

FAQ FOR COLLIERVILLE UNITED METHODIST DISCERNMENT



THE DISCOVERY
JOURNEY

DISCLAIMER: The Discernment Team did our best to answer these questions as factually and neutrally as we could, while providing as much helpful information as possible. We recognize this information may not cover everything. Please contact us at discernment@colliervilleumc.org with any additional questions we can assist with.

CATEGORY 1: WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT DISAFFILIATION?

QUESTION: What is disaffiliation?

ANSWER: Disaffiliation is a formalized process to withdraw from The UMC “Because of the 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...” Disaffiliation means the church becomes independent.

LINK: [What should United Methodist congregations know about disaffiliation?](#)

QUESTION: What scripture supports the argument that LGBTQ people can’t be a leader in The UMC, or can’t be married in The UMC, or is it just contradictory to the Book Of Discipline (BOD)?

ANSWER: LGBTQ people can be members and leaders in the local church. However, they can not be married or ordained in the United Methodist Church according to the BOD. The 3 specific paragraphs of the Book of Discipline referencing this specific item are listed below.

The discernment team compiled a long list of scriptures used for the team’s reflection and spiritual guidance through this process. You can find the scriptures linked here. [Scriptures](#)

¶ 304.3 QUALIFICATIONS FOR ORDINATION

While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society,

they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals¹ are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.²

¶ 161.C THE NURTURING COMMUNITY

Marriage—We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God’s blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.²

¶ 341.6 UNAUTHORIZED CONDUCT

Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.³⁵

QUESTION: Do our pastors agree and accept our BOD?

ANSWER: Yes. They have taken a vow and covenant to uphold our Book of Discipline.

QUESTION: Have churches left the denomination?

ANSWER: Yes, there are traditional and progressive churches that have disaffiliated already. Of the 921 churches in the TWKUMC, 57 have currently disaffiliated as of June 30, 2022. It was announced at Annual Conference, June 2022, an additional 42 churches in the TWK Conference inquired about the process.

QUESTION: Why can’t the conference pull out as a whole from The UMC?

ANSWER: The UMC judiciary ruled conferences cannot pullout, but only individual churches can disaffiliate. Source link: [Judicial Council Decision](#)

QUESTION: Where in the Book of Discipline does it reference marriage of homosexual persons?

ANSWER: [Book of Discipline](#)

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CATEGORY 2: WHAT WILL THE PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

QUESTION: When and how will Collierville United Methodist Church determine whether or not to withdraw or “disaffiliate” from The United Methodist Church (“UMC”)?

ANSWER: The Discernment Team will prepare a report of the information gathered during their research, congregation listening sessions and surveys to make a recommendation to the Administrative Board no later than the January 22, 2023 meeting. The Administrative Board will need a majority vote to begin an official disaffiliation process. For a disaffiliation resolution to pass, it must receive an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the professing members of Collierville UMC in attendance at a “called Church Conference”.

QUESTION: Should Collierville UMC Decide to disaffiliate from The UMC what is the process, terms and likely timeline by which disaffiliation (withdrawal) may occur under ¶ 2553 of The UMC Book of Discipline?

ANSWER: Disaffiliation from The UMC under ¶ 2553 of The UMC Book of Discipline is achieved upon satisfying each of the following conditions:

- a. A two-thirds affirmative vote by members present at a called Church Conference meeting to disaffiliate from The UMC
- b. Agreement to pay any unpaid conference tithe from the previous 12 months (CUMC stays current on our monthly tithe payments so no monies would be due), and a future year of apportionments which is approximately \$237,751 at time of separation.

c. Agreement to pay Collierville UMC share of the Tennessee Western Kentucky Annual Conference's unfunded pension liabilities which is estimated to be 3 years' worth of tithe which presently is \$237,751 per year. 3 years will be approximately \$713,253. All monies would be due June 30,2023.

d. A majority vote of the Annual Conference. The next scheduled Annual Conference is June 19-21, 2023, Items (a) through (c) must be accomplished prior to that time, under the existing schedule, this process may not be completed until June of 2023. The right of a UM church to Disaffiliate under ¶ 2553 expires on December 31, 2023. We are aware of the 120 day lead time for a church conference vote, and it is built into our discernment timeline.

QUESTION: Should Collierville UMC decide to Disaffiliate from The UMC, why must we comply with the disaffiliation process in order to leave The UMC with property and assets?

ANSWER: The "Trust Clause" of the Book of Discipline (¶ 2501) provides that all property of a local UM church (including real estate) is held "in trust" for the benefit of The UMC through the applicable Annual Conference. Consequently, if Collierville UMC withdraws from The UMC without approval of the Annual Conference, it is The UMC's position that ownership and control of church property remains with the Annual Conference. Under the disaffiliation process, the Annual Conference and The UMC shall release all claims to the property of Collierville UMC.

QUESTION: Should Collierville UMC decide to disaffiliate from The UMC, are there options under the Book of Discipline for withdrawal other than through the Disaffiliation procedure under ¶ 2553?

