

Petition 90066

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SUBMITTED TEXT

CLOSE WINDOW X

Disaffiliation - Taylor - NEW Par. 2553 (90066-TC-¶2500-G)

Amend, effective as of the close of the 2019 General Conference, Chapter Six, Church Property, by adding a new Section VIII. Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality, then by adding a new ¶ 2553 as follows:

¶ 2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church over Issues Related to Human Sexuality.

1. Basis--Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

2. Time Limits--The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

~~3. Initial Inquiry to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church--If the church council of a local church determines that the church wishes to consider disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church under this paragraph, that church council shall submit a request to the district superintendent to begin this process. The district superintendent shall appoint a task force under ¶ 248 for the purpose of making findings and a recommendation to the district superintendent on whether the church will have a viable future within or outside The United Methodist Church. The provisions of ¶ 213.2 and ¶ 213.3 shall not apply. If the local church, as it exists at the time of the assessment, is found to have a viable future, the district superintendent shall call a church conference under ¶ 248 for the sole purpose of deciding whether to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under this paragraph, based upon the reasons in ¶ 2553.1. If the local church is found to not have a viable future, the district superintendent shall recommend closure under ¶ 2549, or take other appropriate action, and all property of the local church shall remain with The United Methodist Church according to the provisions of ¶ 2549.~~

3.4. Decision Making Process--The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶ 248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference. In addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

4. 5. Process following decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church--If the church conference votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall be established by the resident bishop¹ of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. That agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

5 a) Standard Terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom. Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.

1. the board of trustees

6. b) Apportionments. The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.
- ~~c) Grants. All grants received by the local church from the annual conference or its ancillary organizations within five (5) years from the date of disaffiliation shall be repaid.~~
7. d) Property. A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church.
8. e) Pension Liabilities. The local church shall contribute withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church's share.
9. f) Other Liabilities. The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.
10. g) Payment Terms. ~~The agreement shall specify the terms and conditions of the payment to the annual conference for any sums related to ¶ 2553.5, b, c, and d. The term of payment shall not exceed ten (10) years.~~²
11. h) Disaffiliating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans. The United Methodist Church believes that a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.
12. i) Once the disaffiliating local church has reimbursed the applicable annual conference for all funds due under the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or claims against The United Methodist Church as a result of the disaffiliation, in consideration of the provisions of this paragraph, the applicable annual conference shall release any claims that it may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church commonly referred to as the trust clause, or under the agreement.

RATIONALE

Creates a consistent process for local churches who desire to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church over disagreements related to human sexuality to receive their property while reducing the impact on the annual conference by paying their portion of conference pension liabilities, and other financial considerations.

2. Replace with, " Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure."

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