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## A Pastoral Update from Bishop Carter

1 message

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To: johnmjack88@gmail.com

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October 24, 2022

Dear Florida Conference Clergy and Laity:

We are faithfully responding to a [lawsuit](#) brought by some of our churches who are taking us to court in order to depart from the denomination.

Based on our [motion](#) filed in September, we are convinced that the lawsuit should be dismissed because it is a violation of the separation of church and state. In fact, it is wrong for secular courts to judge the doctrines of the church.

At the same time, we affirm that our doctrine as a United Methodist Church has not changed. The doctrinal standards in [Paragraph 104 of the Book of Discipline](#) have not changed, and the restrictive rule in the Constitution of our church ([Paragraph 17](#)) ensures that the doctrine will not change. To say otherwise, as it is being communicated in some presentations in our churches, is to bear false witness (the 9th commandment).

And so, to those who are considering leaving the UMC, we say again, we want you to stay. I fully supported the One Church Plan that was presented to the 2019 General Conference. There is space for all of us around the Table of the Lord that is The United Methodist Church. There is a wideness in God's mercy, the hymn says.

We want you to stay.

But if you have discerned that you cannot stay, the pathway to depart is through Paragraph 2553, which has been clarified and [affirmed](#) by the Judicial Council, our Supreme Court. [Paragraph 2553](#) is a process that involves your district superintendent, your authorized lay leaders, and must include an open and democratic process leading to a decision of the full professing membership at a church conference and then affirmed by the annual conference.

We want you to stay, but if you are clear that you cannot stay, I want to encourage you to enter a faithful discernment process, and not to delay it for many months or years. Focusing on the lawsuit may be preventing you from accessing the pathway provided in Paragraph 2553 for disaffiliation.

Let me say clearly that we remain open to constructive dialogue and mediation with those churches who have filed the lawsuit, in order to work toward a resolution that is consistent with Paragraph 2553.

To our members who are in churches exploring disaffiliation and want to remain United Methodist, we have developed a pathway for you to stay in connection, which is known as [UMsConnected](#). This pathway has resources, small groups, a Facebook page, and a website.

Let me next say that the disaffiliation conversation is important, but it must not distract us from our daily calling to be in ministry together or from the urgent matter of caring for the people who have suffered mightily from Hurricane Ian.

One hundred forty persons have died as a result of one of the worst storms in Florida's history. Our state has experienced thirty to sixty billion dollars in damages. Over 100 of our churches have been affected by wind, storm, and flood damage. A number of our people have experienced trauma.

The recovery process has begun. Our people and our connection are responding faithfully. We established a [Hurricane Ian Fund](#), and you have responded by contributing more than \$500,000.

We rise to this call even as we enter the season of Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. This next season will include our gratitude to God, our preparation for rebirth, and our celebration of God's gift of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

These are the matters we will be focusing on in the coming weeks. In the new year we can return to the conversations about disaffiliation, the lawsuits and mediation.

Thank you for being a person of peace, and a follower of Jesus in The United Methodist Church that is The Florida Conference. Thank you for your generosity and compassion towards one another. Thank you for the connection we share together.

The Peace of the Lord,

+Bishop Ken Carter  
Florida Conference  
The United Methodist Church

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