



The Path
Forward

PLANNING FOR OUR CHURCH'S FUTURE

2022

Congregational Report



Fellow Members,

Over the past few months our congregation has contended with our affiliation denomination. We have held town hall style and open conversation meetings, developed a process and timeline for our affiliation discernment period and activated the Affiliation Discernment Committee.

This committee's primary objective is to inform and educate our congregation, through a knowledge and fact-based process, on all relevant issues related to disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church. In addition, they have the responsibility of ensuring each member has had every opportunity to inform themselves and cast an educated vote.

Church leadership prayerfully formed this committee, guided by the following principles:

1. Respect - foster an open and transparent environment where each member will respect difference of opinions
2. Grace and Compassion – display grace and compassion towards one another as they work on behalf of our congregation
3. Unity – promote and actively encourage unity amongst members of the committee and our church

Embodying these principles, the Affiliation Discernment Committee has worked diligently over the last 45 days holding multiple sub-committee meetings, traveling, hosting guest speakers, and engaging in respectful debate. This was a difficult, complex and conflicting task. The result is this report, a concise summary of their research to you, our membership.

This congregational report is not the end, but the starting point of our Affiliation Discernment period. Church leadership will soon be inviting you to join in 40 Days of Prayer as we discern our next steps in ministry together.

Please continue to pray for our church and embody the guiding principles in order to demonstrate the love of Christ and promote the greatest unity possible amongst our congregation.

Peace and Blessings,

Christopher Frohn
Administrative Board Chair

Lisa Birch
Lay Leader

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*"May the God who gives endurance and
encouragement
give you the same attitude of mind toward
each other that Christ Jesus had."
- Romans 15:5*

1

Current Status of the UMC

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

The core issue is the authority and interpretation of Scripture, specifically, *Who is Jesus?* and the role of the church in society. Cultural influences are outweighing the teaching of the scriptures and the transformational power of the Holy Spirit under which the Methodist movement was founded.

There are irreconcilable theological differences in the UMC that continue to move in a more progressive direction. The UMC is becoming increasingly accepting of clergy, including bishops, who denigrate the authority of Scripture and deny the Divinity and Resurrection of Jesus, along with many other key tenets of the faith. These disagreements have led to decline in membership and dysfunction in the UMC.

Background: The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, combining two Methodist entities. Within 4 years, by 1972, there was already a conflict brewing over sexual ethics and homosexuality.¹ Over the past 50 years we are currently in a place many describe as irreconcilable differences. However, contrary to the common assumption that the seminal point of these irreconcilable differences is the issue of homosexuality, or human sexuality as it is more broadly called, in ordination and marriage, this is just a manifestation of a larger irreconcilable difference described above.

WHAT IS THE UMC MEMBERSHIP TREND?⁴

2007 loss of 63,723 members

2008 loss of 77,746 members

2009 loss of 79,056 members

2010 loss of 95,081 members

Since 2012, the United Methodist church has lost about 100,000 members.

WHO IS AT ODDS?

There are three types of United Methodist members who have reached irreconcilable differences.

Note: While these terms sound like they have political or secular counterparts, this isn't necessarily true. You can be a traditionalist, conservative Christian Methodist and a progressive in politics at the same time.

Traditionalists – believe the Bible is the “word of God” and is true and authoritative.

Progressives – believe that the Book of Discipline and the Bible need edits to be more relevant to current culture. They believe the Bible contains the “word of God”.

Centrists – believe that some United Methodists in some Conferences have unique cultural differences and divides, but do not believe the church should dissolve over matters of disagreement. They advocate for compromise instead of control. For example, they may say, “Can’t we all get along and keep the institution of UMC without worrying about the different interpretations of scripture?” Bishops frequently fall into this bucket.²

WHERE DO WE AGREE?

All three factions above agree with the section of The Book of Discipline (BOD) which defines the doctrine and polity of the church and considers “all persons are of sacred worth,” (para. 161, page 113, 2016 edition)¹ It is further agreed by all three factions that all persons should be treated with respect and dignity and are welcome in our churches.

