



Disaffiliation Reporting Guide

October 2023

This reporting guide contains the names and disaffiliation metrics of local church that are seeking to disaffiliate from the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church on October 7, 2023, as well as the agenda for the Special Annual Conference, the list of clergy withdrawals, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on disaffiliation.

October 7, 2023 Agenda.....	Page 2
Local Churches Seeking Disaffiliation.....	Page 3
Disaffiliation Metrics.....	Page 7
Clergy Withdrawals.....	Page 9
Frequently Asked Questions.....	Page 15

Agenda for Saturday, October 7, 2023

8:30 a.m. Optional Q&A session

Rev. Dr. Steve Summers, Assistant to the Bishop
Rev. Denise Bates, Dean of the Cabinet
David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer
Andrew White, Conference Trustees Attorney

9 a.m. Annual Conference Call to Order

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson

Opening Prayer

Martha Stokes
Conference Lay Leader

Practice Vote

Organizing Motions

Rev. Denise Bates

Minutes Committee Report

Rev. Joshua King
Conference Secretary

Consideration of Disaffiliating Local Churches

Kathy Lutman
President, Board of Trustees

Closing Prayer

Conclusion of Annual Conference Session

Local Churches Seeking Disaffiliation on October 7, 2023

Coastal Virginia District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Good Hope UMC	476408	\$79,340.00
Guilford UMC	474045	\$59,484.00
Market Street UMC	474205	\$183,297.00
Smith's Chapel UMC	474353	\$51,023.00
Snead Memorial UMC	963030	\$33,427.00

Living Waters District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Antioch UMC	474865	\$31,585.00
Asbury UMC	478885	\$89,191.83
Barnes UMC	479311	\$35,436.00
Bethany UMC	478010	\$51,513.00
Bethel UMC	475211	\$15,749.00
Boydton UMC	474581	\$49,880.00
Capron UMC	479047	\$71,890.00
Charlotte Court House UMC	474661	\$22,488.00
Corinth UMC	478750	\$12,898.00
Courtland UMC	479127	\$108,451.00
Ebenezer UMC	478976	\$15,312.00
Hebron UMC	475073	\$19,137.00
Ivey Memorial UMC	478282	\$232,757.00
Jetersville UMC	474535	\$40,204.00
Joyner UMC	479036	\$17,003.00
Kingswood UMC	478418	\$34,488.00
LaCrosse UMC	478613	\$33,065.00
Matthews Chapel UMC	478998	\$29,048.00
Philadelphia UMC	478602	\$20,627.00
Rehoboth UMC (Boydton)	474615	\$12,650.00
Rehoboth UMC (Lakeland Charge)	478921	\$48,357.00
Rocky Hock UMC	478863	\$68,380.00
Salem UMC (Dillwyn Charge)	474796	\$38,219.00
Salem UMC (North Amelia Charge)	475632	\$33,206.00

Salem UMC (Petersburg-- PG Cooperative)	478178	\$33,937.00
Somerton UMC	479710	\$32,192.00
Thomas Chapel UMC	475038	\$33,641.00
Trinity UMC	479435	\$40,159.00
White Hall UMC	474810	\$30,079.00
White Oak UMC	479457	\$17,064.00
Williams UMC	474433	\$14,877.00
Zion UMC	474444	\$6,237.00

Mission Rivers District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Bethel UMC	480092	\$85,677.00
Beulah UMC	479732	\$63,467.00
Clarksbury UMC	480310	\$106,856.17
Epworth UMC	481030	\$72,517.00
McKendree UMC	481052	\$73,110.00
Melrose UMC	480137	\$141,331.00
Olivet UMC	481815	\$23,002.00
Pamunkey UMC	481096	\$20,157.00
Parkview UMC	477788	\$42,984.00
Saint Mark's UMC	477436	\$214,784.00
Saint Paul UMC	480148	\$77,238.00
Salem UMC	480365	\$135,954.00
Tabernacle UMC	477653	\$108,203.00
White Stone UMC	480503	\$199,589.00

Mountain View District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Anderson Memorial UMC	475277	\$64,845.00
Bethesda UMC	476738	\$79,128.00
Calvary UMC	476897	\$39,089.00
Crafts UMC	473028	\$29,401.00
Ebenezer UMC	475346	\$17,413.00
Epworth UMC	475483	\$92,251.00
Flint Hill UMC	472855	\$30,425.00
Indian Hill UMC	476272	\$46,860.00
Marsh Memorial UMC	475882	\$84,437.00
Motley UMC	475951	\$47,257.00
Mount Hermon UMC	476066	\$85,213.00

