



North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church

You May Have Heard

An official document from the NC Conference that provides accurate information on the ideas, misconceptions, and misinformation about disaffiliation and The United Methodist Church.

Table of Contents

[Financial](#)
[Theological](#)
[The North Carolina Conference](#)
[The United Methodist Church](#)

Financial

We are tired of paying a “tax.”

Any church organization that seeks to collectively care for God’s children will have expenses. Sharing in that care and providing the means for that care is a distinctive way United Methodists live into our call. This connection is at the core of what it means to be a United Methodist. United Methodists today join the generations of our forebears who built and sustained the church so United Methodist ministry will continue into the future. The opportunity to participate in funding our connectional ministries is not a “tax” but, rather, a way that we join other United Methodists in providing that system of support to care for God’s children.

Apportionments started with John Wesley when he realized that people in the small faith groups (class meetings) he helped organize could do more with their combined resources than they could as individuals in reaching out to the poor and in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Connectional giving was developed as a means to support the mission and ministry of the church. Both clergy and laity have a voice and a vote in setting those financial goals. Our shared giving has made it possible for the people of The UMC to share the gospel and care for all of God’s children throughout the world. Every United Methodist church is part of a larger connection of shared purpose and mission that has been in existence for hundreds of years.

The Conference is planning to redistribute apportionments from churches that disaffiliate to churches that stay, so expect your apportionments to increase.

The budget is set at Annual Conference, so the churches that remain will be the ones who actually set the budget. That budget is then allocated out as apportionments. The Conference leadership is well aware of the budget implications of disaffiliating churches and has run several scenarios of how ministry will continue after churches that disaffiliate are no longer supporting connectional giving. **There is no intention to reallocate the same Conference budget to the remaining churches to cover disaffiliating churches.** The churches that remain will approve a new budget at Annual Conference, and that is the budget that will be apportioned.

The UMC is an ever-increasing bureaucracy.

The UMC has worked diligently to be a good fiscal steward. Over the last decade, all general agencies have weathered steep budget cuts in an effort to support the work of the local church. For each dollar given at a local church in the NC Conference, **91 cents stay in the local church.** Specifically in the NC Conference, the 2016 budget was \$20,514,000. In 2023, the projected budget is reduced to \$15,395,000, a reduction of almost 25%. Accounting for inflation, this is a significant overall reduction. A portion of the NC Conference budget also supports clergy - through the ordination process, training, benefits on Clergy Medical Leave, moving expense reimbursement, and much more.

Theological

The Conference doesn't believe in scriptural holiness.

It is important to note that the NC Conference (nor any annual conference) does not have the authority to speak on behalf of the denomination on any topic. That is an inherent part of our denomination's structure. Our scriptural, theological understanding is defined as part of *The Book of Discipline* and further clarified in *The Book of Worship* and *The Book of Resolutions*.

We are focused on scripture: the word becoming flesh and living among us (John 1:14). The United Methodist Church is founded on a Wesleyan theology of grace, anchored in Scripture, and based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the continuing movement of the Holy Spirit. In our polity, we emphatically state: "Faith is the only response essential for salvation."

United Methodists affirm that through Jesus Christ, God has made salvation available to all persons. That does not mean we believe that all persons will be saved. John Wesley (and we) teach that Christ's death creates the *possibility* that all *may* be saved. We believe salvation is God's response and offer of love, and that love does not compel people to accept it. We do not believe that God predestines some to salvation and others to condemnation. We embrace the fundamentals of the Wesleyan tradition and dedicate ourselves to the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The UMC is more focused on social justice than sharing the saving grace of Jesus. Why should I continue to give to a denomination that is going to prioritize social justice, e.g., anti-racism, over the gospel, e.g., Jesus died for our sin?

We insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice, and renewal in the life of the world. In joining heart and hand, we assert that **personal religion, evangelical witness, and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.**

We remember that in Matthew 22, Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment. He says, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Mat 22:37-40)

Leaving The UMC will give your local church the revival it needs. The NC Conference and The UMC are causing your church to die.

Revival begins in the journey from the heart to the head and then moves beyond the walls of the church into the world as unto Jesus and as the hands and feet and voice of the Body of Christ. **Every church has the power to do this.**

The UMC is about to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone.

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.

[Read more on this topic and others at "Is the UMC Really..." from umc.org](#)

People who want to leave The UMC do not believe the Bible.

People who want to stay in The UMC do not believe the Bible.

Statements such as these have been made about persons with differing opinions on several matters. The United Methodist denomination is focused on scripture: the word becoming flesh and living among us (John 1:14). **One person's opinions differing from another's does not support either of these claims about a person's scriptural beliefs.** These claims might be better interpreted to say that there are varying opinions within the body of Christ, but broad claims such as these are not based in fact and cannot be applied to large groups of people.

For more information on The UMC's position on scripture, see Articles V and VI in the [Articles of Religion](#) and Article IV in the [Confession of Faith](#).

The North Carolina Conference

The Conference owns our building but doesn't help us fix it.

