

Paragould First United Methodist Church
fumcparagould.org

AUG. 1, 2022

The State of the United Methodist Church Information Session

PREPARED BY
REV. DANE WOMACK

Introductions	2
Vocabulary	2
Key Groups	4
Shape of the UMC (Global, Regional, Local, Church, Small Group, Etc.)	5
Current Landscape	6
Timeline	6
Current Local Church Options	6
Bishop Mueller's Leadership Principles	8
Notes from Rev. Dane	8
2016 Book of Discipline Statements Related to Human Sexuality	11
¶2553 Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality	13
¶2548.2. Deeding Church Property to Federated Churches or Other Evangelical Denominations	15

Introductions

- A. Welcome. Thank you for being here and caring for your church. Let us pray...
- B. These are challenging days for the church (Episcopal Lambeth Conference¹, Roman Catholic Church², Southern Baptist Convention³, Hillsong⁴, #ChurchToo⁵). The UMC has challenges but so does every institution and most local churches.
- C. We are experiencing a deep culture of division (elections, pandemic, social media, etc.). It seems we are looking for reasons to divide at every turn. Polarization is rampant. The church can either fall victim to this mode of operation or serve as a witness to deeper unity and care.

Vocabulary

- D. **Book of Discipline (BOD):** A fundamental book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends The Book of Discipline, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. Often referred to as The Discipline.
- E. **General Conference:** The highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference convenes every quadrennium (four years) to determine the denomination's future direction. It is the only body that can speak officially for the denomination.
- F. **Annual Conference:** A regional, organizational unit of The United Methodist Church and the yearly business meeting of that unit, both presided over by a bishop. The business session is composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity. At least one layperson from each pastoral charge is a member. There are 56 annual conferences in the United States and 76 outside the U.S. in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The conference is a time to review ministry, adopt policy and resolutions, and strengthen spiritual life.
- G. **Jurisdictional Conference:** The quadrennial meeting of clergy and lay delegates from the annual conferences within the boundaries of one of five U.S. jurisdictions: North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern and Western. Jurisdictional Conferences convene every four years. The business includes the election and assignment of bishops.
- H. **Central Conference:** One of seven geographic areas outside the territorial United States, each composed of annual conferences as determined by the General Conference. Central Conferences have responsibilities similar to those of Jurisdictional Conferences. The seven central conferences are in Europe, Africa and the Philippines.
- I. **Connectionalism:** (BOD ¶125) United Methodists throughout the world are bound together in a connectional covenant in which we support and hold each other accountable for faithful discipleship and mission. Integrally holding connectional unity and local freedom, we seek to

¹<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2022/07/29/conservative-bishops-to-refuse-to-take-communion-with-lgbtq-bishops-demand-sanctions-for-churches-that-allow-for-same-sex-marriage/>

²<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/24/pope-in-canada-to-apologise-for-abuse-of-indigenous-children-in-church-schools>

³<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/southern-baptist-abuse-report-survivor-speaks-out/>

⁴<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/29/us/hillsong-church-scandals.html>

⁵<https://religionnews.com/2022/06/13/churchtoo-revelations-growing-years-after-movement-began/>

proclaim and embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining a vital web of interactive relationships