ANSWER: Technically there are conceivably other options available for a local church to withdraw from the UMC, including entering into a Comity Agreement under ¶ 2548.2 of the Book of Discipline. However recently, it has been determined by The UMC Council of Bishops that the only option available for a church to disaffiliate is under ¶ 2553 of the Book of Discipline. There are 18 Conferences where their Bishop are not allowing any disaffiliation and many more Conferences who are adding additional fees. The TWK Conference and Bishop McAlilly are having the Conference charge no more than what ¶ 2553 states.

LINK: [EXPLANATION OF PARAGRAPH 2553](#)

QUESTION: Where can I find the Book of Discipline?

ANSWER: Both the 2016 Book of Discipline and Resolutions from the 2019 General Conference are linked here: [Free Versions of Book of Discipline](#)

The Book of Discipline is updated and amended every 4 years, at the General Conference, yet there is no 2020 BOD since General Conference has not been held. The next General Conference is scheduled for 2024.

QUESTION: Will the survey include a yes/no on staying UMC?

ANSWER: Yes it will. The survey is intended to have a variety of questions to gauge the temperature of our church across multiple issues.

QUESTION: How do we ensure the church has email addresses for all confirmed members, including youth, so their feedback is collected in the survey?

ANSWER: The church office staff has been cleaning up our data in Planning Center for the past few years. All professing members of the church should reach out to Sharon Walker in the church office at SWalker@colliervilleumc.org if someone needs to update or add a family member's contact information. Families who only have a single email address on file, are encouraged to share individual email addresses for each member, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to complete the survey. In addition the survey will also be sent to members mobile phone numbers if they are on file with the church, though the survey will only allow a member to reply one time.

The discernment team will also reach out to Jenny Garrott to ensure youth have individual email addresses on their Planning Center profile.

QUESTION: How are confirmed youth being prepared for the issues and survey?

ANSWER: Five of the discernment team members are actively engaged with the youth on a weekly basis. There will be Listening session for the youth. We will encourage the Youth Leadership to invite parents to attend the sessions if they would like when we are discussing these issues. Pastors will be in attendance in all youth discussions as well.

CATEGORY 3: COST AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

QUESTION: Should Collierville UMC decide to disaffiliate, from what sources of funds will Collierville UMC draw to pay the amount required to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553?

ANSWER: Should CUMC decide to disaffiliate, church leadership will need to develop a plan to source funding to comply with the disaffiliation requirement. It is estimated the amount that might be due to the TWK Conference would be approximately \$951,004. This could be a combination of one or more of the following sources: (a) cash on hand, (b) unrestricted funds, (c) restricted funds where such use complies with any restrictions, (d) a bank loan, (e) special offerings by Collierville UMC members who may choose to assist in meeting this specific financial commitment.

QUESTION: If we disaffiliate from the TWKUMC conference, and The UMC, how will it financially impact youth programming, mission funding, resources, preschool, etc.

ANSWER: CUMC is self-funded by our local church members. Unlike some very small churches in our conference, CUMC receives no money from the conference. The self-funded budget is managed through the CUMC Finance Committee. Any financial impacts will be managed through the budgeting process and reviewed by the Finance Committee. Giving may or may not be impacted. Budgets and staffing may need to be adjusted accordingly to match the needs of the church.

QUESTION: What is the current debt on our building and line of credit for repairs?

ANSWER: It's roughly \$3.4M in principle and interest, and another approximate \$600K in a line of credit. This belongs to CUMC, with no ties to the conference. It's a rough estimate, because the actual values will change each month as a monthly payment on our loan is made.

QUESTION: Does CUMC have any unpaid grants?

ANSWER: CUMC has no unpaid grants associated with the conference.

CATEGORY 4: NEXT STEPS IF WE VOTE TO DISAFFILIATE

QUESTION: Define and explain the similarities and differences in UMC vs. GMC.

ANSWER: LINK: [A Comparison of The United Methodist Church & The Global Methodist Church](#)

QUESTION: Does the pastoral staff have the option to stay or leave if CUMC votes to disaffiliate from The UMC?

ANSWER: Should CUMC disaffiliate, the Pastoral staff are guaranteed to retain employment (compensation/insurance/pension) with The United Methodist Church (UMC). The UMC would appoint the Pastor(s) to new assignment(s). Staff pensions remain intact. Staff positions will be determined through the budgeting process.

Should CUMC disaffiliate, and the Pastoral staff wish to remain with the Collierville church, and Collierville church wishes to retain them, then new employment agreements would need to be worked out with the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

QUESTION: If CUMC disaffiliates, what happens to the endowment? The cross and flame image? The columbarium?

ANSWER: The Endowment, and all financial accounts, remain with the Collierville church, similar to the physical property. UMC language would need to be removed from the charter.

The cross and flame are a registered trademark of The United Methodist Church denomination. It would have to be removed and phasing out would take some time.

The Columbarium and cemetery is physical church property and would remain.

CATEGORY 5: ADDITIONAL CLARIFICATION

QUESTION: Please provide context on what Walter Fenton from the GMC was talking about when he shared about Female Clergy in the GMC.

ANSWER: There have been allegations that the GMC does not allow ordination and promotion of female pastors in the GMC. The GMC has the same language in their Book of Discipline as The UMC regarding women in leadership positions including Pastors to Bishop.