

## **Florida Conference Cabinet Expectations in Preparation for a Church Conference and Disaffiliation Vote Using ¶ 2553**

After the District Superintendent has received a request to call a special church conference, has reviewed all necessary procedures and is confident there has been a thoughtful process of discernment and inquiry in the local church and that there is sufficient understanding of the impact of disaffiliation on the church's future so as to make an informed decision, the questions below need to be answered and presented to the congregation in advance of that church conference. Answers to these questions provide knowledge to the congregation for a more informed vote. When possible, have slides prepared to show visibly at the church conference the answers to these questions.

*Should the church approve a motion to disaffiliate:*

1. Disaffiliation through ¶ 2553 requires payment of financial obligations to the Florida Conference.
  - a. What is the total amount that your church would owe?
  - b. What is the recommended way of paying that amount? (A separate called church conference may be needed to vote on the use of funds to pay the obligations.)
2. If a new church name has been determined, what will it be?
3. Does the church plan to join with another denomination?
  - a. If so, which one?
  - b. If not, what will be your polity or guidebook going forward?
4. Churches and Clergy have separate relationships with the annual conference.
  - a. If the vote is to disaffiliate, will the appointed pastor remain at the church following the official disaffiliation date and withdraw from the UMC, or will the pastor remain with the United Methodist Church and serve in a new appointment?
  - b. If the church does not plan to join another denomination and the pastor is withdrawing from the UMC as of the official disaffiliation date, how will your pastor be credentialed?
5. What will be your new property and liability insurance company and what will be the cost of that annual premium?

*Should the church not approve a motion to disaffiliate:*

1. The church will agree to prioritize the ongoing mission and ministry of the church and cease conversations about disaffiliation.
2. As churches and clergy have separate relationships with the annual conference, the appointed pastor will indicate if he/she will continue to serve faithfully as a UMC pastor or withdraw from the UMC.

Be prepared to ensure that membership rolls are accurate and paper ballots can be distributed on site in an organized and efficient manner. All church conferences for the purpose of disaffiliation will be in-person only. If there appear to be significant challenges to ensuring a fair vote on the day of the church conference, it will be postponed by the DS until any inaccuracies can be cleared up.

***During the church conference:***

The DS sets the agenda for the church conference in consultation with the pastor and lay leadership. The DS is the presiding elder and, as such, presides over the agenda and the meeting as ordered by the *Discipline* and by the presider. The role of the presiding elder is to ensure a fair process and to represent the United Methodist Church and the Florida Conference.

People are asked to come to the church conference with a spirit of Christian conferencing, a level of respect, and a desire to only present information void of fear or control. The DS will state expectations for behavior up front including the prerogative to adjourn the meeting should people not act or speak appropriately, in kindness and respect and with accurate information.

The voting membership of a church conference is all professing members of the church. The details of clergy who are eligible to vote will be shared in a separate document.

A disaffiliation vote must pass by a 2/3 majority (67%). Abstentions are valid yet are not counted toward the final percentage. The paper ballots will be counted by at least two unrelated persons under the supervision of the DS or their assigned district representative. If the motion that has been prepared for the church conference does not pass, a second vote will not be considered immediately nor in the calendar year 2023 and a renewed focus on the mission of the church will be prioritized.

If the disaffiliation vote is approved, the process of disaffiliation continues. The process does not conclude until the official date of disaffiliation with all financial and disaffiliation agreement obligations being met. This includes a vote at Annual Conference. Until that time, expectations of United Methodist churches in the Florida Conference remain in place including clergy appointments at full salary and benefits.

***After the church conference:***

It is anticipated that efforts will be made by the pastor(s) to care for all members of the church once a vote is completed. Should a church vote to disaffiliate, it would be part of the role of the pastor to assist persons wanting to remain United Methodist in finding a new church home. This intention will be publicly stated by the DS at the church conference where the DS will also make him/herself available to be an additional resource. Similarly, if a church votes to remain in the UMC, the pastor will make every effort to reengage those persons who anticipated leaving. As long as a pastor is a member of the UMC, it is their role to seek the well-being of the church and the breadth of its members.

If a church votes to disaffiliate, the DS will write a letter to be sent via email through the church database to all church members informing them of the outcome of the vote and offering assistance to church members seeking guidance on how to remain United Methodist including a list of area churches that plan to remain UMC.

Rev. 1/18/2023