New Bethel UMC (Campbell)	476432	\$45,610.00
New Bethel UMC (Pittsylvania)	475984	\$46,218.00
Otterville UMC	476181	\$22,141.00
Penhook UMC	473074	\$66,475.00
Providence UMC	476022	\$32,027.00
Salem UMC (Bedford)	475392	\$18,418.31
Salem UMC (Campbell)	476237	\$68,631.27
Tyreeanna UMC	476088	\$37,716.00
Union UMC	476636	\$15,589.00
Whites UMC	476124	\$45,126.00

Northern Virginia District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
First Korean UMC	470515	\$84,862.00
Smith Chapel UMC	471543	\$40,600.00

Shenandoah River District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Annex UMC	484272	\$99,764.20
Bethel UMC	470617	\$34,686.00
Burnt Factory UMC	484591	\$429,446.00
Clover Hill UMC	484716	\$85,385.00
Crimora UMC	483973	\$70,311.70
East Point UMC	410740	\$27,801.06
Evangelical UMC	410396	\$121,914.00
Fellowship UMC	484705	\$43,875.00
Gainesboro UMC	484818	\$29,419.00
Grove Hill UMC	411163	\$20,232.00
Hawkinstown UMC	412431	\$13,021.00
Limeton UMC	485298	\$45,162.00
Linden UMC	484820	\$40,985.00
Little Mountain UMC	485562	\$25,424.00
Mount Bethel UMC	420896	\$29,246.78
Mount Pisgah UMC	096256	\$176,899.00
Mount Pleasant UMC	470630	\$75,211.00
Oak Grove UMC	411460	\$28,913.00
Otterbein Chapel UMC	412577	\$30,463.00
Parnassus UMC	485015	\$59,062.00

Riverside UMC	095913	\$66,468.00
Riverton UMC	485083	\$407,891.79
Saint Peter's UMC	096438	\$33,563.86
St. John's UMC	484660	\$71,154.00
Trinity UMC	096473	\$12,292.23
Wesley Chapel UMC (Edinburg)	484773	\$55,956.00
Wesley Chapel UMC (Frederick)	485128	\$23,024.00
Wesley UMC	485391	\$116,803.00
White Hall UMC	485573	\$75,596.00

Three Notch'd District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Bethlehem UMC	471805	\$100,625.27
Beulah UMC	480764	\$590,858.00
Calvary UMC	481347	\$155,045.00
Mount Olivet UMC	472616	\$6,570.00
Oak Grove UMC	472627	\$40,084.00

Valley Ridge District

Church	GCFA Number	Disaffiliation Payment
Bethlehem UMC	420874	\$48,540.35
Burnsville UMC	483277	\$28,116.00
Eden UMC	483778	\$39,958.14
Iron Gate UMC	483767	\$18,768.00
Lyndhurst UMC	483803	\$70,804.00
Mount Carmel UMC	483541	\$99,555.00
Prices Fork UMC	482193	\$41,737.00
Saint Paul's UMC (Craigsville)	483585	\$35,044.00
Saint Paul's UMC (Staunton)	421674	\$306,916.94
Sherando UMC	484022	\$56,107.00
Virginia Chapel UMC	483335	\$32,199.91
Walton Memorial UMC	483814	\$14,452.00

Disaffiliation Metrics for the 120 Churches Seeking Disaffiliation

1. As of December 31, 2021, the total number of professing members represented by the 120 disaffiliating churches was 16,570. This is 5.6% of the total membership of the Annual Conference of 295,812.*
2. As of December 31, 2021, the average attendance at all weekly worship services by the 120 disaffiliating churches in 2021 was 3,941. This is 7.36% of the total weekly worshipping population of the Annual Conference of 53,515.
3. The value of all local church assets of the 120 disaffiliating churches, not including real estate, is \$14,407,586. This value is 4.54% of all local church non-real estate assets in the Annual Conference of \$317,271,099.
4. The value of the 120 disaffiliating church's real estate is \$105,674,338.** This is 4.95% of the value of annual conference local church real estate of \$2,133,208,670.
5. The amount paid by the 120 disaffiliating churches for all conference apportionments over a five-year period was \$8,128,227. This represents 5.35% of conference apportioned receipts over that same period of \$151,809,305.

The above information is derived from local church statistical data as submitted by local churches and reported to the General Council on Finance and Administration. *Based on total number of members but does not reflect members who have chosen to remain United Methodist. Corrected totals will be available in the future.

**Property values derived from church self-reporting as recorded on annual statistical tables.

Disaffiliation Metrics for the 120 Churches Seeking and 107 Churches Approved for Disaffiliation Under Paragraph 2553

This summary data is included to show the total impact of disaffiliation in the Virginia Conference (assuming all 120 churches seeking disaffiliation on Oct. 7 be ratified) including the other three Special Called Annual Conferences and their totals from October 2022, February 2023, and May 2023.

