



July 15, 2022

Dear Clergy and Laity of the Florida Conference:

Today, we became aware that a lawsuit has been filed against The Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, demanding the immediate separation of several churches into a new denomination. We are deeply grieved by this, as we seek to be a church united in love and in mission. We cannot comment on particulars in the lawsuit. Nonetheless, we are familiar with the issues at hand. Here are some important thoughts to keep in mind:

The Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to providing a “gracious exit” for those churches that wish to depart, pursuant to our common process outlined in *The Book of Discipline*, paragraph 2553. We have been trying to engage those churches in that process but they have refused to follow that process choosing to file this lawsuit instead.

A law firm that claims to represent dozens of Florida United Methodist churches is demanding a short-circuit to those commitments and an immediate disaffiliation. That is vastly different from our open and transparent processes which occur in church conferences and at our annual conference session.

We ask that, despite their haste, these groups seeking to break away live up to the responsibilities established by the General Conference in 2019, and that they not cause pain, damage or disparage other United Methodist churches, other members in their churches or other pastors, or the Conference.

Much of this is about fairness and responsibilities churches have to each other. For instance, an abrupt separation creates significant issues that could damage benefits and pensions for retired

pastors and their spouses who devoted their lives to service. Another example is the apportionment churches give to support our camps, the United Methodist Children's Home, to campus ministries, to natural disaster response projects and to missions abroad.

From the perspective of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, our doctrinal standards have not changed and will not change, even as we continue on a journey to be a church that serves all people.

In all this, our overarching goal is to move through this process in a spirit where we can support, bless and love each other. A tenet of our faith is that we embrace a Church built in loving relationships rather than uniformity in thought and action. As John Wesley is quoted "though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?"

Thank you for your faith in Jesus Christ and our connection as United Methodists.

The Peace of the Lord,  
+Ken Carter  
Resident Bishop, Florida Conference  
The United Methodist Church