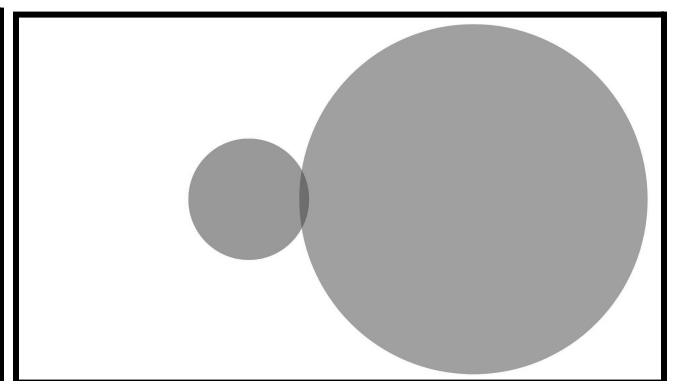
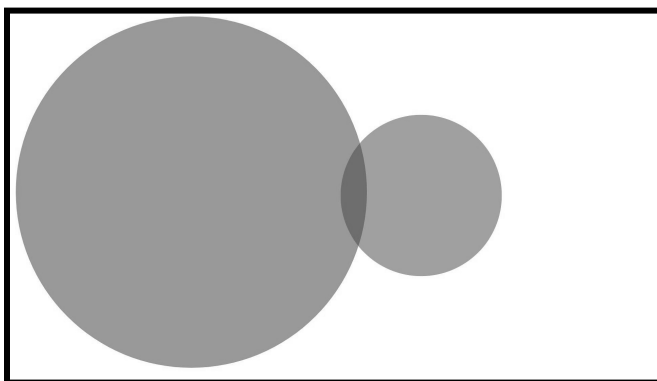
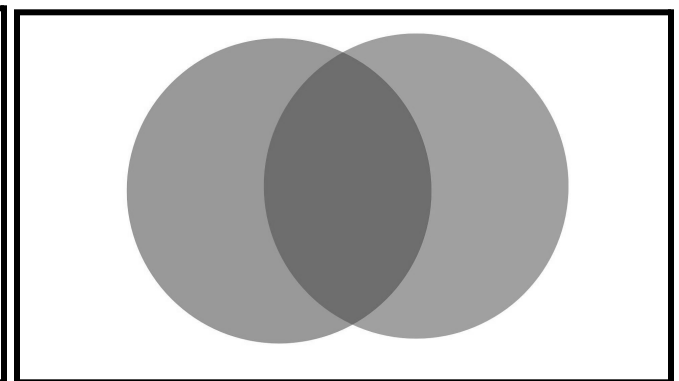
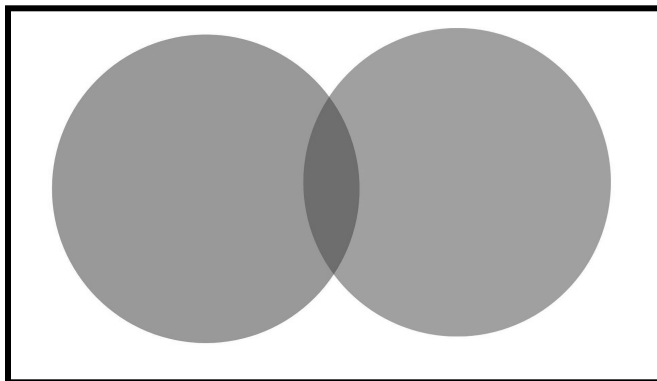
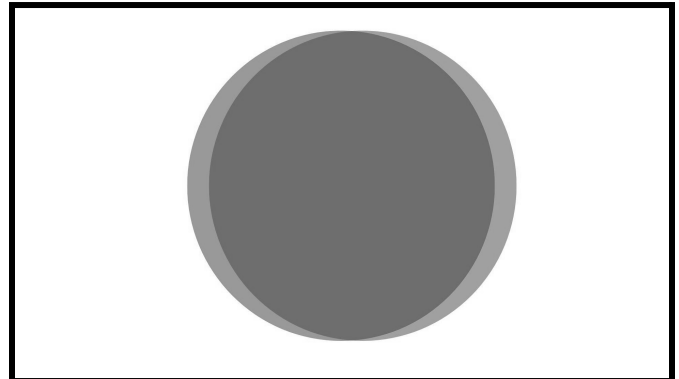
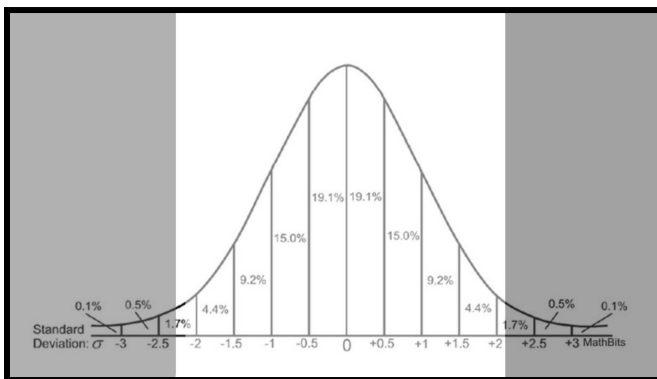
- J. **Trust Clause:** (BOD ¶2501) The clause that must be included in the deeds of all United Methodist properties. All properties held by the General, Jurisdictional, Annual, and District Conferences or by a local church or by any agency or institution of the denomination are to be held in trust for the denomination. The titles are not held by "The United Methodist Church" since it is a connectional structure and not a legal entity in and of itself. The titles to the properties are held by boards of trustees established for the purpose of holding and administering property. In the case of local churches, the deeds to all local churches, parsonages, and other properties must include a trust clause. This clause indicated that the property is to be maintained for the benefit of the local church as this ultimately relates to the ministry and work of the Annual Conference. This trust requirement is an essential element of the historic polity of The United Methodist Church (and its predecessors) and has been a part of the Discipline since 1797.
- K. **Congregationalism:** a system of Christian doctrines and ecclesiastical government in which each congregation is self-governing and maintains bonds of faith with other similar local congregations. (This is the form of government for most local congregations including non-denominational and Baptist churches. They are self-governed and united with other churches through voluntary relationships. The UMC is connectional. We share a government and polity structure across all of our churches and institutions.)
- L. **Common Terms w.r.t. Sexuality Debate:**
- a. **Traditionalists:** Those who believe marriage should only be shared between one man and one woman. Strict Traditionalists cannot be in a church with those who believe/practice differently.
 - b. **Centrist lean traditional:** Those who believe marriage should only be shared between one man and one woman. They do not mind being in a church with those who disagree with them.
 - c. **Centrist:** Those who are sympathetic to both Traditionalists & Progressives and do not have a strong opinion on gay marriage. Centrists are often more concerned with maintaining community and unity over and above a single ethic on marriage.
 - d. **Centrist lean progressive:** Those who believe gay marriage should be recognized and celebrated in church. They do not mind being in a church with people who disagree with them.
 - e. **Progressives:** Those who believe the church should be actively working to recognize/celebrate gay marriage within the church. Strict Progressives cannot be in a church with those who believe/practice differently.
 - f. **Incompatibilists:** Traditionalists and/or Progressives who can only be in a church/denomination with 100% agreement.
 - g. **Compatibilists:** Traditionalists/Centrist/Progressives who are willing to be in a church/denomination which includes diverse opinions.