1. As of December 31, 2021, the total number of professing members represented by all 227 churches that have disaffiliated or are seeking approval for disaffiliation was 31,299. This is 10.58% of the total membership of the Annual Conference of 295,812.*
2. As of December 31, 2021, the average attendance at all weekly worship services by all 227 churches in 2021 was 7,725. This is 14.44% of the total weekly worshipping population of the Annual Conference of 53,515.
3. The value of all local church assets of all 227 churches, not including real estate, is \$24,266,076. This value is 7.65% of all local church non-real estate assets in the Annual Conference of \$317,271,099.
4. The value of the 227 churches' real estate is \$182,291,683.** This is 8.55% of the value of annual conference local church real estate of \$2,133,208,670.

5. The amount paid by the 227 churches for all conference apportionments over a five-year period was \$16,577,824. This represents 10.92% of conference apportioned receipts over that same period of \$151,809,305.

The above information is derived from local church statistical data as submitted by local churches and reported to the General Council on Finance and Administration. *Based on total number of members but does not reflect members who have chosen to remain United Methodist. Corrected totals will be available in the future.

**Property values derived from church self-reporting as recorded on annual statistical tables.

Clergy Who Have Withdrawn from the Virginia Conference UMC 2022-2023
as of September 1, 2023

Clergy Status Key

FE: Ordained Elder
FL: Full-time Local Pastor
MQ 20: Minute Question 20 (Licensed but not appointed)
PL: Part-time Local Pastor
OF: Other Fellowship
RB: Retired Bishop
RE: Retired Elder
ROF: Retired Other Fellowship

Affiliation Key

No Aff: No affiliation (not leaving to serve another denomination)
GMC: Global Methodist Church
Independent: Leaving to serve a church that has disaffiliated, or a
non-denominational church

All who withdraw from the Virginia Conference UMC follow *The United Methodist Book of Discipline* (2016) paragraph 360.1 and our withdrawal process as outlined here:

<https://doc.vaumc.org/minservices/VAUMCWithdrawalProcess.pdf>

As recorded in the Minute Questions for the General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church, licensed local pastors and ordained members are listed separately as those who withdraw as licensed local pastors are voluntarily or involuntarily discontinued and lose their clergy credentials (license). Upon withdrawal, ordained members terminate their conference membership, but retain their ordination. For the purposes of this report all clergy are listed together. This report does not include licensed local pastors who have been involuntarily discontinued.

Included in the Minute Questions for VAUMC Annual Conference 2022

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Prior Conf Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>District</u>
Moore	Edna	4/27/2022	RE	No Aff	Three Notch'd
Boyette	Keith	5/1/2022	RE	GMC	Mission Rivers
Meisenhelter	Matt	5/1/2022	FE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Eisenman	Mike	6/1/2022	FE	No Aff	Mission Rivers
Shepherd	Russell	6/3/2022	PL	No Aff	Valley Ridge

Included in the Minute Questions for VAUMC Annual Conference 2023

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Prior Conf Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>District</u>
Lloyd Jr.	Robert B.	6/22/2022	RE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Almy	Robert	6/27/2022	FE	GMC	Mission Rivers
Allen	Marie B.	7/13/2022	RL	GMC	Mission Rivers
Poeckert	Kevin C.	7/15/2022	FL	No Aff	Shenandoah River
Palmer	Nancy	7/26/2022	RL	GMC	Valley Ridge
Barrell	Veronica	8/15/2022	RE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Kubat	Joseph	8/18/2022	RE	GMC	Mission Rivers
Copeland	Michael	8/18/2022	RE	North American Lutheran Church	Valley Ridge
Nichols	Brandon	9/16/2022	FE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Steele	Eddie	12/13/2022	PL	No Aff	Shenandoah River
Clark	William R.	12/15/2022	PL	Independent	Mountain View
Drinkard Jr.	Jerry	12/16/2022	PL	Independent	Living Waters
Carte	Cameron	12/18/2022	PL	Independent	Shenandoah River
Eo	Yunho	12/27/2022	RE	GMC	Three Notch'd
Sullivan-Trent	Mary	1/1/2023	FE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Tucker	Johnny	1/4/2023	FL	GMC	Living Waters
Clark	Jay	1/4/2023	RE	GMC	Coastal Virginia
Bright	John A.	1/6/2023	FE	GMC	Mountain View
Larrimore	Paul	1/22/2023	FL	Wesleyan Church	Living Waters
Reynolds	Charles	1/31/2023	RE	GMC	Valley Ridge
Teague	Forrest	2/2/2023	MQ20	No Aff	Northern Virginia
Sternfeld	Brenda	2/13/2023	PL	No Aff	Valley Ridge
Gaylor	David	2/20/2023	FL	No Aff	Mountain View
West	Greg	3/24/2023	FE	GMC	Mission Rivers
Simmons	Myron	4/1/2023	RE	GMC	Living Waters
Blythe	Donna	5/1/2023	PL	GMC	Mission Rivers

