

INTRODUCTION

When and how will Christ Church determine whether or not to disaffiliate from the UMC?

A congregational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, October 30, 2022, for a vote to disaffiliate from UMC. For the resolution to pass it must receive an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of Christ Church in attendance.

What are the processes, terms, and timeline for Disaffiliation under paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline?

- Two-thirds majority vote from Christ Church members in attendance at the congregational meeting to disaffiliate
- Agreement to pay two years of apportionments
- Agreement to pay the church's share of the unfunded pension liability of the Annual Conference
- A majority vote by delegates of Special Annual Conference scheduled for May 22, 2023

VOTING PROCESS

Is it required to be a church member to vote?

Membership at Christ United Methodist Church is required to vote on October 30.

What is the latest someone can join the church to vote?

October 2, 2022

Do you need to sign your legal name on the ballot?

Yes, you are required to sign your legal name to the ballot, as well as print your name on the ballot. If your current legal name is different than your name as shown on the membership roll of Christ Church (e.g. married name as compared with maiden name), please contact the church office to advise them accordingly. View sample ballot [\[LINK\]](#)

Are my children eligible to vote?

Any child who has completed Confirmation, a three-year process from 6th through 8th grade, is eligible to vote at the congregational meeting.

Is there an absentee ballot?

No, there is no absentee ballot. In order to cast a vote, a member must be present on October 30, 2022 between 9:45 AM and 1:00 PM to cast his or her vote. The United Methodist Church set the voting requirements as described in the Book of Discipline, including the rule that absentee ballots are not allowed in the vote for Disaffiliation.

Why is this not a secret ballot?

The United Methodist Church set the requirements for the Disaffiliation voting process, following the Book of Discipline. The Annual Conference prepared the required ballot which cannot be changed by a local congregation. Consequently, Christ Church Memphis is following the requirements of the UMC and the Annual Conference, which includes the signing of the ballot. In that only church members are allowed to vote, the Annual Conference must be able to confirm the membership status of each voter, thus the requirement of signing the ballot.

REASONS FOR DISAFFILIATION

What are the fundamental issues for Disaffiliation?

The United Methodist Church is a divided and hurting church, confronted with major disagreements on essential theological doctrines and the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture; in addition, the institution and polity of the denomination is dysfunctional, including clergy and ecclesiastical disobedience, and differing approaches on matters of mission and discipleship within the church such as the important issue of human sexuality. Contrary to what many believe, the reason for Disaffiliation is not solely due to the sexuality issue, though this is an important issue facing the church and a symptom of much deeper divisions. It is considered the “presenting issue” because of the public attention attributed to it.

Christ Church Memphis has always been consistent in supporting the renewal and preservation of historic, orthodox, evangelical Christianity in the Wesleyan tradition, and has reached a point where this commitment is at odds with a significant portion of the UMC, and particularly the leadership within the United Methodist Church.

You can learn more about the divide here: [PODCAST LINK 1]

Is the vote to disaffiliate a vote to no longer be Methodists?

No, the Disaffiliation vote is not a vote to cease being Methodist. Christ Church Memphis members will remain Methodist Christians regardless of the outcome of the Disaffiliation vote. Christ Church was birthed in the Wesleyan heritage. Many of our members were Methodists before they were United Methodists (1968) and will remain so.

What are some of the differing views on theology and the role of Scripture?

There are major disagreements within in the United Methodist Church as to “how we view Jesus”, such as the divinity of Jesus, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, belief in Jesus being the only way to God and Jesus’ death on the cross providing the only way for salvation. There are also basic differences relating to the definition of discipleship and mission of the Church.

Whether influenced by post-modernism, emotionalism, or harmful interpretative frameworks leading to theological constructs, the UMC is also divided on matters of the authority,

inspiration and interpretation of Scripture. The Bible tells us what the will of God is and how we are to live our lives. Some in the UMC do not believe this – they say the Bible contains the word of God but is not the Word of God. This leaves the truth of Scripture to the discretion of the reader. This is unacceptable to those in the UMC of today who would be considered traditionalists.

Christ Church has historically been involved, along with others in the UMC, in standing for the authority of Scripture and biblical truth through, among other acts, joining in the Houston Declaration and the Memphis Declaration, both of which were adopted by those of the traditionalists' persuasion.