WHERE DO WE DISAGREE?

Doctrinally

The second part of the above reference in the BOD (paragraph 161, G. Human Sexuality) does not condone the practice of homosexuality” considering this practice “incompatible with Christian teaching.”¹ This difference in opinion starts the divide in the core issue of the authority of scripture.

Theologically

Will the Methodist Church be the master of the Bible, or will the Methodist Church be mastered by scripture? Fundamental dispute of the UMC currently...human sexuality is an example of this. Progressives believe in picking the parts of the Bible they like and allowing the rest to recede into the background. For example, some don’t believe in the theological beliefs espoused in the Apostle’s Creed.

ORGANIZATIONAL ROOT CAUSES²

Progressives and centrists have been fighting for change for 50 years, but after 2019 when this effort failed to effect change, many bishops are not enforcing the BOD. There is a lack of enforcement of the (BOD) rules across the country.

Per Dr. Matt O’Reilly, *“It’s not primarily about sex. It’s not even primarily about doctrines. It’s about the accountability of our ecclesial leadership.”*

Background on Ecclesial (Church) Leadership:

There are 3 branches of governance in the UMC.

- **Constitutional Branch** – The UMC has a constitution and a Judicial Constitutional branch. There are 9 members in this branch. The Book of Discipline is part of the Constitution.
- **Executive Branch** – Charged with keeping and enforcing the rules – Includes: Bishops, DS, Gen Bd and Agency (46 Bishops in US, a small minority are considered traditional). Due to this composition, it would appear impossible to elect another traditional bishop.
- **Legislature – General Conference (GC)** – Comprised of approximately 862 delegates from around the world, this is the only group that can make the rules or change the BOD. The Legislature or GC has been controlled by traditionalists due to the number of African parishes. Twenty years ago, there were 1 M Church members in Africa. Now there are 7 M, with 3 M in Congo alone. Slightly more than half of all the worldwide UMC lives in Africa, and they are 100% traditionalist in theological views. Therefore, the voting body representing the church in Africa has maintained the traditional stand of the UMC.

Problem: Rules can't be changed, and all Bishops won't enforce.

TIMELINE OF HOW WE GOT TO CURRENT DECISION OPTIONS

“Protocol for Grace Through Reconciliation and Separation” was to be voted on in 2020 which would have allowed for a congregation to affiliate with another Methodist denomination without penalty and keep their assets including property until such time as they might remove themselves from the Methodist denomination entirely. There was broad support in 2020 but support has waned as the General Conference has been postponed twice now, once in 2020 and again in 2022 due to COVID concerns. Now progressives are withdrawing support and there is concern it won't pass in 2024.

If a church wants to disaffiliate now, there are only 4 legal ways:

1. Through BOD paragraph 2553* – the best way and the only certain way to disaffiliate.
2. BOD Paragraph 2548.2 – transfer to another Methodist denomination – “sole discretion of Bishop” legally and there is little to no chance of this passing
3. Close Church; abandon property and meet somewhere else and/or buy back from UMC.
4. Defy conference. Churches may be sued and property seized.

**See attachment 2*

2

Status of the South Georgia Conference

This subcommittee gathered information to clarify the status of the South Georgia Conference (SGC). We examined factors associated with “status,” including:

- The structure and organization of the SGC,
- Critical UMC/SGC problems and policies,
- Effects of policies on South Georgia churches, and
- Potential consequences of church disaffiliations in the SGC.

SGC Structure and Organization

- Georgia includes two regional bodies, North and South Georgia, each overseen by a Bishop elected by the Southeastern Jurisdiction (a UMC division).
- The SGC, headed by Bishop David Graves, includes 6 districts and 473 local congregations: Northwest, North Central, Northeast, Southwest, South Central, and Coastal. An ordained clergy District Superintendent supervises each district.
- Financial resources (apportionments) from each church fund all expenses associated with the SGC including three primary agencies in Savannah: Epworth Retreat Center, Wesley Community Center, and Magnolia Manor.
- SGC is governed by the Book of Discipline, the UMC denomination’s policy book, which is reviewed every four years at the General Conference.
- An Annual Conference, held each June, is the basic organizational body for the UMC districts.
- SGC delegates participate in a General Conference that meets every four years.