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Prior Conf Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>District</u>
McMullen	Brad	5/1/2023	FE	Independent	Mountain View
Shepherd	Thomas	5/1/2023	FE	Independent	Mountain View
Wood	Marcus	5/1/2023	PL	Independent	Mountain View
Schoeman	Laetitia	5/1/2023	FL	Independent	Shenandoah River
Moseley Jr.	Robert	5/1/2023	FL	Congregational Methodist Church	Living Waters
Brown Jr.	Booker D.	5/1/2023	FL	GMC	Mission Rivers
Martin	Terry	5/1/2023	PL	Independent	Mountain View
Lacy	Jim	5/1/2023	RL	GMC	Three Notch'd
Schoeman	Robert	5/3/2023	FE	Independent	Shenandoah River
Crichlow	Winston	5/3/2023	ROF	Independent	Mountain View
Guyton	Morgan	5/17/2023	FE	Baptist	Mission Rivers
McCaslin	Henry	5/21/2023	RL	Another Denom not specified	Mission Rivers
Lavender	James	6/7/2023	RE	GMC	Three Notch'd
Robertson	Rick	6/9/2023	PL	Independent	Shenandoah River
Senters	John	6/12/2023	PL	Independent	Shenandoah River
Lock	John	6/12/2023	RE	Independent	Shenandoah River
Weeks	Robert J.	6/15/2023	RE	No Aff	Shenandoah River
Thomas Jr.	Howe O.	6/19/2023	RE	GMC	Mountain View
Budzik	Kathryn	6/30/2023	FL	Independent	Mountain View
Gibson	Ronald	6/30/2023	FL	Independent	Mountain View
Calhoun	Jimmy	6/30/2023	OF	Independent	Mountain View
Wright	John Churchwell	6/30/2023	FL	GMC	Mission Rivers
Gillespie-Howard	Laura Beth	6/30/2023	PL	Independent	Valley Ridge
West	Michael	6/30/2023	FL	Independent	Living Waters
Yoo	Sung Il	6/30/2023	FE	GMC	Northern Virginia
Lutz	Tobias	7/1/2023	FL	No aff	Mountain View
Collins	Mark	7/1/2023	PL	No aff	Mountain View

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Prior Conf Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>District</u>
McLaughlin	Neal	7/1/2023	FL	No Aff	Three Notch'd
Williams	David	7/1/2023	PL	No Aff	Mountain View
Decker Jr.	Thad	7/1/2023	FL	Baptist	Living Waters
Stabler	Brian	7/1/2023	FL	No Aff	Shenandoah River

For Annual Conference 2024 Minute Questions

* Dates can be backdated due to official disaffiliation dates of churches, that is why some of these dates are within the range of the 2023 Annual Conference, or the request was not received until after Annual Conference.

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Effective Date</u>	<u>Prior Conf Status</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>District</u>
Cho	Young Jin	6/30/2023	RB	GMC	Northern Virginia
Kiel	John Randall	7/1/2023	PL	GMC	Living Waters
Roscoe	Mark	7/1/2023	MQ 20	GMC	Mission Rivers
Showers	Phillip C.	7/2/2023	RL	Independent	Mountain View
Franklin	Tammy B.	7/2/2023	RL	Independent	Mountain View
Franklin	John B.	7/2/2023	RL	Independent	Mountain View
Torres	Ivelisse	7/6/2023	PL	Independent	Living Waters
Hong	Shinwoo	7/20/2023	FE	GMC	Shenandoah River
Barnard	Thomas	8/1/2023	RE	GMC	Three Notch'd
Hong	SeongUK	9/1/2023	FL	Independent	Coastal Virginia

Additional clergy who were in the October round of disaffiliations are in the process of withdrawal and will be listed in the Minute Questions for Annual Conference 2024.

VAUMC Withdrawal Statistics

Number of Clergy Who Have Withdrawn

2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 * still in process	Total
5	57	9	71

* A Bishop's membership belongs to the College of Bishop's and not the conference from which they have previously served.