This question is directly related to the [trust clause defined by the Book of Discipline](#) and used in titles for property and assets. This requirement is a “fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.” ([¶ 2501](#))

The trust clause has been a part of Methodism since the beginning. In 1750, John Wesley worked with lawyers to craft deeds for existing Methodist properties that helped ensure they would continue to be used in support of the Methodist movement. The clause was first approved by the General Conference for American Methodists in 1796 and included in the Book of Discipline in 1797.

Local church property is held by the local church Board of Trustees. The property is held “in trust,” which means the local church holds the property **with an obligation to maintain and protect the property** so it can continue to be used as a United Methodist Church in the future. The UMC trust clause was developed by John Wesley based on the belief that the key question is, “What is best for the whole connection?” and not “What is best for my congregation or me?”

The Conference cares more about the Conference than the local church.

Our polity provides opportunities for there to be multiple areas of focus in our shared life together. While there are certainly pressing concerns at the Conference level, the leadership of the NC Conference also cares deeply for and seeks to support the life and ministry of all of the local churches in our connection. The Conference leadership are keenly aware of the purpose of the annual conference as defined in The Book of Discipline: “equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.” ([¶ 601](#)). Here are just a sampling of some of the ways that the Conference is supporting and tending to local churches:

- Clergy Care programs
- Over 400 Zoom accounts for local churches to stay connected in worship and fellowship during a pandemic
- Missional and congregational support grants during the pandemic
- Multiple staff and thousands of hours from New Faith Communities, Connectional Ministries, Church Transformation, and Cabinet, working individually and collaboratively with congregations around evangelism and disciple-making, vitalization, new faith expressions, and congregational transitions.
- Our Conference Media Center provides for the local church, continuous resources on Christian formation, Christian discipleship, evangelism, the church and contemporary topics, children’s resources, bible studies, and other resources for Christian education.

If you stay, the Conference will appoint a gay pastor.

The needs and theological understanding of the local church are always considered by the Cabinet. The Cabinet will not send a pastor in order to “convert” a congregation or force a particular agenda.

In the appointive process, the Bishop and Cabinet consider a common set of Core Values. These Core Values, as approved by the Bishop and Cabinet, include:

- We will listen for and submit to the Holy Spirit’s leading through prayer, scripture reading, and holy conferencing.
- We believe the church is the Body of Christ and the work we do is the work of God.
- We will prepare ourselves spiritually, physically, and mentally for this discernment process while relying on Christ to do “more than we could ask for or imagine”.
- Our appointment considerations will include the church and the larger community
- We will consider the needs/opportunities of the church and gifts/strengths of the pastor with both a present and a post-pandemic framework in mind.
- We will name and claim the missional rationale for new appointments.
- We will engage in ongoing critical and constructive self-reflection on how we can improve the appointive process and best support clergy & congregations in transition.

If you stay, the Conference will force pastors and churches to perform same-sex marriages.

No pastor would be forced to marry anyone. Pastors currently make their own decision about their willingness to marry a couple. They have autonomy and do decline to marry people. Further, it is unlikely that a gay couple would want to be married in a non-accepting congregation. As stated above, pastors have the discretion to decide who they marry.

The Disaffiliation Agreement will probably change when we get a new Bishop. You should probably get out now.

This is addressed in the following statement from the Conference Board of Trustees:

“The Conference Board of Trustees retains the authority under The Book of Discipline to establish, and change when appropriate, the terms and conditions for churches within the Conference to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. The Board of Trustees hereby confirms, however, that it adopted the Disaffiliation Agreement, in the form in which it was published in May 2022, with the expectation and understanding that this will be the final version of the Disaffiliation Agreement that will remain the path for churches to disaffiliate for reasons described in paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline until December 31, 2023, the time limit provided in paragraph 2553.2 for this process. **The Board does not anticipate or expect any changes to the Disaffiliation Agreement prior to the expiration of paragraph 2553 as outlined in The Book of Discipline, and the Board does not anticipate or expect that a potential change in bishop for the Conference in 2023 will**

provide a reason or occasion to revisit the terms and conditions of the Disaffiliation Agreement.”

Every church has to take a vote on this.

No. Every church is not required to vote on disaffiliation. You can continue doing ministry as before if you want to stay United Methodist.

Bishop Fairley is retiring at the end of 2022.

Bishop Fairley is not retiring at the end of 2022. Bishop Fairley serves as bishop for three annual conferences through December 31, 2022. When the SEJ Conference meets in November 2022, episcopal assignments for January 1, 2023, will be made. Bishop Fairley will receive an episcopal assignment that may or may not include the North Carolina Conference.

If we disaffiliate, we have to send the Conference all our UMC hymnals.

Hymnals have been deemed to be property that will be released from the trust clause under a fully executed Disaffiliation Agreement. As such, hymnals will not be required to be sent to the Conference as part of the agreement. If a church chooses to affiliate with another denomination, they may, however, choose not to continue using United Methodist hymnals.

The United Methodist Church

The church is splitting.

No. The term “split” applies when there is a negotiated agreement within the denomination to divide assets and resources. No such agreement has been made in The United Methodist Church. The earliest point at which such an agreement could be made would be at the next General Conference to be held in 2024.

