

Guiding Principles for UMC Clergy and Disaffiliated Churches

Virginia Annual Conference clergy are free to officiate at funerals and memorial services not on the premises of disaffiliated churches. Serving in this capacity has always been permitted and will continue to be permitted.

We are not establishing a hard and fast policy for funerals and memorial services on disaffiliated church properties, but do ask that all clergy contemplating such invitations weigh these guiding principles when discerning whether or not to participate:

1. Consider the generalized and isolated trauma the church community has already experienced in their journey to disaffiliation. Is additional harm being created, or is healing being impeded by your participation?
2. Your role must be focused in nature and limited at the funeral; you are not the pastor of the disaffiliated church.
3. Your pastoral care of the church and with the bereaved should not be ongoing; preserve that on-going pastoral role for the church's resident pastor.
4. Remember that, should your UMC pastoral presence at the disaffiliated church continue to evolve into a longer-term pastoral role, you risk the possibility of being voluntarily withdrawn. (see Judicial Council Decision 691)
5. This approval for limited UMC pastoral participation in disaffiliated church funerals should not be interpreted as an on-ramp or threshold event for future involvement in the disaffiliated church.
6. To facilitate a season of settling and healing in a disaffiliated church, and those who left to stay UMC, would it serve the greater good to have a funeral service off-site for six to twelve months post-disaffiliation?
7. Clergy who have chosen to withdraw from the UMC shall not perform any pastoral duties for any United Methodist Church congregation.

We appreciate your heightened sensitivity and consideration of these guidelines as we navigate this transitional time.

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson
The Appointive Cabinet
February 20, 2024

Note: If you have any questions, please direct those to [Rev. Dr. Steve Summers](#), Assistant to the Bishop and Chief Operating Officer, or to your District Superintendent.