

The 9 most frequently reoccurring questions regarding disaffiliation

October 23, 2022



CHURCH CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20 @ 5:00 PM

All members in good standing should attend.



Marlon First United
Methodist Church

1. Why does the Church Council think that we should vote toward disaffiliation?

The decision of the council comes at the end of several years of information shared by the Lead Pastor and our Annual Conference delegates reporting the growing dissonance of the United Methodist church. The previous disregard by our bishops of the Book of Discipline led us to withhold our apportionments beginning in 2017.

Other factors for the Council's decision are the third postponement of General Conference (now to 2024) and the near certainty that a simple and gracious pathway to leave the denomination will be legislatively blocked, coupled with the "sunset" date 12/31/23 of the opportunity to disaffiliate.

The council spent time reviewing materials surrounding the issues of sexual ethics, scriptural teachings and contrary theological views currently causing turmoil in the UMC. We also reviewed presentations given at Marion Methodist by #BeUMC (which included the two Assistants to the Bishop of the Iowa Annual Conference) and the Wesleyan Covenant Association.

Further, after reviewing the outcome of the 2019 General Conference and the "Leading Now" visionary letter from our Bishop encouraging additional disobedience to the current Book of Discipline that was legislatively upheld at the 2019 conference, it was apparent the congregation needed to be informed similarly as the council. Thus, the council voted unanimously that the entire congregation should have a voice regarding disaffiliation by calling for a Church Conference vote with our district superintendent for the purpose of disaffiliation or remaining with the UMC.

2. Why do we think we should disaffiliate?

We believe we, should disaffiliate because our doctrine based on scripture is not being upheld by those charged to do so. Disaffiliating will mean that we will continue with the current doctrine of the church in a consistent manner that aligns with scripture as we have been doing at Marion Methodist for the entirety of our existence. *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* Romans 12:2

3. What is a Methodist?

Methodism was developed as a result of revival and reformation movement led by John Wesley and his brother Charles. The Wesleys believed in growing as Christians through community, surrounded by people of similar faith and convictions. Like all Christians, Methodists believe that God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to sacrifice himself for the sins of humanity and hold to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible to be the holy scripture. Salvation is through Christ alone, through faith in Christ and by His grace.

Methodists believe that a personal relationship with God, faith in Christ, and the Holy Spirit transforms their lives and leads people into services for others.

3b. How do we stay Methodist by disaffiliation?

Disaffiliation does not change any of our beliefs that we have been operating in for the last 180+ years. Marion Methodist will still believe that God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to sacrifice himself for the sins of humanity and hold to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible to be the holy scripture. We will continue to believe salvation is through Christ alone, through faith in Christ and by His grace. We will still believe that a personal relationship with God, faith in God and the Holy Spirit that transforms their lives and leads people into service for others. And Marion Methodist will still believe in growing as Christians through community, surrounded by people of similar faith and convictions.

3c. What is going to change if we disaffiliate? Or stay United Methodist?

If we disaffiliate:

1. We will have the choice to become affiliated with another Wesleyan denomination or stay independent. We are not encouraging Marion Methodist to become an independent church because we believe Christians simply do better work binding together.
2. Our current beliefs, values, and practices will not change!

If we stay United Methodist:

There will be churches within the United Methodist Conference that "consider themselves liberal, evangelical, progressive, traditionalist, middle of the road, conservative, centrist, or something else." It is desired by our denominational leaders that General Conference will permit individual churches and pastors to be able to decide whether same sex marriages will be performed at their church. No one will be asked to act contrary to their beliefs and convictions but, likewise, no one will be prevented from doing the ministry they feel God is calling them to do. Does this sound like one church? Future pastors will still be appointed by the bishop. Pastors can fall anywhere on the scale from conservative to progressive and are appointed by the bishop regardless of the beliefs of the local church.

4. Is this all about sex?

The short answer is no. While this issue has been the most visible and widely publicized, there are deeper and more significant scriptural and theological disparities that are becoming increasingly apparent. For example, one bishop likened the virgin birth to mythology, suggested Jesus merely claimed to be the Messiah, and rejected the bodily resurrection of Christ.

The pastor of United Methodism's largest church is teaching that scripture can and should be put into three "buckets"- one for teachings you just know are good and right, another for those that were for a specific time and no longer relevant for today, and the third for scripture that "never ever reflected the heart of God".

United Methodist-affiliated (apportionment supported) Duke Divinity School prayed to the "Great Queer One" and refer to God as the "mother, father, and parent." Similar activities, "worship services", have been held at other United Methodist seminaries as well.

Isaac (They/Them) also known as Ms. Penny Cost (She/Her/Hers) studies Business Management and Religious Studies at Illinois Wesleyan University. They are reportedly the first Drag Queen in the world to be Certified as a Candidate for Ordination within the UMC. Isaac has spoken to congregations across Iowa, the United States, Canada, and the UK on the topics of Queer Theology, The Spirituality of Drag, and Our Collective Call to Liberation.

The above examples are a representative sample of some violations of the current Book of Discipline. Although United Methodism as a whole is not endorsing or promoting all the above in the current "#BEUMC" campaign or claiming these actions as the proper way forward for the church, none of these actions are being disciplined or corrected. In fact, the Cabinet of the Iowa Conference (November 2021) and Bishop Laurie Haller released *Leading Now*, which called for disregarding our Discipline and circumventing the proper disciplinary process. The Dean of the Cabinet wrote "Yes, we violated the Discipline, but sometimes rules must be broken to effect change."

These examples, and many more like them, have caused disarray, dysfunction and confusion within the church. All these issues are taking time and energy away from our true mission of making disciples for Christ and are ignoring the truth of scripture.