Key Groups

- M. Reconciling Ministries / Congregations (Progressives)
- N. StayUMC / BeUMC (Centrists)
- O. Wesleyan Covenant Association / Global Methodist Church (Traditionalists)

Shape of the UMC (Global, Regional, Local, Church, Small Group, Etc.)

I offer these graphics to help people imagine the “shape” of the UMC. Each of us perceive the identity of the UMC based on our experiences (local church, small group, seminary, etc.). My UMC experience can be represented by a “Bell Curve” (or a Normal Distribution). I tend to think of the UMC as largely being “Centrist” with the “tails” of the curve occupied by our most committed “Traditionalists” and “Progressives”. Or you might prefer the image of a Venn Diagram. Imagine “Traditionalists” and “Progressives” occupying two circles. Then, consider how much they overlap. The shared center would be the “Centrist”. My experience is that the two circles largely overlap and most people consider themselves “centrist”. But I realize that may not be true for everyone. Others’ perception of the UMC may look like one of these other venn diagrams.



Current Landscape

Adapted from ARUMC Bishop Gary Mueller's Presentation⁶ & other Resources⁷

Timeline

- a. **1972 General Conference:** The first statement regarding homosexuality was published in *The Book of Discipline*
- b. **2016 General Conference:** Legislation was enacted assigning the Council of Bishops the responsibility to find a solution for our denomination that has been deeply divided on matters of human sexuality.
- c. **2016: The Commission on the Way Forward Appointed:** This diverse and representative group was created by the Council of Bishops to assist it in leading the denomination forward. It offered the Council of Bishops three options: The One Church Plan, The Connectional Conference Plan and The Traditional Plan. The Council endorsed the One Church Plan, but also offered the other two options for consideration by a special called session of the General Conference. The Council of Bishops also asked the Judicial Council to undertake a constitutional review of the proposed plans.
- d. **2019 Called Session of General Conference:** The "Traditional Plan" was enacted by a 53% - 47% margin. Additional legislation was adopted allowing those to disaffiliate and depart who could not remain for reasons of conscience.
- e. **January 2020: "The Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation" Unveiled**
This plan, agreed to by a theologically diverse group of 9 bishops, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and conservative Renewal Group leaders, proposed allowing churches desiring to do so to separate in an easy and orderly manner. The Protocol assumed that the remaining the United Methodist Church would become more inclusive of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Support for the Protocol was offered from across the theological spectrum and convention wisdom held that the 2020 General Conference would enact it. However, COVID-19 overwhelmed the world beginning in March 2020 and General Conference 2020 was postponed.
- f. **February 2022:** The rescheduled 2020 General Conference set to begin August 29, 2022 was canceled and the Global Methodist Church announced it would form on May 1, 2022.
- g. **2024 General Conference** is the next scheduled meeting of the General Conference

