



## Questions

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**Question:** What is the urgency of deciding to stay in or leave the United Methodist Church before the General Conference in 2024?

**Answer:** Many churches that have made the decision to leave the United Methodist Church in our Annual Conference have done so to avoid more severe penalties for leaving after the General Conference in 2024. Though those penalties are yet to be determined should the United Methodist Church vote to amend the current Book of Discipline in 2024, our Annual Conference is unique in that it has a process a church can employ to disaffiliate without much financial penalty or risk of losing property. This process sunsets in December of 2023. Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica desires to make a Christ-centered decision that will honor and glorify God. The congregation will be part of the decision to wait or proceed sooner than the General Conference in 2024.

**Update:** Per Bishop Graves, from his visit on 8/3/22, there may be an extension to the current process for disaffiliation from December 2023 to December of 2024 (after the General Conference). Currently there is uncertainty however, regarding the extension and the extension being upheld in the event of a legal challenge. More information is needed.

**Question:** What is the monetary cost of disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church?

**Answer:** It will cost about \$340,000 to disaffiliate. However, the figure will change as the market changes. We will be obligated to pay two years of apportionments, plus our percentage of unfunded pension liability.

**Question:** What percentage of churches in the U.S. and globally are expected to disaffiliate?

**Answer:** We do not know the total number of churches that are disaffiliating or that will join the Global Methodist Church (GMC). The GMC is now accepting entire nations, like the Baltic States and Ukraine, into the denomination. Florida expects about 107 churches to disaffiliate. Another Annual Conference will have over 100, and the North Georgia Conference will have 72 churches that will disaffiliate. At the South Georgia Annual Conference in June, 18 churches disaffiliated from the denomination and 62 churches disaffiliated at the special called Annual Conference

on August 20, 2022. Many more are expected to disaffiliate from the South Georgia Conference in June 2023.

**Question:** How will property and assets be divided when the United Methodist Church splits?

**Answer:** This depends on the terms of the split. If the Protocol passes in 2024, there is a provision for a church to leave with its assets and property. [7/25/22: For all intents and purposes, the Protocol is dead and will not, in its current form, be voted on at the General Conference]. The GMC does not have a trustee clause. If the South Georgia Conference can leave together, then there would be no trustee clause. [7/25/22: Judicial Council decision #1444 (5/10/22) ruled that an Annual Conference cannot leave without an approved protocol and process, voted on by the General Conference]. If a local church does not accept the GMC, they can withdraw with no penalties.

**Question:** Is becoming an independent Methodist church an option? If so, what are the pros and cons of that decision?

**Answer:** If a local church decides to disaffiliate, it loses the right to be called “United Methodist” or “Methodist.” A disaffiliated church cannot use the Cross and Flame, any signage, or be called a “United Methodist Church.” The term “Methodist” can only be used if the church joins a recognized Methodist denomination. There are clear disadvantages to becoming independent. For example, the church will have to vet its own clergy, will need to create its own doctrinal standards, and will lose accountability—which is vital to who we are within the UMC. In addition to these risks, the church becomes open to a lot of liability. Every church will have to make a decision that fits their needs and understanding of denominations. There is always a need to be in community with like-minded people, not to mention the fact that belonging to a denomination limits the variability of theology amongst pastors.

**Question:** What will the new denomination be called?

**Answer:** If Wesley chooses to disaffiliate, our church will have many options to choose from. The so-called ‘new denomination’ will be the Global Methodist Church. Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica may choose to remain independent, join the Global Methodist Church or join other Methodist related denominations such as Free Methodist, Independent Methodist, or Congregational Methodists.

**Question:** Where did Park Avenue United Methodist Church go and what will its new name be?

**Answer:** Park Avenue Church, formally known as Park Avenue United Methodist Church, has chosen to remain independent for the time being.

**Question:** Does the United Methodist Church have to approve or grant permission before Wesley can disaffiliate?

**Answer:** Yes. Because the Board of Trustees of every Annual Conference holds the trustee clause, the Annual Conference in session must vote to allow the church to disaffiliate. This entails the distribution of funds and the re-deeding of the property. Without a vote of approval by the Annual Conference, a local church cannot disaffiliate. In the local church setting with the District Superintendent and a called Charge Conference, a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote must occur before a church can disaffiliate.

**Question:** Does the District Superintendent have to approve a church taking a vote to disaffiliate?

**Answer:** No, the District Superintendent does not have to approve a church's decision to take a vote to disaffiliate.

**Question:** Are gay people welcome at Wesley?

**Answer:** Gay people are always welcome at Wesley! *Everyone* is welcome at Wesley!

**Question:** Why isn't there anyone here to tell us why we should remain in the United Methodist Church?

**Answer:** Bishop David Graves came to address this question on August 3, 2022.

**Question:** Will we have an opportunity to hear the theological perspective- a speaker on behalf of the other side of the viewpoint of those churches wanting to disaffiliate?

**Answer:** Yes, the Reverend Ben Gosden will meet with Wesley on August 31, 2022.

**Question:** Are there any legal ramifications or discrimination in refusing to ordain homosexuals or perform gay marriages?

**Answer:** No. Each religious body in the United States determines its standards for ordination, and that is currently a protected Constitutional right. We have an order and discipline for our clergy and churches, and this is another downside of becoming independent: an independent church may not have these same protections, orders, or disciplines.