Withdrawn by Status

Status	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024 * still in process	Total
RE	2	12	1	15
FE	2	10	1	13
PL	1	13	2	16
FL	0	15	1	16
RL	0	4	3	7
OF	0	1	0	1
ROF	0	1	0	1
MQ 20	0	1	1	2
Total				71

Withdrawn by Affiliation

Status	Another Denon Not Specified	Baptist	GMC	Independent/Non Denom	No Affiliation	Lutheran	Wesleyan	Congregational Methodist
RE	0	0	11	1	2	1	0	0
FE	0	1	8	3	1	0	0	0
PL	0	0	2	9	5	0	0	0
FL	0	1	2	4	7	0	1	1
RL	1	0	3	3	0	0	0	0
OF	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
ROF	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
MQ 20	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	1	2	27	22	16	1	1	1

Withdrawn by District

District	Coastal Virginia	Living Waters	Mission Rivers	Mountain View	Northern Virginia	Shenandoah River	Three Notch'd	Valley Ridge
RE	3	1	2	1	0	2	4	2
FE	3	0	4	3	1	2	0	0
PL	0	3	1	5	0	4	0	3

FL	1	5	2	4	0	3	1	1
RL	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	0
OF	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
ROF	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
MQ 20	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Total	7	9	12	18	2	11	6	6

Withdrawn by Ethnicity and Gender

Ethnicity	Male	Female
White	54	10
Hispanic/Latino	0	2
African American/Black	1	0
Asian	4	0
Total	59	12

Withdrawn by Age and Gender

Age Range	Male	Female
20's-30's	1	0
30s-40's	1	1
40's-50's	12	1
50's-60's	17	2
60's-70's	18	5
70's-80's	8	3
80's-90's	2	0
Total	59	12

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Disaffiliation

1. What does disaffiliation mean in The United Methodist Church and the Virginia Conference?

The United Methodist Church has wrestled with matters related to human sexuality since 1972. With the most recent postponement of General Conference until 2024, and the launch of the Global Methodist Church, some churches are discerning they should disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. Some churches will stay independent and some will join the Global Methodist Church.

The Virginia Conference lay and clergy leadership respects that the decision to stay or leave the denomination should be one of conscience. There is a fair, simple, and consistently applied process for those who have prayerfully discerned disaffiliation as their best course.

For those churches considering disaffiliating from the denomination for reasons of conscience relating to matters of human sexuality, Paragraph(¶) 2553 of the 2016 Book of Discipline as amended in 2019 (the “Discipline”) must govern this process through December 31, 2023, at which time ¶ 2553 will lapse. [See Judicial Council Decision 1449](#).

¶ 2553 was added to the Discipline at the specially called General Conference in 2019. General Conference is the only body that can amend ¶ 2553.

[Judicial Council Decision 1422](#), which was issued February 9, 2022, confirmed that any church seeking to disaffiliate for reasons of conscience over matters of human sexuality, whether conservative, moderate, or progressive, may use ¶ 2553 to do so.

Any church who wishes to explore disaffiliation needs to first contact their District Superintendent. The process for Virginia local churches is detailed further below in Question #9. For any churches that wish to remain in The United Methodist Church, no action is needed.

2. How many churches in the Virginia Conference are seeking disaffiliation?

On Saturday, October 29, 2022, a Special Virginia Annual Conference was held and 10 churches seeking approval to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under ¶ 2553 were approved by the Virginia Annual Conference membership.

On February 18, 2023, the Virginia Annual Conference members considered 34 churches seeking to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553. Thirty-three (33) churches were approved by the Virginia Annual Conference membership.

On May 6, 2023, the Virginia Annual Conference members considered 64 churches seeking to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553 and all 64 churches were approved by the Virginia Annual Conference membership.

On October 7, the Virginia Conference membership will consider 120 churches seeking to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553.

The ¶ 2553 legislation will sunset December 31, 2023. The October 2023 session is the last session that churches in the Virginia Annual Conference can disaffiliate using the ¶ 2553 legislation.

The Virginia Conference currently comprises over 900 churches.

3. Why is a Special Annual Conference being held on October 7, 2023? What business will be conducted?

A Special Annual Conference will be held on Saturday, October 7, 2023 to consider approval of certain disaffiliations under ¶ 2553 of the Discipline.

At 8:30 a.m., a Q&A session will be held for any members to ask questions pertaining to the Special Annual Conference. At 9 a.m., the Special Annual Conference will convene solely to vote on the request of 120 local churches that seek to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church over matters of human sexuality using ¶ 2553 of the Discipline.

4. What will be the voting procedure at the Special Annual Conference on October 7, 2023?

The names of every church requesting to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553 will be presented. The Annual Conference members will be given the opportunity to vote “yes” or “no”. There will be no amendments to the church Disaffiliation Agreement for those churches seeking to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553 of the Discipline. There will be speeches “for” and speeches “against” and those will be limited under our Conference rules. The simple majority of the body will prevail on the vote. For those churches seeking disaffiliation under ¶ 2553 of the Discipline, this process was approved by [Judicial Council Decision 1420](#) on February 9, 2022.

5. What is The United Methodist Church trust clause?

United Methodists and generations of Methodists before structured ministry through a connectional system that sustains the work and mission of the church.