Current Local Church Options

- h. **Remain UMC** - This is the default option. No one has to do anything! This is what the majority of congregations will do. Moderate and traditional congregations, in addition to centrist and progressive congregations, will be included in this group. 2016 Discipline (as amended in 2019) is authoritative. No decision is required by any church. Only those congregations interested in leaving have to decide what action to take next

⁶ <https://arumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CurrentLandscapePresentationScript.pdf>

⁷ <https://arumc.org/current-landscape/>

- i. **Wait** - Wait for the outcome of the 2024 General Conference and see what the emerging shape of the United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church will be. There is no need to rush, especially for traditional congregations, since the 2016 Book of Discipline is authoritative.
- j. **Use ¶2553 in the *Book of Discipline* to Disaffiliate (attached)**
 - i. Adopted at 2019 General Conference & expires December 31, 2023.
 - ii. Originally intended for more 'Progressive Churches', but recent Judicial Council decisions broaden the application so it is now available to any church who wishes to pursue it.
 - iii. Requirements - as adopted in 2021 by the ARUMC '*Principles Regarding Local Church Requests for Disaffiliation*'
 - 1. A congregation's Church Council or leadership team must agree to pursue this option followed by:
 - 2. A three month discernment process for the church which, at the end of those three months, will require a 2/3 vote by the church.
 - 3. The local church must be up-to-date on its past 12 months tithe
 - 4. Full payment of the estimated upcoming 12 months tithe
 - 5. Repayment of certain grants received in the last 10 years - benevolent grants are not included in this requirement.
 - 6. Full payment of the local church's share of the conference's unfunded liability. Note: there currently is exploration taking place about whether a less expensive option might be available for churches leaving. Updated information concerning this will be shared as appropriate.
 - 7. \$5,000 in legal costs - estimated (closing costs on property, not litigation)
 - 8. After all requirements have been met, a simple majority vote by the Annual Conference.
 - 9. After all requirements of the disaffiliation process have been completed, a quick claim deed will be issued to the church without the Trust Clause in it.
- k. **Possible Future Option: Use ¶2548.2 of the *Book of Discipline* to Transfer (attached)**
 - i. This option remains controversial, may be subject to legal challenges and is currently under Judicial Council review.
 - ii. If the Judicial Council decides that ¶2548.2 may be used by churches to transfer from the United Methodist Church, legislation will be considered at the next regular or special session of the Arkansas Annual Conference to develop principles and processes to be used. Unless both of these things happen, ¶2548.2 will not be an available option.

Bishop Mueller's Leadership Principles

- i. First, we will **embrace a heart of peace** and treat each other with the grace and respect that sisters and brothers in Christ owe each other.

- m. Second, we will **graciously allow congregations to land where they may thrive, while protecting the appropriate interests of the UMC.**
 - n. Third, we will **guarantee a fair process for congregations discerning whether to leave.**
 - o. Fourth, we will **keep the focus on what matters most:** seeking to grow as many vital local congregations as possible by keeping the focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world. Too often, the United Methodist Church has fallen into the trap of thinking that what matters most is which side wins the votes at the General Conference. It has not been healthy for our churches, our mission or those Jesus calls us to serve.
 - p. Fifth, we will **provide updates and transparent information** on a regular basis. In the meantime, contact your district superintendent or Bishop Mueller if you have any questions or concerns. Both laity and clergy are a bit anxious and uncertain, as well as have questions about how all of this will work and what it means for you and your congregation.
 - q. **Prayer** will be at the heart of all Bishop Mueller does in the coming months as we travel this journey that will sometimes be painful and always be challenging.
-

Notes from Rev. Dane

1. American Methodist History

- o 1735 John Wesley chaplain Georgia
- o 1744 Wesley's first Conference of Preachers
- o 1776 Thomas Coke named first superintendent in America by Wesley
- o 1784 First "Christmas Conference" Methodist Episcopal Church
- o 1800 Church of United Brethren in Christ Founded
- o 1816 African Methodist Episcopal Church Organized
- o 1830 Methodist Protestant Church Organized
- o 1844 Methodist North & South split over slavery
- o 1845 Methodist Episcopal Church South Organized
- o 1870 Colored Methodist Episcopal Church Organized
- o 1939 Formation of the Methodist Church (Union of the Methodist Episcopal Churches, North and South; and the Methodist Protestant Church)
- o 1940 First Meeting of (African-American) Central Jurisdiction
- o 1946 Evangelical United Brethren Church Organized (Evangelical Church & Church of the United Brethren in Christ)
- o 1956 Full Clergy Rights for Women
- o 1968 United Methodist Church Organized (Methodist Church & Evangelical United Brethren Church)
- o 1972 First full General Conference of The United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church as we know it was formed in the late 60's during a time of great hope for the unity of the church. The Second Vatican Council (1965) out of the Roman Catholic Church placed a renewed emphasis on ecumenism and our common liturgy. Denominations began working on efforts to emphasize what is shared (rather than what divides us) and "uniting" where possible. The UMC was