SGC and UMC: Critical Problems and Policies

- Human Sexuality, a key issue for five decades, is the intractable problem dividing the UMC. Three key issues exist: the theological debate, authority of scripture, and dysfunctional enforcement of church law from UMC governing body regarding homosexual ordinations and marriages performed by Bishops and clergy.
- 1972 General Conference added wording to The Book of Discipline that forbids the ordination of same-sex persons and marriage of same-sex persons by UMC clergy.
- 2016 Called General Conference resulted in no change to the Book of Discipline relative to sexuality which caused dissention among the churches.
- 2019: Two plans were presented at a special Called General Conference. A vote of 438-384 adopted the Traditional Plan:
 - Traditional Plan retained restrictions on human sexuality and added stricter enforcement of violating church law.
 - One Church Plan allowed for churches and clergy to be decision makers on all issues except ordination, a conference decision. This plan was defeated 449-374.

Critical Problems and Policies (Cont.)

- 2019: Disaffiliation Policy was adopted, allowing congregations to leave the Annual Conference in an amicable manner until the end of 2023. Compliance with a procedure must be followed to be released from the UMC “Trust Clause” which deems all properties and buildings of any UMC to be held in deeds by the Annual Conference.
 - Churches may leave by paying two years apportionments plus clergy pension liabilities.
 - 2/3^{ds} of the church membership must vote in person at a Church Conference to disaffiliate for “reasons of conscience related to human sexuality, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues.”
 - Annual Conference must ratify the vote.
- 2020: The *Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation*, an agreement that would allow UMC restructuring so that each part can remain true to its theological understanding, was to be presented at the Annual Conference. With the onset of COVID, plans were postponed until the 2024 Conference. Conflict among conservative delegates accelerated and plans for a traditional conservative church began.
- 2022 Annual Conference extended Disaffiliation Policy through December 2024.

Effects of Policies on South Georgia Churches

- Through August 2022, 96 churches have disaffiliated. Numbers and percentages of church disaffiliations have grown from 7 (1.2%) in 2020 to 96 (16.9%) in 2022. (See Figure 1)
- With provisions for exiting the UMC set to expire in December 2023, a substantial number of the remaining SGC churches (473) will likely vote to disaffiliate in 2023.
- Some congregations may believe that waiting to consider disaffiliation until after the 2024 General Conference is “risky” because of potential legislative changes to policies.

Figure 1

Number and Percent of Churches Located in the South Georgia Conference (SGC) that have Disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church (UMC) by Year and SGC District

Church Disaffiliations		Number of Church Disaffiliations by District						Church Disaffiliations	
Month ^a / Year	Number	North- west	North Central	North- east	South- west	South Central	Coastal	Total	% ^b
6/2020	7	0	1	0	1	4	1	7	1.2%
6/2021	9	0	1	5	1	0	2	16	2.8%
6/2022	18	0	2	3	3	7	3	34	6.0%
8/2022	62	6	8	19	11	10	8	96	16.9%
	District Total	6	12	27	16	21	14		
11/2022	Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference: College of Bishops Meeting								
6/2023	?							?	
4-5/2024	General Conference: Delegates review <i>The Book of Discipline</i> and have authority to rewrite.								
6/2024	?							?	

Source: South Georgia Conference website (sgaumc.org). Annual Conference journals from website.

^a 6 = June, 8 = August, 11 = November, 4-5 = April or May.

^b Disaffiliation percentages based on 569 South Georgia UMC churches in 2020.

Consequences of Church Disaffiliations on the SGC

- The South Georgia Conference is facing a loss of membership, financial reductions and losses, and an uncertain future due to the human sexuality and property issues.
- The decreasing number of churches in some conferences may require structural adjustments.
- Many churches do not have the resources they had previously and are struggling to remain viable.
- The June 2023 Annual Conference will most likely reflect additional church losses.
- An official at the bishop's office estimates that the SGC will lose about 78 congregations by disaffiliation through December 31, 2023, leaving 395 congregations in the conference.

