
purpose of voting to disaffiliate.

The process would then continue

OR

Remain in the UMC (at least until after the 2024
General Conference).

The process would end at this time

THE FINE PRINT

- An Administrative Council vote to call the Church Conference requires 50%+1. If they elect to do so, they will notify our District Superintendent, Greg Porterfield between January 1 and February 28, 2023. He would then schedule us a **Called Church Conference** in March or April of 2023
- Disaffiliation **requires a 2/3 majority vote** of all professing members who are present to pass
- North Georgia Annual Conference **must vote to approve** in June of 2023

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED IN DISCERNMENT?

- Pray and seek God's Will for yourself and our church
- Read your Bible
- Do no harm, Do good, Stay in love with God
- Ask questions & understand the facts
- Have conversations with each other and/or a member of the discernment team

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED IN DISCERNMENT?

- Research all 3 sides of the discussion
 - Traditionalist
 - Progressive
 - Centrist
- Host or attend small group discussions
- Allow time for the Holy Spirit to guide you in the process (**have patience with yourself**)
- Give feedback and participate in any surveys and polls

SUMMARY

- The UMC language regarding human sexuality has not changed and cannot be changed before 2024.
- This language has been challenged in the past and will likely be again in the future.
- No one knows for sure what if any of the language will be changed or how it will affect us.
- Some have violated the existing language without reprimand.

SUMMARY

- Paragraph 2553 provides a path to disaffiliate now. It has a cost, requires a 2/3 majority vote and expires 12/31/2023.
- If the language changes in the future, there could be a Paragraph 2553 extension.
- Also, the Conference is also claims in writing that there are other ways to disaffiliate.

SUMMARY

The next several weeks are our period of conversation and discernment. **We will gather again in November** and seek consensus to either:

- **Remain a United Methodist Church** congregation

or

- **Hold a vote** to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church
- If the Church chooses to disaffiliate, then the Church would need to decide what to do next.

Questions

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