**Question:** What are some of the ordination requirements that have been modified to date?

**Answer:** Over time, we have had to add to and define what these requirements look like. For example, the use of technology has had to be discussed as an important issue. We've had to adapt and refine some things. Divorce is another discussion that we've had to have, especially when involving a clergy person.

**Question:** How does the law and discipline of the Methodist Church coincide with God's Word on the issues of women in clergy and divorce?

**Answer:** We recognize, in the Methodist denomination, that women have a role in ministry. We have ordained women for a long time, and even within the United Methodist Church, there have been missionaries who were consecrated as deaconesses. We affirm that role and will continue to affirm that role. The GMC has done a much better job in communicating and being cognizant of the roles of women in ministry. Regarding divorce, the Scripture is clear in many places that divorce is permissible in certain situations. It is less clear on whether a divorced clergy person may remain in active ministry. Currently, our clergy must complete a psychological evaluation with a board of psychologists in the case of a divorce. A written report then goes to the Board of Ordained Ministry, which begins an extensive process. The clergy person in question must complete this process to determine whether they may continue in ministry after some time off or perhaps

with mandated counseling. In other cases, the board may decide to terminate the divorced clergyperson's ordination. This all depends on what happens in terms of the divorce.

**Question:** From its inception, has the United Methodist Church changed its stance and interpretation of Scripture from the exclusion of women as clergy to the inclusion of women as clergy? The exclusion of divorced clergy to the inclusion of divorced clergy? The separation or race in worship to integration? All issues of personhood and human sexuality? I am concerned that this issue is about interpretation and not the authority of scripture.

**Answer:** The United Methodist Church is a flawed institution because it is man-made- and humans have all fallen short of the glory of God. No one is righteous, we are all fallen, imperfect people. The United Methodist Church has indeed changed its position on many issues at different times throughout its relatively short history. The issue at the center of the debate within the United Methodist Church is primarily on the authority of scripture. Do we allow ultimate Truth to define our reality or do we allow our personal life experiences and or the cultural nuances at play to define ultimate Truth? This question is central to many churches who are deciding on whether to stay in the UMC or disaffiliate.

**Question:** Can you give examples of Old and New Testament Scriptures that speak to issues on homosexuality?

**Answer:** Yes, passages include but are not limited to Leviticus 18:22; Genesis 9:18-28; 18:1-29; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7

**Question:** What did Jesus say about homosexuality?

**Answer:** Jesus did not explicitly say anything about homosexuality. Christians understand the biblical prohibition regarding the practice of homosexuality is in force today because many Bible passages reveal the timeless, cross-cultural divine principle of sexual purity in the context of man-woman marriage — which is reiterated in the New Testament (Jesus affirms that in Matthew 19:5-6; Paul includes all "sexual immorality" in 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

The Bible indicates that the practice of homosexuality is wrong. Never in the Bible is the practice of homosexuality mentioned in a positive light; only sex within a marriage between a man and a woman is ever mentioned in a positive way. But the church must be consistent and proclaim the truths that adultery and fornication are wrong, idolatry and thievery are wrong, greed and drunkenness are wrong. There are many ways by which we all go astray. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says it clearly: "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor

swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

The Christian message does not emphasize hateful exclusion or condemnation, but rather loving salvation. The church is a place that loves and accepts all people: not to remain as they are, but to help them become followers of Jesus and His sound teaching. Let's leave our sins behind. God calls us to repent of our sins, be forgiven, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to follow holiness and righteousness. No matter what our sins are, Jesus Christ loves us, took our moral failures upon Himself in his death, and rose again so we could live apart from any and all immorality, shining the gracious, holy light of God out to the world.

**Question:** Where can I access the Book of Discipline?

**Answer:** The Book of Discipline is available online at <https://www.ctcumc.org/files/fileshare/206-book-of-discipline.pdf>

**Question:** Why has the current doctrine of the UMC prohibited the marriage and ordination of same sex people? Weren't we all created in God's image?

**Answer:** We were all created in God's image (Genesis 1 and 2). It is important to note the difference between same sex attracted people and the practice of homosexuality. At Wesley, all are welcome! As followers of Christ and a community of imperfect people, we want to be a church that welcomes all and encourages each other to pursue holiness and obedience to Christ in all areas of our lives. Sexuality is just one part. Christ demands every part of us and every part of us is subject to the redeeming, restoring, transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

**Question:** Why are the ones that want to uphold the current Book of Discipline, the ones having to leave the denomination.

**Answer:** Many believe that the United Methodist Church is moving in a direction that is contrary to their beliefs and principles. Evidence of this shift in direction includes but is not limited to virtually no enforcement on the current Book of Discipline as well as potential punitive measures taken upon churches who are holding fast to scripture's view on issues like marriage. As the United Methodist Church moves towards *inclusivity*, as defined by today's cultural standards- many believe that if the Book of Discipline is amended to allow for same sex marriage, there will be zero tolerance for churches who refuse to marry same sex persons.

**Question:** Who makes the final decision for Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica?

**Answer:** The decision to disaffiliate is a church membership decision and NOT a decision made by a committee, a pastor, or lay leader. Before the membership of Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica vote to stay in the UMC or to disaffiliate, the church will have held:

- 3 Family Meetings
- 2-3 In person meetings held in a member's homes.
- Churchwide Survey which will help determine how our church moves forward.
- A called Church Conference that requires a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> vote of members in attendance to disaffiliate.