The Book of Discipline, which could address human sexuality and other issues, will not be voted on until June 2024.

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives do I give to you.
Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them
be afraid." – John 14:27*

3

Key Issues

As a brief background on how the UMC has arrived at this juncture, it is helpful to look back about 100 years when the doctrine of “question everything” began emerging into theology and politics. The beginnings of the progressive/traditional schism began to emerge when a disagreement over whether to emphasize evangelism, which concentrates effort on spreading the Gospel through each individual (no matter their background) or to concentrate the most effort on a social gospel. This social gospel hopes to spread the Good News by investing in institutions that looked after the physical needs of people and interpreting the Bible in a less restrictive way. This pluralism between the progressives and the traditionalists, who still believed in the power and process of individual evangelism and the authority of the Bible, has festered beneath the surface for the past century.

More recently, the progressives began to emphasize their concern that the traditionalist belief in Biblical authority was harmful to the interests of the LGBTQ+ community. This issue came to a head when a practicing lesbian bishop from the Western Jurisdiction performed same sex marriages in a jurisdiction that wasn't under her authority and when charges/concerns were raised, no disciplinary action was undertaken. This disregard of the Book of Discipline started the discussion on preparing the way to split the UMC, citing “irreconcilable differences.”

As we begin to look at these issues as they relate to our own church, we have chosen to emphasize the following three key issues for the sake of clarity and brevity, recognizing this is not an exhaustive list:

1. **Authority of Scripture** - The Wesleyan hierarchy of the UMC has traditionally been very clear on the authority of the Bible to discern the path forward. Over time this basic tenant has been challenged by some people in authority over conferences and churches. Also, whereas UMC seminaries in the past taught the authority of scripture, a majority have now adopted the teaching of a social gospel concentrating on issues important to progressives.
2. **Accountability** - In the past few years, a growing number of pastors, bishops and district superintendents in the UMC have decided to disregard the tenants and rules outlined in the Book of Discipline. These officials in the UMC have not only disregarded the Book of Discipline, but have actively attempted to mold more conservative churches to their theology by:
 - making it difficult for conservative pastors to gain ordination
 - making pastoral appointments to churches with the intent of shaping the congregation's views toward liberalism.
3. **Stewardship and Control** - Traditionally members of the UMC have been called to pass down the Wesleyan traditions of evangelism and sending members out into the world

to teach God's love through the sacrifice of His Son. We have tried to fulfill this mission in our Skidaway Church for 40 years. We were helped in the mission by the hierarchy of the United Methodist Church. The concern now is since there is a widening chasm between different groups in the hierarchy of the UMC, will this compromise our mission since the hierarchy of the UMC has control over the local churches in the following ways:

- Appointment of pastors
- Holding deeds to most local church buildings
- Having access to trustee funds

OUR CONCLUSIONS:

When the UMC was a homogenous body relying on Scripture for its guidance the top-down control of local churches worked well. However, at present the UMC is a divided body. Both sides in this large organization feel that their positions are correct. Some people in authority in the UMC feel it is their duty to bring the other side to their point of view. Therefore, if we wish to control what happens to our local church, we may not want to be tied to an organization which may not reflect our views in the not-too-distant future. It is our fervent hope and prayer that whatever the outcome of our discernment process, we will continue to be the same loving, caring Church we have become as we serve our world and G.R.O.W. our faith.

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." - Isaiah 40:31

4 Affiliation Options

The six-person team, upon completion of its necessary research and collaborative discussion, is pleased to submit its findings and recommendations.

OPTIONS

SIUMC's congregation enjoys the freedom to choose its future direction and denominational structure from among these generic options:

1. Remain with UMC;
2. Immediately affiliate with another Methodist-related denomination;
3. Become non-Methodist independent church until 2024 General Conference, then decide;
4. Become non-Methodist independent until an acceptable denomination is found;
5. Become an independent church permanently;
6. Function under some arrangement and subsequently return to UMC.

