

Messenger

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Special Edition

Called Church Conference: Final Disaffiliation Vote



Dr. Stephen Cook, our District Superintendent, has scheduled a Called Church Conference at **6 p.m. Wednesday, January 11**, for the sole purpose of voting on Disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church.



This will be a congregational meeting held in the sanctuary, and every full member of the church will be eligible to vote. **Only those who are physically present will be allowed to vote.** There will be no absentee ballots or voting proxy for another. So, your attendance is important.

This is the final and binding vote on whether or not to disaffiliate from the UMC. There will be no second vote or revote. It will be a secret written ballot; however, you may be asked to sign your ballot to verify its authenticity.

Also, there will be a check-in process before the meeting. You will be asked to **sign in at the registration table** to verify that you are a full member and then receive your ballot. So, it will be very important to arrive early to the meeting so that you can sign in.

Disaffiliation Process

For a Disaffiliation Vote to pass it requires a **two-thirds majority (66.7%)** of all full church members present and voting at a duly called church conference. However, even if it passes, it still has to receive a simple majority (51%) approval at Annual Conference in June 2023.

The Disaffiliation Agreement would then be finalized on June 30, 2023. The Disaffiliation Payment of \$266,467 would be made at that time. And the church would begin operations as something other than United Methodist on July 1, 2023.

What We Believe



The Bible Is the Word of God.

The Bible is the Revelation of God's will to us. It is God's Eternal, Timeless Truth for us. As such, the Bible is Inspired, Authoritative, and Binding on our lives.

So, if God has said something is right and good, then it's always right and good. And if God has said something is wrong and sinful, then it's always wrong and sinful.

Jesus Is the Only Way of Salvation.

Jesus is the Eternal, Only Begotten Son of God. He is fully man and yet fully God.

Jesus' death on the Cross is the Atoning Sacrifice for our Sin. Only by His shed blood on the Cross do we have forgiveness of our sin.

Jesus is the only way. Salvation comes only through Him.



So, while many in our day might argue that all good people go to heaven and all religions lead to God, we disagree. We hold to the biblical truth that there is only one way of salvation, and that's through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Marriage is Between One Man and One Woman.



God created humans in His own Image. Male and Female He created them.

So, the Bible teaches there are two genders. Not three or four or an indefinite number more. Only two genders: Man and Woman.

And God established marriage as a holy covenant between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Every other arrangement of marriage runs counter to what God has commanded as well as to how God created us.

Faithfulness:

We are called to be faithful to the Word of God and to be faithful to our covenant within the Church, as expressed in the United Methodist Book of Discipline, so long as it is in agreement with what the Bible teaches.

One of the challenges in the current United Methodist Church is that not only are many bishops, pastors, and churches disobeying God's Word in the Bible, they are also disobeying church teaching in the Book of Discipline. They are breaking the covenant we all made to be faithful.

Bishop Scott Jones, Texas Conference



“In other words, the **quantity of disobedience** is spreading and increasing as bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry and Conferences choose to do it, so that even if the General Conference doesn't vote to be more progressive, **the church will become more progressive** simply because people who are supposed to enforce the rules choose not to do so.”

Richard John Neuhaus

“Wherever orthodoxy is optional, orthodoxy will sooner or later be proscribed” (that is, prohibited).

General Conference 2024

It is widely expected that the General Conference in 2024 **will change the definition of marriage** and the standards for ordination within the United Methodist Church.

Those two things only require a simple majority vote. And the votes have moved in that direction. This is partly due to the changing delegate count for 2024. With each of the departing churches in 2022 and 2023, there are lay and clergy delegates to General Conference who are leaving with them.

So, in the Texas Conference (Houston) 294 churches disaffiliated in December 2022. In the Northwest Texas Conference 145 out of 201 congregations voted to leave. In North Carolina 249 disaffiliated in November. And recently in the North Alabama Conference 198 churches all voted to leave.

Many of those represent traditional, conservative delegates to General Conference who will not be there in 2024. Their replacements are centrist at best and liberal at worst.

Current estimates are that the **progressives have a simple majority** and intend to use it at General Conference. As one progressive delegate put it to encourage his followers, “Get ready! The progressive wave is coming!”

Our Response to LGBT

The question often gets asked, “So what happens if a gay or lesbian couple walks into our church?”

And the answer is: The same thing that happens anytime anyone walks into our church. We welcome them. We befriend them. Ideally, we invite them to sit with us. And we love on them. Then, we try to share God’s truth in love.

We do not hate anyone. We do not live in fear. We simply stand for God’s truth. That’s it.

We know that God has told us what is right and what is wrong. And by faith we hold to God’s truth and try to live it. We cannot call good what God has called sin.

And yet, we love everyone. And we all have friends and family who aren’t currently living the way God says. We don’t disown them. But, we also don’t call it good or agree with what they’re doing. We love them fully, yet we hold firmly to God’s truth.