

Disaffiliation FAQ

- When and how will AUMC determine whether or not to disaffiliate from the UMC?

A church conference will be scheduled for a vote to disaffiliate from the UMC. For the resolution to pass, it must receive an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of AUMC in attendance.

- Agreement to pay two years of apportionments
- Agreement to pay our share of the unfounded pension liability
- A majority vote from the Annual Conference in May

Voting Process

- Is it required to be a church member to vote?
Membership at AUMC is required to vote.
- Is there an absentee ballot?
No, there is no absentee ballot. All voters must be present to cast their vote. The United Methodist Church determines all voting requirements per the Book of Discipline.
- Why is this not a secret ballot?
Because UMC must be able to validate the membership status of each voter, only church members are allowed to vote.
- The United Methodist Church determines the disaffiliation process according to the requirements found in the Book of Discipline, which AUMC is obligated to follow.

Reasons for Disaffiliation

- What are the fundamental issues for disaffiliation?
AUMC has always been consistent in supporting the renewal and preservation of historic, orthodox, evangelical Christianity in the Wesleyan tradition, yet the United Methodist Church is a divided and hurting denomination. It is confronted with major disagreements on essential theological doctrines and the inspiration and interpretation of Scripture. Additionally, the institution and polity of the denomination are 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 its public attention.

- Is the vote to disaffiliate a vote to no longer be Methodists?
No, the disaffiliation is not a vote to cease being Methodist. AUMC will remain Methodist Christians regardless of the outcome of disaffiliation. The church was birthed by Wesleyan heritage—we were Methodists before we were “United Methodists”—and we will remain so.
- What are some of the differing views on theology and the role of Scripture?
Of note, there are questions in the United Methodist Church on foundational issues, such as what it means to be the church, Jesus’ divine status and role as being the only way to God, His death on the cross providing the only way for salvation, and the definition of discipleship. We know 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. Progressives 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, which is unacceptable to those in the UMC today who would be considered traditionalists.
- Whether influenced by post-modernism, emotionalism, or harmful interpretative frameworks, we are also divided on Scriptural authority and inspiration matters.
- 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, made in the image of God. It teaches that we are to love, respect, and care for all people. Human sexuality teaches us important truths about God, the gospel, and human flourishing in addition to human brokenness. In these truths, the Book of Discipline also states that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

The above position of the UMC was adopted in 1972, and affirmed at every General Conference thereafter, including the Special Called General Conference in 2019, and remains the current teaching of the church today. It has not changed. However, many bishops and clergy seek to defy the Book of Discipline, and while attempts have been made to hold UMC leadership accountable, they have not succeeded. In the current direction, the United Methodist Church is headed, the Book of Discipline will be changed on many issues that we are divided on, including those of human sexuality.

- 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?

There is a belief that only a small minority is against the decision. Actually, nearly half (25) of the 54 annual conferences have gone on record to say they disagree with the Discipline, and 12 of those stated they will defy the Discipline. The United Methodist church is a divided church with a leadership and governing structure that is not holding churches accountable to the Book of Discipline, leading to a lack of consequences for these statements. This has led several bishops to take early retirement due to the conflict within the denomination and failure of leadership by the College of Bishops.

What does the Bible say about homosexuality?

We believe that both the witness of Scripture and the history of the church states that homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian life. It is contrary to God's design for marriage and 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, we believe that those experiencing same-sex attraction are called to repent of their sin and trust in the promises of the gospel of new life and a new identity. While this repentance might lead to a change in sexual desires, we do not believe that it 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 toward 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 AUMC if the congregation votes to disaffiliate?

At AUMC, 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 AUMC. 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 AUMC, 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.

What happens to my United Methodist Church membership if we disaffiliate? Will my membership automatically transfer to a new denomination?

If AUMC does vote to disaffiliate, the final decision for Disaffiliation will not take place until the Special Annual Conference in May or November 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, AUMC 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, Free Methodist Church, or some other Wesleyan denomination, as yet to be determined. At that time, membership status at AUMC will be fully explained.