CRITERIA

The following Criteria are offered to empower and guide the congregation in first evaluating and then selecting an affiliation arrangement that best aligns with its theological beliefs, core values and Christian mission in the world:

- Compatible with SIUMC's Mission, Core Values and Vision;
- "Methodist" appears in both Church's and denomination's name;
- Mission-driven and Church directed;
- Apportionment, if any, is fair and equitable;
- Worship and teaching follow traditional Wesleyan doctrine/theology and Book of Discipline;
- Clergy appointments, with traditional credentials, open-ended/laity involved;
- No trust clause, Church owns all property;
- Female clergy serve at all levels;
- Prohibits ordination/appointment of homosexual/transsexual clergy;
- Prohibits clergy/churches marrying same sex couples;
- Integrity/accountability of denomination and it's leadership are evident;
- Departure policy is simple and without cost;
- Denominational support: teaching materials, literature, clergy/lay education, pension;
- Welcomes all individuals, including same sex couples, to worship and participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sub-Committee's charge was successfully reached with the selective identification of these three (3) optional Methodist denominations, satisfying a varying but adequate number of the above Criteria, with the following features and impacts on SIUMC:

OPTION A: The Global Methodist Church (GMC)

- Launched May 2022.
- Tax Exempt.
- Governed by 17-person Transitional Council until Convening Conference in late 2023.
- Retains traditional Wesleyan theology/doctrine/connectionism.
- Birthed by Wesleyan Covenant Association.
- Upholding UMC Book of Discipline.
- Emphasis on local church as "front line of ministry."
- 50% lower apportionment/"connectional giving."
- Open-ended clergy appointments/laity involved.
- No trust clause and no cost to join/leave.
- Leaner Church hierarchy/less top-down decisions.
- DS=Presiding Elder.
- Term-limited Bishops/report to both laypersons/other Bishops.
- Female clergy.
- Racially and ethnically diverse/four continents now.
- Pension continuance.
- Prohibits homosexual/transsexual clergy and marrying same sex couples.

OPTION B: Association of Independent Methodists (AIM):

- Founded 1965.
- Tax-exempt.
- Christ-centered, Bible-based Methodism.
- Wesleyan-Armenian tradition.
- No bishops/DSs.
- Voluntary network of like-minded, independent Methodist churches.
- No cost for entry/departure and no trust clause.
- No apportionment; tithe voluntarily.
- 40 churches (5 from GA), smaller and clustered in SE.
- Churches hire/dismiss their own clergy.
- AIM helps screen/interview pastor candidates/plant new ministries.
- Female clergy.
- No homosexual/transsexual clergy; no same sex marriages.
- Denomination/churches welcome and support same sex couples for membership/participation.
- Leader is parish pastor/small home office.
- Churches collaborate on international missions/camps/continuing education.

OPTION C: Remain with United Methodist Church (UMC):

- Worldwide membership of 12 million/four continents.
- Formed 1968.
- Methodism conceived by Wesley brothers.
- Projected to move toward a progressive denomination with emphasis on cultural aspects.
- Pluralistic, flexible theology.
- Book of Discipline being followed inconsistently by some bishops, clergy, seminaries and churches.
- Book of Discipline unenforced by current leadership.
- Duties performed by General Conference, Council of Bishops and Judicial Council.
- Trust clause. Female clergy at all levels.
- One year guaranteed clergy appointments with varying degrees of laity consultation.
- Bishops-for-life/accountable to each other.
- Mission-driven.
- Some bishops appoint homosexual/transsexual clergy.
- Some bishops/clergy perform same sex marriages.
- Likely nuanced pro-choice position.
- Approaching right-sizing of agencies/district boundaries due to disaffiliation.

NOTE: Other Methodist denominations were studied and found to not satisfy an acceptable number of the above "Criteria."

Further details on these recommended Methodist-related denominations are forthcoming in a series of congregational roundtable and town hall sessions, panel presentations, videos and newsletters.

