

## The Affiliation Question

The information contained in this document was shared with members of the congregation at the end of focus groups sessions held in January and February 2023, on the affiliation question and possible disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church.

### 1. Different views and positions on homosexuality within the UMC explained in four categories (*by Rev. Tom Lambrecht and Rev. Tom Berlin*)

- 1) **Traditionalist Non-Compatibilists:** People in this zone are satisfied with the current restrictive wording of the Book of Discipline on same-sex marriage and the ordination of people who are practicing homosexuals. They want to see the church live out what they feel are obvious prohibitions in Scripture regarding homosexual acts. For them it is an issue of personal holiness. They are concerned that if these passages are compromised, all passages related to practices of sexual ethics and personal holiness will be compromised. Their concerns about change are of such importance to them that they would rather be in a church where all agree on these matters than feel personally compromised by a church with a diverse view on human sexuality.
- 2) **Traditionalist Compatibilists:** These people hold traditional views on human sexuality but understand that other pastors or churches would like to have the option of offering marriage ceremonies to same-sex couples. Some Annual Conferences want to have the ability to ordain people who are practicing homosexuals. While they do not want to be forced into performing such a marriage, they can live in a denomination where this occurs, understanding that there are many issues beyond this where they find unity in our connection.
- 3) **Progressive Compatibilists:** They would like to see the church offer ordination to all people and same-sex marriage to committed Christian couples. They understand that their friends on the right are not where they are and believe that the unity Christ prayed for the church can be upheld despite this difference. They respect the right of their traditionalist friends and do not want them to be forced into situations that would violate their personal beliefs.
- 4) **Progressive Non-Compatibilists:** People in this space have deep concerns for the call of Scripture for justice to all people and Jesus' deferential care of the marginalized. These two points of biblical interpretation, among others, lead them to work for full inclusion in the life of the church. This is such a high value for them that they only want to be in a church that reflects this belief and will work for change as long as the church does not.

### 2. What does disaffiliation mean in The United Methodist Church and the Virginia Conference? (*Answered by Jeremiah Team, VAUMC*)

The United Methodist Church has wrestled with matters related to human sexuality since 1972. With the most recent postponement of General Conference until 2024, and the launch of the Global Methodist Church, some churches are discerning they should disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. Some churches will stay independent and some will join the Global Methodist Church. The Virginia Conference lay and clergy leadership respects that the decision to stay or leave the denomination should be one of conscience. There is a fair, simple, and consistently applied process for those who have prayerfully discerned disaffiliation as their best course. For those churches considering disaffiliating from the denomination for reasons of conscience relating to matters of human sexuality, Paragraph(¶) 2553 of the 2016 Book of Discipline as amended in 2019 (the “Discipline”) must govern this process through December 31, 2023, at which time ¶ 2553 will lapse. See the full text of the Paragraph in addendum.

**3. How many churches in the Virginia Conference are seeking disaffiliation? (Answered by Jeremiah Team, VAUMC)**

At the called Annual Conference on Saturday, October 29, 2022, 10 churches were ratified to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under ¶ 2553. There can be more churches that seek to disaffiliate this year. The Virginia Conference currently is comprised of 1,121.

**4. Will there be additional called Annual Conferences this year to allow more churches an opportunity to leave before the paragraph 2553 expires? (Answered by Jeremiah Team, VAUMC)**

Yes, there will be three more called annual conferences to help churches complete the process outlined in paragraph 2553.

- Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 9 a.m.
- Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 9 a.m.
- Saturday, October 7, 2023 at 9 a.m.

**5. What if we can't get this done by December 31, 2023? (Answered by Virginia UMC)**

Other arrangements similar to the paragraph 2553 can be made at the next General Conference available for churches that desire to leave after December 31, 2023. However, we don't know for sure until the General Conference meets. Next General Conference will be held April 23 – May 3, 2024, at Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

**6. If we leave, do we have to join the Global Methodist Church? (Answered by Virginia UMC)**

There is no requirement for you to do so. Most of those 10 churches that left the Virginia Annual Conference at the called Annual Conference held on October 29, 2022 are becoming independent, not GMC.

**7. Will our pastor come with us if we leave? (Answered by Jeremiah Team, VAUMC)**

Your pastor will make their own decision as to whether or not to stay connected as a pastor in the United Methodist Church. If they do not leave with you, you cannot have another UMC pastor. You will need to find your own pastor.

**8. What is involved in the costs of disaffiliation? Below is the estimates of CUMC's cost of disaffiliation. (Information provided by the Treasurer's office of VAUMC)**

- 1) CUMC's share of Annual Conference Pension and Health Liabilities: \$331,120
- 2) CUMC's two years of Annual Conference and District Apportionments: \$190, 368
- 3) Legal expenses related to disaffiliation: (Yet to be determined. The Leadership Team is in the process of obtaining more information on possible legal costs. The estimated legal expenses will be shared with the church members before the vote to be taken later this spring)
- 4) Remaining salary, housing, benefits for appointed clergy through the end of the appointment year if the clergy stays with the Annual Conference of UMC: (Yet to be determined depending on the date of disaffiliation, if CUMC votes to do so, and the remaining period until the end of the pastor's appointment which is June 30.)