You can learn more about the divide here: [PODCAST LINK 2]

What does the Book of Discipline teach on human sexuality, and has that changed? If not, why are we doing this?

First and primarily, The Book of Discipline teaches that all persons are of sacred worth and value and made in the image of God. It further teaches that we are to love, respect, and care for all persons and that human sexuality teaches us important truths about God, the gospel, and human flourishing, as well as human brokenness. In these truths, the Book of Discipline also states that the church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and that it is incompatible with Christian teaching.

The above position of the UMC was adopted in 1972 and affirmed at every General Conference thereafter, including the Specially Called General Conference in 2019, and remains the current official teaching of the UMC. However, as a matter of practice, in disobedience to that standard, persons throughout the UMC, including clergy and bishops, have rejected and refused to follow the stated and confirmed teaching of the UMC. While attempts have been made to hold those who defy this teaching, including church leadership, accountable, in many instances, these attempts have been blocked by some bishops and, to a great extent, have not succeeded.

As to the Book of Discipline not being changed, it appears that most bishops recognize that notwithstanding the lack of revisions to the Discipline, they are allowing churches to Disaffiliate by giving credence to the initial statement in paragraph 2553.1 of the Discipline that “Because of the current deed 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...”.

With the current and projected leadership of the UMC and the clear direction in which the denomination is headed, the Book of Discipline in all likelihood will be changed on many issues upon which there is division, including those issues relating to human sexuality (e.g. the definition of marriage and changing requirements on ordination). This is a recognized reality by all segments of the UMC.

Why are we voting to disaffiliate if the Book of Discipline was upheld? If only a small minority violates the Discipline, why didn't the majority expel them?

To first question, see above answer.

As to the second question, many believe that there is only a small minority who are violating or who intend to violate the Discipline. Actually, nearly half (25) of the 54 Annual Conferences are on record that they disagree with the provisions in the Discipline addressing human sexuality, and 12 of those stated they will openly *defy* the Discipline. There are numerous examples of bishops acting in flagrant disregard of the Discipline, not to mention the Scriptures. As stated above, there is an outward and public disregard and disobedience to the Discipline with little or no consequences or accountability within the church. The institution of the UMC is currently in a broken state, which has led to several bishops taking early retirement due to the conflict within the denomination and failure of leadership by the College of Bishops.

What does Christ Church believe about homosexuality? What does the Bible say about it?

Christ Church stands for the proposition that both the witness of scripture and the history of the universal church confirm that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian life. It is contrary to God's design for marriage & sexuality as a one-flesh union presented in Genesis 1 and 2, a truth that is affirmed by Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19 and the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5. Homosexuality is presented as an explicit sin in the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19; Jude 7), the moral requirements of the law (Lev 18:22, 20:13), and Paul's teaching on unrighteousness (Rom 1:26-28; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:10). It is also implicitly presented in Jesus' teaching in Matthew 15:19 on sexual immorality. While the text does not use the same explicit language for homosexuality, the context of the audience would have understood Jesus' reference to the Old Testament passages listed above as part of his definition for sexual immorality.

Therefore, it is Christ Church's position, as stated in the Bible and supported by over 2,000 years of church history, that those who are experiencing brokenness as it relates to human sexuality (both homosexuals and heterosexuals) are called to repent of their sin and trust in the promises of the gospel of new life and new identity. While this repentance might lead to a change in sexual desires, we do not believe that is promised, and, therefore, call the believer who experiences same sex attraction to live a full life of celibacy. All experiencing same-sex attraction are of sacred worth and value and should be welcomed into the family of the local church with support, love, and community. Christ followers should be against any form of violence, harassment, or mistreatment directed towards these individuals. We do not believe that same sex attraction disqualifies a repentant celibate believer from ministry and leadership within the local church, and we reject any form of teaching that would present homosexuality as a sin too great for the blood of Christ to cover.

Will LGBTQ+ members and guests feel and be welcome at Christ Church Memphis if the congregation votes to disaffiliate?

At Christ Church, because of our belief in the Book of Discipline that all people are of sacred worth and value, and the teachings of Scripture to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom 15:7), we pray that everyone will feel welcome at Christ Church. We believe that there is no one that is beyond the gracious and redeeming love of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ gracious and redeeming love is united together by his truth and authority, which maintains and teaches that matters of sexual immorality, including homosexuality, is incompatible with Christian teaching. We believe that in Christ’s welcome of us, we began by hearing and responding to the gospel.