A more accurate term, as suggested by the Rev. William Lawrence, retired dean of Perkins School of Theology and former member of the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church, is [“splintering.”](#) What is happening is that some traditionalist leaders have decided to create their own denomination (the Global Methodist Church). Leaders of that denomination and other unofficial advocacy groups, such as the [Wesleyan Covenant Association](#), which created it, are encouraging like-minded United Methodist congregations and clergy to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join their denomination instead. [\(Answered from umc.org\)](#)

Traditionalists are being asked to leave the denomination.

No. The North Carolina Annual Conference leadership does not desire for any church to disaffiliate. The requests for disaffiliations are coming largely from traditionalists. Keith Boyette, former president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and now leader of the Global Methodist Church, describes the reasons he and other leaders are asking traditionalists to leave [beginning at 13:32 in this video.](#) [\(Answered from umc.org\)](#)

The UMC is 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. [\(Answered from umc.org\)](#)

The UMC is allowing congregations that exit the denomination to continue to offer the same pension and health benefits programs to their clergy and staff.

No. The Book of Discipline does not permit non-UMC entities to be plan sponsors of the Clergy Retirement Security Program. Only a General Conference can change this. Churches that disaffiliate will face changes to the benefits they can offer their clergy. Individual congregations and clergy that join the Global Methodist Church (GMC) will be eligible to participate in a retirement plan offered by the GMC, which will be a Wespath defined-contribution retirement plan similar to a United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP).

Elders and deacons who withdraw under Discipline ¶360 will have all assets accrued in CRSP and previous programs in which they may have participated (defined benefit and defined contribution) converted into a cash equivalent and placed into their United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP). Future retirement plan contributions may be made to the new

retirement plan described above which, like UMPIP, is a personal retirement account subject to the effects of the stock market and other investments on its value.

Nor, at this time, is it possible for individual congregations (whether in the Global Methodist Church or in the UMC) to be plan sponsors for the HealthFlex health insurance programs Wespath offers unless a congregation has more than 50 eligible employees. United Methodist annual conferences are the plan sponsors for congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees. This means individual congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees currently participating in these programs that exit The United Methodist Church at this time can no longer offer these benefits to their clergy and employees effective with the date of disaffiliation. Clergy currently covered by HealthFlex, whether they disaffiliate or not, are eligible to continue on the health insurance plan by paying 100% of the costs themselves for up to 18 months. At that point, the HealthFlex plan is no longer available to them. Individual congregations and clergy who join the Global Methodist Church may participate in the health benefits selected by the Global Methodist Church, which may include HealthFlex.

For additional information, [see this FAQ from Wespath. \(Answered from umc.org\)](#)

The Bishops aren't enforcing the Discipline.

There has been a range of responses to the *Discipline*, and how it has been carried out has varied from conference to conference. In part, that is why the Council of Bishops felt it was appropriate to put on hold all proceedings related to human sexuality until further clarification could be developed from General Conference.

The church is too political/liberal/progressive.

In regard to spiritual formation, we are non-partisan; as Christians, however, we cannot be a-political. **The church is political**, a word derived from the Greek word *polis*, literally “a city” or a gathering of people. Jesus overturning tables in the temple is a political act.

We often sense the discomfort we feel in current climates, which is our *human* response, and then take that discomfort and act in negative ways, ways that are contrary to the gospel. But politics are not intrinsically bad. The cross of Christ is not one of condemnation and shame. “Political” doesn’t have to mean “divisive.”

General Conference 2019 has already spoken, so why are the 'liberals' telling 'us' that we have to form a new denomination? Why are we the ones that have to leave? Conservative pastors and congregations feel persecuted.

It is important to remember again that **no one is being asked, forced, coerced, or otherwise made to leave or to remain in The UMC**. In 2021, the Council of Bishops released their vision of a future for The UMC that makes space for *all* perspectives to co-exist and continue working together for the transformation of the world. Their vision document is entitled "[A Narrative for the](#)

[Continuing United Methodist Church](#)." The bishops envisioned "a denomination rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ, and welcoming to all churchgoers - however they identify."

Paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline states the basis for a church to disaffiliate from The UMC as follows:

"Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church 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."

Reasons such as connectional giving or property are not related to the basis for ¶ 2553 and would not be applicable to disaffiliation under this provision.

This really doesn't have to do with sexuality. This is our chance to get out with our building.

As stated above, ¶ 2553 of the *Discipline* clearly outlines the provisions for a church to disaffiliate from the UMC, and those provisions do not extend to matters of property.

The Council of Bishops has already decided that homosexuality will be condoned at the next General Conference.

The only body with the authority to set policy for The United Methodist Church is the General Conference. **Bishops do not vote at General Conference.** While bishops certainly have preferences individually for the future of The United Methodist Church, the General Conference will ultimately make decisions on changes to The Book of Discipline.

Our pastor can retire from the UMC and then lead our GMC congregation.

Retired and active UM clergy cannot serve as clergy in a disaffiliated church, while maintaining membership in the UMC. In order to serve a disaffiliated church, UM clergy must withdraw to unite with another denomination (per paragraph 360.1 of the Book of Discipline), surrender their conference membership, and be credentialed through an entity other than the UMC.