The trust clause is central to this approach. The United Methodist trust clause is specific wording in legal documents (deeds) declaring that the property and assets of a local church or United Methodist entity are held “in trust” to benefit the entire denomination. The trust clause also applies even if it is not in the legal documents based on prevailing legal opinions from the courts. The trust clause ensures that United Methodist property will continue to be used for the purposes of The United Methodist Church.

The Discipline addresses the wording of the trust clause in a variety of forms, depending on whether this property is a place of worship, a parsonage, intended for some other use, or acquired from another United Methodist entity.

Holding property in trust for The United Methodist Church means the “holder” must use the property exclusively for the purposes of and to benefit The United Methodist Church.

Because a local church holds its property in trust for the denomination, it has a legal obligation to maintain and protect that property so it can continue to be used as a United Methodist church. The local church does not own the property; rather, title is held in the name of the local church trustees, subject to the trust clause.

The Discipline sets forth detailed procedures a church must follow before taking most major actions affecting its property.

By following the disaffiliation process, signing the Disaffiliation Agreement, and paying the disaffiliation fees and costs, the local church is being allowed to leave the denomination, free of the trust clause. This allows the local church to assume title to the property, real and personal, tangible and intangible, subject to any third-party claims (as discussed in Question #14 below.) [Learn more about the trust clause in an article from Ask the UMC...](#)

6. What are the differences between Paragraph (¶) 2553, 2548.2, and 2549 from the Book of Discipline (BOD)?

Paragraph 2553

On August 23, 2022, the Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church’s top court, issued a strong and clear ruling that churches seeking to disaffiliate over matters of human sexuality must do so under ¶ 2553 of the Discipline. The 2019 Special General Conference enacted ¶ 2553 which, as stated in the Discipline, pertains to “Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality.”

¶ 2553 outlines the steps the congregation, the District Superintendent, and the Conference must take to complete a disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church. At minimum, three provisions must be met:

- a decision to disaffiliate by a two-thirds majority of the professing members present at a church conference (not charge conference);
- the payment in full of two years of that congregation's apportionment commitment as set by the Conference;
- the payment in full of the congregation's pro-rata share of the Conference's pension liability, based on a formula approved by the Conference.

Requirements for local churches in the Virginia Conference are listed further below in Question #9 of the FAQ document.

Paragraph 2548.2

This paragraph has been part of the Discipline for many years. It permits the Conference to direct the local church trustees to assign the deeds of church property to the proper legal representatives of a Pan Methodist church or another evangelical denomination. This paragraph is about transfer of property. It is not about a congregation changing its denominational affiliation. Transferring of property may happen "under an allocation, exchange of property, or comity agreement, provided that such agreement shall have been committed to writing and signed and approved by the duly qualified and authorized representatives of both parties concerned." The key words in that sentence are "church property," "permit," and "annual conference." This paragraph gave permission to annual conferences to order such transfers of deeds at the request of the local church. This paragraph does not create a right nor a process for congregations to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. Nor does it allow local congregations, by themselves, to transfer their property to other denominations. It creates a right for congregations to request such transfer of property, and then only where local laws require the congregation's involvement in the transfer. The annual conference determines whether and when such transfer may take place. The annual conference may only consider such a request after the Bishop and the majority of the District Superintendents and the District Board of Location and Building have given their consent. ¶ 2548.2 of the Discipline is not to be used for churches that seek to disaffiliate based on Judicial Council Decision 1449.

The Role of Paragraph 2549.3.b

This paragraph authorizes the Bishop and majorities of both the District Superintendents and the District Board of Location and Building to declare that "exigent circumstances exist that require immediate protection of the local church's property." The effect of that declaration is the immediate transfer of all property and assets of a local church to the control of the Conference Board of Trustees. Exigent circumstances include, but are not limited to, situations

where the property will no longer be used for The United Methodist Church or the congregation is no longer in a position to maintain it for the denomination.

7. What did Decision 1449 from the Judicial Council rule about transferring church property?

On August 23, 2022, the Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church's top court, issued a strong and clear ruling that churches seeking to disaffiliate over matters of human sexuality must do so under ¶ 2553 of the Discipline. The 2019 Special General Conference enacted ¶ 2553 which, as stated in the Discipline, pertains to "Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality."

For such churches, the Judicial Council said, "It stands to reason that, if disaffiliation of local churches could be accomplished under ¶ 2548.2 or any other provision of The Discipline, the special session of General Conference in 2019 would not have gone through the trouble of enacting ¶ 2553."

The Judicial Council's ruling was in response to issues and questions raised May 12, 2022 by the Council of Bishops about whether ¶ 2548.2 could or should be used for those churches that want to disaffiliate. Some have claimed ¶ 2548.2 can be used to transfer church assets and membership to the recently launched Global Methodist Church. The Judicial Council rejected these claims in clear language.

¶ 2548.2 states that a property transfer must take place "under an allocation, exchange of property, or comity agreement." While The United Methodist Church has long standing agreements with several other denominations, no such agreement exists with the Global Methodist Church at this time.