In stating this belief, we pray that LGBTQ+ members and guests would hear the gospel, and our desire is for them, as for each and every guest at Christ Church, to respond to it and be led into a lifetime of growing in holiness. We pray that our church is a welcoming and hospitable community so that the gospel will be made clear and each and every person, regardless of sexual orientation, has an opportunity to respond.

Are there reasons for Christ Church not to separate?

Every voter has the right and dignity to vote as their conscience dictates at the October 30th congregational meeting. Our prayer is that the vote of all persons will be informed and based upon factual information, processing, and reflection and that we all participate in prayerfully seeking discernment for the future of Christ Church.

Our Senior Leadership Team, Executive Committee, and Church Council have all unanimously recommended Disaffiliation after months, and indeed years, of reflection and conversation through Scripture and prayer as to how to address these issues. The leadership of Christ Church acknowledges how deeply sensitive, personal and difficult this situation and the Disaffiliation vote is to many of our members.

NEXT STEPS

If we vote to disaffiliate, will we join another denomination?

The Executive Committee has established a Task Force to engage in a short term study of this issue in order to best recommend a future structure and polity for Christ Church. This includes remaining an independent church after Disaffiliation, joining the Global Methodist Church, joining the Free Methodist Church, or another alternative.

If we vote to disaffiliate, what entity will receive the title to our conveyed assets?

There will be a new Tennessee non-profit corporation formed as a church with the name "Christ Church Memphis," and all assets of Christ United Methodist Church will be conveyed, transferred or otherwise moved to that entity.

What would Disaffiliation cost?

Christ Church Memphis will be required to pay the following amounts to disaffiliate from the UMC:

1. Two years apportionments. An annual apportionment is roughly 10% of the church's annual budget. Our annual budget is \$7 million, thus making a yearly apportionment of \$700,000 and two years of apportionments approximately \$1.4 million.
2. Unfunded pension liabilities. Christ Church must pay its share of the Annual Conference's unfunded pension liabilities as determined under paragraph 2553. We have been advised by the Annual Conference that currently that figure is approximately \$2.1 million.

Consequently, as currently calculated, the total amount that Christ Church will be required to pay to disaffiliate from the UMC is approximately \$3.5 million. This figure may be lower depending upon the pension fund recalculation at the time of Disaffiliation, but it is very unlikely to be higher.

Because Christ Church Memphis has anticipated this possible expense for at least five years, our leaders have worked diligently for the church to be financially prepared to meet the required payment to separate from the UMC without sacrificing the church's ongoing mission and ministries, as well as have sufficient cash for the normal operations of the church.

Christ Church is very fortunate and blessed to be in a positive financial position. To satisfy the expected approximately \$3.5 million obligation that will be owed in the event of Disaffiliation, the church has two sources of funds totaling \$2.4 million which are held for special designated purposes; however, these funds may be properly applied against the Disaffiliation payment. Christ Church also has a \$900,000 line of credit with a financial institution (current balance of zero) which may be drawn upon for this purpose. In addition, additional borrowing capacity of well over \$2 million is being secured by the church if needed; moreover, members of the church may desire to make special gifts to the church to meet this one time financial obligation upon Christ Church. Finally, the church currently has unrestricted cash in the amount of approximately \$1 million but the congregation may rest assured that leadership will not place the church in a situation in which it does not have adequate cash, including cash reserves, to prudently manage the financial affairs of Christ Church.

What happens to membership if I join a United Methodist Church and it disaffiliates? Does my membership automatically change to a member of a new denomination? Do I need to notify the United Methodist Church?

If Christ Church Memphis does vote to disaffiliate on October 30th, the final decision for Disaffiliation will not take place until the Special Annual Conference in May of 2023. No changes will be made or will be necessary as it relates to church membership until that time unless a member so chooses. Upon the Special Annual Conference approving Disaffiliation, Christ Church will move into its next season of ministry for the Kingdom of God either as an

independent church or a member of the Global Methodist Church or the Free Methodist Church or some other Wesleyan denomination, as yet to be determined. At that time membership status at Christ Church will be fully explained.

Will there be any impact on Christ Methodist Day School?

No matter the outcome of the vote on Disaffiliation, Christ Methodist Day School and all Christ Church Memphis operations will continue to move forward as they currently operate. There will be no change in the day-to-day operations in the Day School or church life and ministry.