birthed out of the hopefulness for church unity. The UMC is a “grand experiment” in not only a national but global denomination. The Southern Baptist Convention is larger by numbers, but it is a loosely connected voluntary organization. The UMC is the largest Protestant denomination with a worldwide presence and governance. We are a “big tent” church that has included great diversity since its founding. The UMC is a difficult institution to manage because of its size and diversity and that has been true across its history.

2. Note the growth of Methodism globally (especially in Philippines & Africa). We typically think of non-US/European Methodists as being conservative.
3. Rich history of theological resources, scriptural interpretation, and careful work on important issues (slavery, African-American participation, women’s ordination/leadership, alcohol, divorce, global missions, abortion, war, etc.). See UMC Book of Discipline Part III “Doctrinal Standards & Our Theological Task” & Part V “Social Principles”
4. Accusations by WCA/GMC that remaining UMC is not “orthodox” (belief in Trinity, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, Divinity of Christ, etc.) are untrue & hurtful. UMC orthodox theological commitments have not changed.
5. 90+% churches in ARUMC are not currently involved with disaffiliation.
6. Many ARUMC churches pursuing disaffiliation have long been wanting out of the UMC and are taking this opportunity (§2553) to be at the forefront of a new denomination (GMC).
7. The GMC will be a different denomination (lack of guaranteed appointment, no Trust clause, etc.).
8. Future of UMC is to be determined. In the coming years, FUMC Paragould could play a role in shaping the UMC in Arkansas & NEA. FUMC Paragould may one day conclude UMC is no longer a good fit as its denomination.
9. As with many UMCs/FUMCs, Paragould FUMC membership has a diverse opinion on this and other matters. A rush to a vote would be painful.
10. Methodism (Christianity?) will surely undergo changes in coming years.
11. What now?
 - ¶121. *Rationale for Our Mission*—The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world. The fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world is the vision Scripture holds before us. The United Methodist Church affirms that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord of all.
 - ¶122. *The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission*—We make disciples as we:
 - proclaim the gospel, seek, welcome and gather persons into the body of Christ;
 - lead persons to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and the spirit and profession of faith in Jesus Christ;
 - nurture persons in Christian living through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace, such as Wesley’s Christian conferencing;
 - send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the

oppressed, being and becoming a compassionate, caring presence, and working to develop social structures that are consistent with the gospel; and continue the mission of seeking, welcoming and gathering persons into the community of the body of Christ.

We should continue to monitor and respond to the work of the denomination. What's going on is important to the future of the church and important to many in our church for personal reasons including deeply held convictions. I would never insinuate that denominational changes are a "distraction." At the same time, our identity and mission as a church has not and will not change. We are committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and serving others - as our UMC Book of Discipline says so well. Denominational unfoldings will continue. But that should not take away from our identity and work as a church.

Attached are various documents related to the status of the denomination. Please read and study at your convenience. Follow up questions and/or meetings are welcomed.

2016 Book of Discipline Statements Related to Human Sexuality

Regarding church membership

1. ¶4. Article IV. Inclusiveness of the Church: The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection.
2. ¶214. Eligibility: All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection

Book of Discipline, Social Principles on Marriage

3. ¶161.C 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.

Book of Discipline, Social Principles on Human Sexuality

4. ¶161.G We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.
 - a. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.

Regarding the ministry of the ordained

5. ¶304.3: The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
6. ¶341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

Regarding United Methodist funds

7. ¶613: The [conference council on finance and administration] shall have authority and responsibility to ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The UMC "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" (¶ 161F). .
8. ¶806.9: [The General Council on Finance and Administration] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church 'not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends' (¶ 161F).

¶2553 Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality⁸

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.

⁸ Adopted in 2019

- 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.**

¶2548.2. Deeding Church Property to Federated Churches or Other Evangelical Denominations

With the consent of the presiding bishop and of a majority of the district superintendents and of the district board of church location and building and at the request of the charge conference or of a meeting of the membership of the local church, where required by local law, and in accordance with said law, the annual conference may instruct and direct the board of trustees of a local church to deed church property to one of the other denominations represented in the Pan-Methodist Commission or to another evangelical denomination 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.