The Judicial Council also noted any such agreement must also be in writing and must be approved by the General Conference, which cannot happen until at least 2024 when the General Conference meets again. Importantly, even if the General Conference approves the use of ¶ 2548.2 in 2024, three other conditions need to be met before this provision can be used by churches.

To view Judicial Council Decision 1449, [click here](#). A related UM News story about Decision 1449 is [here](#).

8. What were the steps for a local church in the Virginia Conference in the 2553 disaffiliation process?

The steps for all churches were as follows:

1. Contact District Superintendent and schedule an in-person congregational information meeting;
2. Enter into a minimum thirty (30) day prayerful discernment designed by the local church in collaboration with the pastor;
3. Take a straw poll to determine congregation's discernment whether or not to disaffiliate;
4. If the congregation's discernment is to disaffiliate, then the local church's attorney will finalize the Disaffiliation Agreement with the Conference Trustees' attorney;
5. Once the Disaffiliation Agreement is finalized, a Called Church Conference must be held to vote on the Disaffiliation Agreement;
 - a. 2/3 (66.67%) of professing members present at the Called Church Conference are required to approve disaffiliation; and
 - b. If approved, the Disaffiliation Agreement is signed by local church trustees and sent with monetary deposit to be held in escrow.
6. The disaffiliation of the local church must be ratified by the Annual Conference body.

9. What is included in the "Benefit Liability" portion of the Disaffiliation Cost?

In the event of a church seeking disaffiliation, two financial liabilities associated with clergy benefit programs must be addressed. These include the Conference's share of the denominational clergy pension liabilities and the projected liability associated with the Conference-sponsored retiree medical plan.

The Conference's share of the denominational pension liabilities is determined by Wespath, and the Conference Treasurer will identify a disaffiliating church's share of that liability. The liability is calculated on a market value basis, which reflects the ongoing risks associated with a long term defined benefit liability. The Conference's pension liability will be updated quarterly by Wespath.

As noted below, the Conference also sponsors a retiree medical program under which clergy may earn access to that benefit program based on their years of active ministry in the Conference. The present value of the total future liability associated with the retiree medical program is determined by a third party actuarial firm annually.

A church that formally initiates disaffiliation dialog with the Conference will be provided with its covenantal share of these benefit liabilities based on the most recent valuation reports, and those liabilities will be incorporated into the final Disaffiliation Agreement. The local church's share of the total clergy benefit liabilities will be calculated using the church's decimal (the decimal is used to determine the church's annual apportionments).

10. How is the cost determined for the local church?

As churches begin their disaffiliation discernment process, they are provided a worksheet detailing their specific cost structure for disaffiliation. This cost structure is the same for every church, but the cost number is unique for every church because of the use of the decimal which is how every church's share of the apportionments is calculated.

Depending on the specific church, there may be five parts to the disaffiliation cost structure (parts one-three are applied to every church and parts four and five are situational and may not apply to your church).

Part One: The church's decimal is applied to the Benefit Liability, which includes the unfunded pension liability and the retiree medical liability. This concerns promises made to clergy who have faithfully served. There is more on the Benefit Liability below.

- The unfunded pension liability represents the cost of the pension benefits that have already been earned by our Conference's clergy. That liability is the difference between the projected value of the Conference's pension assets and the projected total pension liability. If the liability exceeds the projected value of the pension assets, there is an unfunded liability.

- These projections are based on several assumptions, including the projected growth rate in our invested pension assets and the longevity of our clergy who will receive lifetime pension benefits in retirement. It is possible that the actual return on pension assets could be significantly lower than expected, and average life spans may end up being much longer than expected. In either of those cases, the Virginia Conference would need to come up with additional funds in order to make the pension benefit payments that have been promised to our clergy. The unfunded pension liability calculation is designed to ensure that the Virginia Conference will be adequately equipped to manage the entirety of the ongoing pension liability.

- Under the Conference's retiree medical program, Virginia Conference clergy have the opportunity to earn a lifetime health insurance benefit. The liability associated with that program is calculated annually by an external actuarial consulting firm, and represents the projected cost of the benefits that have already been earned by our clergy.

- In essence, the Virginia Conference's pension and retiree medical liabilities are simply the financial costs associated with promises that have been made to our Conference's clergy.

[Learn more in this VUMPI video...](#)

Part Two: Apportionments. This concerns people and ministry in the Virginia Conference.

- The local church's decimal is used to calculate the specific apportionments for that specific church.

- This is current year's unpaid apportionments (Conference + District) and an additional 12 months of apportionments.