Marion Methodist has persistently been on record in policy and congregational practice that all persons and family structures are invited and welcomed to partake in the work of ministry and the marks of discipleship.

5. *Are we going to lose the church buildings? Escrow, money, etc. Can we sustain (either way)?*

No, in fact by disaffiliating we actually will OWN the church building, Carnegie and any other real assets the church possesses (i.e., funds in the Foundation etc.).

In the current state, we hold these buildings and assets in "sacred trust" which is a legal term for the United Methodist Church.

It is true that church council has raised and held apportionments beginning in 2017, a practice that has

been reaffirmed by the council numerous times. This began when it became clear that the Book of Discipline was not being followed on certain matters by the Board of Ordained Ministry, our District Superintendents and Bishops. These funds are being held in an Edward Jones fund in escrow. On September 1, the held apportionment fund totaled \$917,000. These funds will allow us to disaffiliate. We prayerfully believe we shall be able to financially sustain either way, as we have been good stewards of our money.

6. *Why do we have to leave and why do we have to pay to leave? Is there a cost to disaffiliate?*

This might be the most upside-down issue of the disaffiliation question. If we want to maintain the doctrine, spirit and discipline of the church isn't it logical that we would stay and those who desire something different in the church would exit? Yes, it is, BUT, because the denominational checks and balances are broken and some bishops are making policy in dissonance with the doctrine of the church, if we desire to hold to the tenets of 2,000 years of church tradition and the doctrine of the United Methodist Church we must leave.

As of mid-October, we are aware of nearly 100 churches in Iowa having disaffiliation conversations (and over 1,000 churches have already voted to disaffiliate in the USA). Because of that mass, obviously the remaining United Methodist Church will be under much more financial duress than it currently is experiencing. Thus, at General Conference 2019 paragraph 2553 was added to the Book of Discipline and the financial requirements for Marion Methodist are as follows.

The Book of Discipline requires churches seeking to disaffiliate pay 2 years of apportionments (roughly \$230,000) and any unfunded pension requirements (currently \$133,000 but will be refigured in February).

How would we pay for the cost to disaffiliate?

As noted above in #5 in 2017, the Stewardship and Finance committee voted to withhold payment of apportionments and keep the funds in a trust account until the Iowa Conference began holding churches and pastors accountable to the Book of Discipline. Since then, the church council has continually voted to hold the apportionments payments until a resolution from the Annual Conference was passed. This funding is sufficient to cover any costs from disaffiliation. (There will be additional legal costs; title search, rewriting our bylaws, removing the United Methodist emblems from our signs etc.)

7. *How does this impact the current pastor and how will we hire new pastors?*

How this impacts the pastor is dependent on the outcome of the vote. If we choose to disaffiliate, then our pastor will stay with us. His pension will transfer to a new denomination, and we will continue to fund his pension. At the time of

disaffiliation, we will also be required to pay for our portion of the unfunded pension liabilities to the UMC. (see #6)

How do we hire new pastors if we disaffiliate? Depending on where we land denominationally after disaffiliation has an impact on how we select a new Pastor. For example, if we join the Global Methodist Church, there will be resources to help place a new pastor similar to how this is currently done as part of the UMC. If we choose to remain an independent Church, then we would use a service that specializes in finding an appropriate match to meet our requirements. This would be very similar to how it's currently done just using an outside service.

If we choose not to disaffiliate, then our pastor will more than likely retire or could choose to stay with the church. If we need a new pastor, one will be assigned, and we continue as we have in the past.

8. Do we have to be present to vote?

Yes, we do have to be present to vote. This is a longstanding United Methodist Book of Discipline rule.

9. Why consider becoming part of the Global Methodist Church?

First and foremost, we believe in the Wesleyan way of making disciples and that the "methodology" of Methodism could be fantastically effective in this century. Two centuries ago, nearly half of Americans were Methodist and we believe the pre-Christian environment of today has many parallels. Further, we believe Methodism when administered according to form with accountability between the Legislative, Episcopal and Judicial branches is incredibly effective.

That said, United Methodism has LOST 5,000,000 members

in the United States in the 54 years of our existence as a denomination. We need something new, and it is right here, available to us. In short, the Global Methodist Church is intended to serve as a resource for all who wish to join in a "methodical," practical, and warm-hearted pursuit of loving God and serving others as Jesus' disciples in the world.

The Global Methodist Church is committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and the work of the Holy Spirit in conveying God's truth and grace to all people. Witness to the world is marked by mutual love, concern, sharing, and a focus on those who are most vulnerable. Watching over one another in love and bearing witness to the transforming power of the Good News as we humbly, but boldly, strive to serve others as ambassadors of Christ!

In the 1720s John and Charles Wesley and friends at Oxford University met together to deepen their Christian faith through daily, practical spiritual disciplines. Derided by others as a "new sect of Methodists" for their "methodical" ways of practicing the faith and holding one another accountable to it, the small group embraced the insult and persevered in their fellowship. And so, they and the millions who followed after them have ever since been known as "the people called Methodists." In that spirit, this *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of the Global Methodist Church is intended to serve as a resource for all who wish to join in a "methodical," practical, and warm-hearted pursuit of loving God and serving others as Jesus' disciples in the world. Beginning with confessions rooted in Scripture and shaped by the great teaching of the Church universal, the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* provides the essential structure for the Global Methodist Church from its official launch on May 1, 2022.

We believe it in the best interests of the church to consider becoming a part of the Global Methodist Church.



PRAYER TIMES

Sunday 7:30 AM
Monday 7:30 AM
Tuesday 12:00 PM
Wednesday 12:00 PM
Thursday 6:00 PM
Friday 12:00 PM
Saturday 6:00 PM

Sign up to spend time in prayer for our church at 5050 REC Drive



Marion First United Methodist Church