\* Culpeper UMC's Annual Conference apportionments for 2023 is \$80,136 and the District Apportionments is \$15,048. Apportionment is a fair share of the UMC local churches to support the denomination, Annual Conference, and the District mission and ministries as they are listed below.

- Conference Mission and Ministries
- Conference Services
- District Superintendents Fund
- Equitable Compensation
- Church Extension and Development
- Virginia Education Fund
- Active Clergy Health
- Retired Clergy Health
- Episcopal Fund
- World Service
- General Interdenominational Fund
- Ministerial Education
- Black College Fund
- Africa University Fund
- Supporting our District

*Is The UMC? (Information provided by the denomination, UMC.org)*

**1. Is the UMC about to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?**

No. All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, more specifically in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These cannot be altered without a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths aggregate approval of all annual conferences of The United Methodist Church worldwide. There is no basis to conclude such majorities can be achieved to alter the Articles and Confession for any reason.

Here is what the Articles and Confession say on these matters. And will continue to say.

*Virgin Birth and Divinity of Jesus*

Articles of Religion, Article II:

“The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin.”

Confession of Faith, Article II:

“We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

*Resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

Articles of Religion, Article III:

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

Confession of Faith, Article II:

"Jesus Christ... was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return."

*Salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ*

Articles of Religion, Article IX:

“We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith.”

Confession of Faith, Article IX:

“We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**2. Is the UMC intending to change the Bible?**

No. The United Methodist Church has no official translation of the Bible and has never sought to alter the Bible at all. United Methodists have always had a variety of views about how to interpret specific passages of Scripture and likely always will.

**3. Is the UMC immediately dropping all prohibitions related to human sexuality, now that the Global Methodist Church has been officially started?**

No. The creation of the Global Methodist Church has no bearing on the existing policies of The United Methodist Church. The policies of The United Methodist Church are set by its General Conference. The General Conference is the only body that can change them. The General Conference is scheduled to meet in April, 2024 at Charlotte, NC.

***Current position of the UMC on homosexuality (stated in the Book of Discipline of UMC)***

¶ 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.

**4. Is the UMC ending United Methodist Church memberships of those whose local church disaffiliates?**

Yes. When a local church disaffiliates, the Judicial Council has made clear all of its members depart the denomination with it. “Disaffiliation... under ¶2553 involves *both* church membership and property... the membership departs from The United Methodist Church” (Decision 1449, Question 5). From the standpoint of The United Methodist Church, it is not possible to be a member in The United Methodist Church and a member in another denomination (or an independent church) at the same time (Paragraph 241 of the 2016 Book of Discipline). So if your congregation has voted to disaffiliate, and you wish to remain a member of The United Methodist Church, you will want to find another United Methodist congregation to join *before* the effective date of disaffiliation set by the annual conference. You may ask your district office for assistance in this process.

**5. Is the UMC forcing or going to force congregations that do not want a self-avowed practicing homosexual as a pastor or deacon to accept one?**

No.

First of all, it remains a chargeable offense in The United Methodist Church to be a clergy person or candidate for the clergy who is a self-avowed, practicing homosexual. Bishops are forbidden to appoint those found through the complaint process to be self-avowed, practicing homosexuals. This has been the case since 1984.

To be sure, some of these rules are unevenly enforced in some places. But in most U.S. conferences, these policies have been consistently enforced from their beginning. The result has been either no self-avowed, practicing homosexual clergy remaining in the conference, or, if there are any, once charges are brought and a finding of guilt determined, their ability to be appointed is at an end. In short, these policies have been very effective at keeping self-avowed, practicing homosexuals out of the clergy pool of The UMC or removing them from it.

Thus, the likelihood that any congregation in most conferences could receive a self-avowed, practicing homosexual person as its pastor or deacon is close to zero. And in the conferences from whom we have received this question most frequently, it is zero.

*\* Additional comment:*

*At the called Church Conference held on October 30, 2022, Rev. Dr. Hyo Lee, District Superintendent of the Three Notch'd District, stated that the Virginia Conference of the UMC's cabinet which consists of the Bishop and District Superintendents has been always appointing clergy in consultation with a church's SPRC. Regarding a concern of receiving a homosexual as a pastor of a local church, he assured that the Virginia UMC cabinet would not appoint any homosexual as a pastor against the desire of a congregation.*

*According to Dr. Lee, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson who is newly assigned to Virginia Annual Conference beginning in January 2023, stated that she would honor and uphold the current Book of Discipline.*