Part Three: Legal expenses

- The local church attorney will collaborate to finalize the Disaffiliation Agreement with Conference Trustees' attorney.
- The local church attorney will assist in incorporating the local church in its new form, so it can receive the property.
- The Conference Trustees' Attorney fees are generally fixed at \$3,000 for each transaction unless extraordinary circumstances require more legal fees to be expended.

Part Four: As applicable, satisfying a loan or grant related to property from the conference or district.

Part Five: As applicable, may have to provide compensation support (salary, pension, housing) if disaffiliation is out of sync with the appointment year and the church's pastor is remaining in The United Methodist Church and an appropriate appointment is not available.

Costs associated with disaffiliation are not negotiable.

11. What is the process for clergy considering joining the Global Methodist Church or other denomination?

Following the procedure as outlined by ¶ 360.1 of the Discipline, clergy must submit a written request for withdrawal from membership in The United Methodist Church to the Bishop and copy the Office of the Center for Clergy Excellence, their District Superintendent, and the Office of Pensions and Benefits. The withdrawal and readmittance processes have been updated on the Conference website under the Center for Clergy Excellence. [Learn more...](#)

12. If a church is disaffiliating on October 7, 2022, should lay membership who want to remain in The United Methodist Church move their membership prior to that date?

The disaffiliating church is a UMC until the settlement date of the disaffiliation agreement, so they do not have to move their membership by October 7, 2023 (or the AC date). They should move their membership prior to the settlement/disaffiliation date. Membership in disaffiliating churches goes with the disaffiliating church. Following ratification, the district will send a letter to all professing members of disaffiliating churches with further information. (See FAQ Question #15 for an explanation of when exactly a church will legally be disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church.) Those who wish to remain United Methodist but have not identified a new church may transfer their membership to the General Roll of the United Methodist Church as a temporary option as they discern their next steps. The form to transfer membership to the General Roll is available at this

link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScygogqWrvPNVR6cxfCtOHc9xygnfyPRcCIF_uGlPCYXFbsTw/viewform. More information and other resources are available at nextsteps.vaumc.org.

13. What is the Conference leadership’s role in the disaffiliation process? What if the church land was donated by a person or some other entity under a condition stated in the deed that the property would remain a United Methodist church?

The Conference leadership is observing the requirements of ¶ 2553, which provides the local church “a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination . . .” (emphasis added). Just as any local church must follow the rules of ¶ 2553 in seeking to disaffiliate, the Virginia Annual Conference also must follow ¶ 2553 in respecting the right of a local church to disaffiliate.

Under ¶ 2553, the Conference leadership has limited discretion in establishing the terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement. Once the local church has completed the steps required for disaffiliation as listed above, including the approval of the terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement by a 2/3 vote of the professing members present at a Called Church Conference, it is up to the Annual Conference body, and not the Conference leadership, to approve the Disaffiliation Agreement on behalf of the Conference. Conference leadership is bound by, and does not have authority to overrule, such action by the Annual Conference.

It is important to note that certain property rights are outside of the scope of the disaffiliation process, and it is up to the local church (and not the Conference) to deal with any rights that third parties may have in the church property. Subject to the trust clause, real estate may be conveyed to a church subject to certain conditions stated in the deed. For example, the church’s deed may state that the property must be used as “a United Methodist Church” or, more generally, as a Christian place of worship, and further that if the church fails to satisfy such condition, then the property will revert to the person who sold or gave it to the church (or to that person’s heirs). This kind of provision is known as a “possibility of reverter” under Virginia law. As mentioned above, local UMC church property is always subject to the trust clause even when it is not expressly contained in the deed (the trust clause may be released through a disaffiliation under ¶ 2553), it also may be subject to a possibility of reverter. Depending on the language contained in the deed, the disaffiliation of a local church may or may not trigger the rights of third parties under a possibility of reverter.

At the closing of the disaffiliation, the Conference will provide a document to be filed in the land records that has the effect of releasing the trust clause. It is up to the local church to

address any third-party issues caused by language contained in the existing deed to the property, including any possibility of reverter.

14. What is the effective date of when churches seeking disaffiliation are no longer United Methodist?

Disaffiliation is complete only when there is a settlement date. The “settlement date” is the day the money is paid and the property is transferred. The local church remains a United Methodist Church, with their appointed/assigned pastor until the settlement date of the disaffiliation. The Annual Conference approving the Disaffiliation Agreement is one step but it is not the final step. In other words, a church will not be legally disaffiliated until the settlement date. Between the Annual Conference approval and the settlement date, there is legal work to be done. The disaffiliation date for each of the 120 churches, should they be approved, will likely all be on different dates. The settlement date for each church approved at the October 7 Annual Conference must be no later than December 7, 2023.

The disaffiliated local church must cease using UMC symbols (i.e. cross and flame) at the time of the settlement date, although they may retain and continue UMC hymnals and Bibles with the cross and flame if they wish.