SCORECARD ON DENOMINATIONAL FULFILLMENT OF AFFILIATION CRITERIA

CRITERIA	GMC	AIM	UMC
“Methodist” Name Appears in Church’s and Denomination’s Name:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compatible with SIUMC’s Mission, Core Values, and Vision:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Worship/teaching: Wesleyan Theology/Doctrine and Book of Discipline:	Yes	Yes	Inconsistent compliance/enforcement
No trust clause: Church owns property/assets:	Yes	Yes	No
Mission-driven; Church controlled:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clergy appointments open-ended; laity consulted:	Yes	Yes	No
Apportionment fee, if any, fair and equitable:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Female clergy at all levels:	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prohibits homosexual/transsexual clergy:	Yes	Yes	Inconsistent compliance/enforcement
Prohibits marrying same sex couples:	Yes	Yes	Inconsistent compliance/enforcement
Departure policy simple/no cost:	Yes	Yes	No
Integrity/accountability of denomination and its leadership are evident:	N/A*	N/A	No
Denominational support: Teaching materials, literature, pension, clergy/lay education	Yes	Minimal	Yes
Welcomes all people, including same sex couples for membership and participation:	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Unable to measure at this time.

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Legal Considerations

If the Church votes in March 2023 to disaffiliate, our attorneys at Moore Clark DuVall & Rogers have prepared an outline below of the remaining timeline and actions to be taken by both the church and our attorneys to complete disaffiliation.

As you know, if the Church votes to disaffiliate, the Annual Conference will meet the first week of June 2023 to vote and finalize Disaffiliation. We already have our Articles of Incorporation filed with the state, so the new entity is set up and in existence.

If the Church votes to disaffiliate, by the end of April 2023, our lawyers will deliver to the conference lawyer a legal description for all of our property. Once they have that, they will send our attorneys a draft Disaffiliation Agreement for their initial review. The Agreement will then be sent to us to review specifically the financial provisions in there to see if they meet up with what our Finance Committee was thinking in terms of the Disaffiliation Fee. It is our understanding that the Agreement is a fairly standard document.

Once our attorneys have given the legal/deeds to the conference lawyer and the Disaffiliation Agreement draft, they will then provide us with a draft set of By-Laws, Conflict of Interest Statement, Faith and Practice Statement and an Action of the Incorporators. These can be prepared and, in our possession, as of the date of the vote in March 2023, if not earlier.

According to our attorneys, there will be no need to begin operating in the new corporation until after the June conference vote and after our Disaffiliation funds are paid and deeds filed. However, it is probably a good idea to have our Administrative Board meet and authorize the execution of the Articles, and authorize the Administrative Board Chair, Trustees Chair and Finance Chair to take all actions necessary to complete Disaffiliation and sign all documents. Once we get the By-laws, Faith and Practice Statement and Actions of Incorporators finalized, it would be necessary for us to hold a meeting of the new corporation (through the Administrative Board) which adopts the Actions of Incorporators. This is an outline of initial actions of the corporation.

After the June vote, our attorneys will provide us with wiring instructions for the Disaffiliation fees. Those must be wired to the conference lawyer's office. When we wire them from our bank, we will need to provide our attorneys with a copy of the wire confirmation, and they will be in contact with the conference lawyer to make sure it is received. Once the funds are received, they will transmit the deed and bill of sale from the conference and our attorneys will take care of recording that deed as well as the remaining deed into the new corporate entity.

Once recorded, this process will be finalized, and our attorneys will button up any remaining issues with the documents.

We will also have to work through the historical document delivery to the conference, but this has been a minor issue thus far and especially in the Coastal District. Every church has to (1) gather historical documents (charge conference minutes, directories, member lists, etc. – there is a list our attorneys will provide when the time comes) and give them to the District Superintendent or take them to the museum on St. Simons and (2) the District Superintendent has to do a walkthrough of the church to make sure all cross and flame symbols or items with the United Methodist name on it are removed. We need to make arrangements in advance to have the sign changed as the lawyer for the conference holds the deeds for churches until the sign is changed.

