

Revised Process for Disaffiliation (paragraph 2553) June 9, 2022

STEP 1: INITIATION OF THE PROCESS

- 1) The governing body (such as Administrative Board, Leadership Team or Church Council) of the local church writes a letter to the district superintendent expressing a desire to disaffiliate “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of *The Book of Discipline paragraph 2553* related to the practices of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals ... or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues”
 - a. Church members shall be notified through church communication channels that this request has been made.
- 2) Within 30 days of receiving the letter, the district superintendent:
 - a. District Superintendent (DS) and a representative of the conference board of pensions/conference staff will meet with church leadership and pastors to share the following.

Financial Obligations:

1. The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments (BOD 2553). The Annual Conference upon recommendation of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, will set the formula to determine apportionment-related financial obligations for disaffiliating churches.
2. Pay the pension liability in full to the Dakotas Annual Conference Board of Pensions by the disaffiliation date set forth in the disaffiliation agreement with the Dakotas Conference Board of Trustees.
3. Purchase the church building and property from The United Methodist Church for \$1.00 and transfer of title to the new incorporated name. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church.
4. Other obligations that may apply, such as loans and grants (shared by conf. treasurer)

Clergy Credentials

5. Clergy of disaffiliating congregations should communicate with their district superintendent about their intentions regarding their affiliation and be informed of the necessary steps according to Discipline requirements.
6. (Deleted)

Other

7. Congregation members will lose access to any staff provided by the conference once the disaffiliation is complete unless an agreement for shared staff has been reached and/or the staff/services are already available to the general public. (e.g. Archives).
 8. Lay members of the disaffiliating church will surrender all membership in the annual conference, including membership on committees or boards, and the ability to attend conference events as a member.
 9. Lay persons of the congregation who wish to remain UMC, will be assisted in transferring their membership to another UMC in the conference and may continue to participate in conference events and leadership.
 10. Pastoral coverage and supervision will become the responsibility of the disaffiliating church.
 11. Church will be governed by the rules and policies of the disaffiliating church.
 12. Disaffiliation process and timeline (Steps below) including readiness assessment work and communication regarding church conference must be completed.
 13. Draft of disaffiliation agreement between the Dakotas Conference Board of Trustees and the local church Board of Trustees will be created.
 14. Additional paperwork may be required of a receiving denomination. This is the responsibility of the disaffiliating church.
 15. Disaffiliation process as outlined below.
- 3) The district superintendent and local church governing body send a joint letter (model letter provided by the district superintendent) to all members of the congregation announcing the initiation of disaffiliation and the readiness assessment process.

STEP 2: READINESS ASSESSMENT

- 1) Within 60 days of the joint district superintendent/church leaders' letter to the congregation, the governing board/pastor assembles the following information and provides copies to the DS:
 - a. Compile the following information: This includes but is not limited to:
 - i. information on endowments, trusts, and/or foundations which may have designated funds directly tied to UMC

- ii. information on any loans/grants that have been provided through the UMC
 - iii. audited list of church membership by The United Methodist Book of Discipline paragraph 231. This list shall be made available to the entire congregation in print at least 30 days prior to any called church conference disaffiliation vote.
 - iv. Disaffiliation Readiness Assessment Document (may also be used by the church board as part of the member survey)
- 2) The governing board conducts a congregational survey of all members for the purpose of sharing accurate information and determining readiness. The survey shall include at a minimum the questions listed below.
 - 3) The governing board holds at least 1 assessment informational meeting at which the congregation is invited to ask questions and to share their input to complete the readiness assessment. It is recommended that this meeting include a DS.
 - 4) The completed readiness assessment is made available to the congregation, district superintendent, District Board of Church Location and Building, and Conference Board of Trustees for the purpose of their assisting in the development of the terms of the disaffiliation agreement.
 - 5) After the congregational assessment informational meeting(s) and survey, the district superintendent meets with the local church governing body to determine readiness to proceed to a church conference vote. The congregation shall be informed of when this meeting is taking place.
 - a. If it is determined the congregation is not yet ready, the district superintendent and the governing board will determine other appropriate steps.
 - b. If they are ready to move forward, the 120-day clock to complete the process begins.

STEP 3: CHURCH CONFERENCE ACTION

- 1) The district superintendent schedules a church conference to vote on the audited membership list and the motion to disaffiliate following all procedures for timeliness and promotion currently enumerated in ¶246.6 of the 2016 Book of Discipline.
 - a. All relevant information from the disaffiliation readiness assessment and notification of date and time of the church conference must be provided to the congregation at least 2 weeks prior to the Church Conference by postal mail and by electronic means.
 - b. The Common Table shall be provided with the completed disaffiliation process checklist to ensure all steps in the process have been completed prior to a vote.
- 2) Church Conference is conducted by the district superintendent. A two-thirds majority vote, by written ballot, of professing members of the local church present at the church conference, is required for passage (no proxy, ZOOM or absentee voting).
 - a. Disaffiliation Church Conference Agenda
 - i. Prayer/Devotion
 - ii. Audited membership list – discussion and approval
 - iii. Disaffiliation – discussion, questions, pray and vote
 - iv. Close with Prayer
 - b. Balloting procedure for disaffiliation
 - i. Paper copy of the approved audited membership list is provided to the district superintendent
 - ii. Paper ballots are provided to each person in attendance. (one side of the ballot asks for name and contact information which will be cross checked with the audited membership list before ballots are tabulated, other side printed with yes/no)
 - iii. Ballots are collected and tabulated by district superintendent and designated helper.
 - c. If the vote to disaffiliate passes; then the remaining steps in the process are followed. Superintendent contact information will be shared as an acknowledgement of support for anyone who wishes to remain United Methodist.
 - d. If the vote to disaffiliate is defeated (does not reach the 2/3 threshold); the process is terminated. If the congregation wishes to continue to pursue disaffiliation, they must restart the entire process.

STEP 4: COMPLETION OF DISAFFILIATION AGREEMENT

- 1) The district superintendent, annual conference Board of Trustees representative, Conference Chancellor, local church Board of Trustees representative, local church Finance Committee chair, and senior or lead pastor meet to complete the disaffiliation agreement reflective of the information gathered from the readiness assessment.
- 2) Once the agreement is completed, the local church Board of Trustees and Conference Board of Trustees vote to affirm and execute the disaffiliation agreement.

- 3) The agreement comes before the annual conference at a regular or special called session for ratification.
- 4) After all terms and financial obligations have been fulfilled, the disaffiliation is complete.

STEP 5: ANNUAL CONFERENCE APPROVAL

- 1) The disaffiliation agreement is fully executed when the annual conference approves.
- 2) There is a presumption that when a local church has faithfully and fully completed the disaffiliation processes that the Book of Discipline, GCFA and the Dakotas Conference require, the Dakotas Annual Conference will vote to approve the agreement as executed in Step Four.
- 3) If the congregation fails to complete any of the terms in the approved disaffiliation agreement by the deadline set within the document, the whole agreement is null and void.