Finally, our attorneys suggest that we plan on operating in our new corporation, by accepting tithes, paying bills, moving funds, etc. on or about July 15, 2023.

"Worship the Lord with gladness, Come before Him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is Good. His unfailing Love continues forever, and His faithfulness continues to each generation."

- Psalm 100

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Financial Considerations

Unfunded Pension Liability Payment*	\$150,000
Apportionment Assessment**	\$95,000
Legal Costs	
South Georgia Conference charge	\$1,500
Other related legal costs (estimated)	\$10,000
Rebranding Costs (estimated)	\$15,000
Estimated Total Disaffiliation Costs	\$275,000-\$400,000
<p>Notes:</p> <p>* Due to current bond market conditions this amount cannot be exactly determined. However, as of September 1, 2022, this liability was \$137,000 and is not expected to exceed \$250,000 at date of disaffiliation</p> <p>** Assumes all apportionments are paid up to date of disaffiliation (June 2023) and is based on our 2023 assessment of \$86,765</p>	

Based on the church's current cash position, it expected that the funds to pay these exit costs would have to be provided from our Endowment Fund, which has a value of approximately \$1,300,000.

The pension and apportionment costs would still be future obligations, should we vote to remain with the UMC.

7

Committee Leadership

Skidaway Island United Methodist Church Affiliation Discernment Committee

Oversight

Chris Frohn – Administrative Board Chair

Lisa Birch – Lay Leader

Current Status of UMC

Beth Majeroni

Gayle Burkhardt

Kathi Madison

Larry Cook

Kay Higby

Charlie Higgins

Status of South Georgia Conference

Phyllis Albertson

Mo Field

Jim Lomax

Latne' McMakin

Joe Wells

Kelly Shapley

Key Issues

Gary Schopfer

Steve Sample

Bettie Negley

Herb McKenzie

Nancy Howell

Max Baldwin

Affiliation Options (Generic and Specific)

Steve Ummel

Nancy Sheets

Linda Lynes

Audrey Wells

Brett Feemster

Joe LeBlanc

Legal Considerations

Warren Lokey

Jerramy McGee

Financial Considerations

Dan Huffer

Harriet Johnson

Ken Haynes

Attachments

Attachment 1

UMC Book of Discipline (BOD) References

BOD Paragraph 161 – (F) Women and Men (G) Human Sexuality

F) Women and Men

We affirm with Scripture the common humanity of male and female, both having equal worth in the eyes of God. We reject the erroneous notion that one gender is superior to another, that one gender must strive against another, and that members of one gender may receive love, power, and esteem only at the expense of another. We especially reject the idea that God made individuals as incomplete fragments, made whole only in union with another. We call upon women and men alike to share power and control, to learn to give freely and to receive freely, to be complete and to respect the wholeness of others. We seek for every individual opportunities and freedom to love and be loved, to seek and receive justice, and to practice ethical self-determination. We understand our gender diversity to be a gift from God, intended to add to the rich variety of human experience and perspective; and we guard against attitudes and traditions that would use this good gift to leave members of one sex more vulnerable in relationships than members of another.

G) Human Sexuality

We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

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, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.[3]

Attachment 2

BOD Paragraph 2553 Disaffiliation

2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality—

1. Basis-- 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.

2. Time Limits--The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

3. Decision Making Process--The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶ 248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference. In addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

4. Process Following Decision to Disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church--If the church conference votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. That agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

a) Standard Terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom. Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.

b) Apportionments. The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.

c) Property. A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church.

d) Pension Liabilities. The local church shall contribute withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church's share.

e) Other Liabilities. The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.

f) Payment Terms. Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure.

g) Disaffiliating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans. The United Methodist Church believes that a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.

h) Once the disaffiliating local church has reimbursed the applicable annual conference for all funds due under the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or claims against The United Methodist Church as a result of the disaffiliation, in consideration of the provisions of this paragraph, the applicable annual conference shall release any claims that it may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church commonly referred to as the trust clause, or under the agreement.

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