

August 9, 2022

Friends,

It was so good to see many of you at our Town-Hall meetings this past Thursday and Sunday. If you were there, I hope you found the time informative and helpful.

If you haven't already, you should sign-up for a small group feedback session. The available times and dates are set and you can sign-up before or after worship for the next two Sundays.

I tried to give you plenty of resources that will provide information about a variety of things. As I said in both meetings, I highly commend the following websites as starting points:

www.aumc.org/resources

www.txcumc.com/navigatingthewaters

www.cameronfumc.com/discernmentprayer

I also wanted to take a few moments to address some of the topics that seemed to draw a lot of interest and questions.

Property & Asset Ownership

In the UMC, a church's property is held in trust by their annual conference. The trust clause has existed in Methodist denominations since John Wesley. Its original intent was to have the legal authority to determine who can and who cannot preach in a church's pulpit.

The sad truth is that in the current UMC, the trust clause is being used to constrain churches to stay. Thankfully this is not the case in our conference.

The entire point of the disaffiliation process is that a local church congregation may exit the denomination *with* their property and assets. The legal thing that happens by working through the conference's adopted disaffiliation process is that the Texas Annual Conference will release the local church from its trust clause. *This means if Cameron FUMC votes to disaffiliate, we will retain all our property and assets.*

In the Global Methodist Church, there is no trust clause and there is little to no interest in instituting one. Meaning local church congregations who join the GMC will own their property outright and have all authority to manage it in ways that best fit their context.

Connectional Ministries

One of the great advantages of being United Methodist is that we are able to do more together than we could do alone. Because of our connectional giving and collective efforts, Methodists have done many phenomenal works around the world and in our local communities – such as building leading hospital systems, building orphanages, operating schools and seminaries, working to end Malaria (Imagine No Malaria/UMCOR), planting churches, ministering to college students, and much, much more.

If Cameron FUMC decides to disaffiliate, then our apportionment dollars will no longer directly go towards these sorts of ministries and our delegates to annual conference will no longer have a voice in how these organizations are run. This is one of the biggest griefs I have in all of this. But I offer you three thoughts to consider.

First, many of these larger organizations are already financially and organizationally independent from the UMC (such as the Methodist Hospital System in Houston, and the Methodist Children's Home in Waco) *and* they predate the United Methodist Church to begin with. Second, nothing prevents the local church from willfully choosing to continue to support any ministry in ways it feels called to do so. Finally, the GMC will, in time, create connectional ministries of their own.

Cost to church

The cost of disaffiliating from the UMC (and thereby retaining all property and assets), is made up of several factors. The bottom line is this: disaffiliating from the UMC will *never* be any cheaper than it is right now.

First, the past year and current years apportionments must be paid. Because of your faithfulness, this only means paying the remaining balance of our 2022 apportionments – \$8,563.00 as of August 8, 2022. Note: this amount will be paid regardless of whether or not the church disaffiliates.

Second, the local church must pay its portion of the conference's unfunded pension liability. This number is calculated quarterly and because it has to do with pensions and investment plans, it can fluctuate depending on economic conditions. I just heard from the conference that our current calculation, which is *only valid until October 1, 2022*, is **\$0.00 (zero dollars)**.

Third, the local church must be prepared to refile deeds and other legal paperwork that will require the help of an experienced lawyer or law firm. It also must consider the cost of altering signage, etc.

Finally, the local church must consider the cost of staying in the UMC. The UMC currently requires 13-15% of the local church's operating budget in apportionments. The GMC's connectional giving will never be more than 6.5% of the church's operating budget and in transition is capped at 3%. Find out more by searching for "local church connectional funding" here: <https://globalmethodist.org/what-we-believe/>

Clergy Pension and Healthcare

Pension and Healthcare programs have been an important part of caring for clergy and their families in the United Methodist Church. In the UMC, there are three contributing units to support these initiatives - conference apportionments, local church contribution, and clergy contribution.

In the Global Methodist Church, the Transitional Leadership Council has signed a contract with Wespath to offer clergy and certain lay employees the opportunity to participate in a defined contribution pension plan as well as a group health benefits plan. In the GMC, the contributing

units will be the local church and the clergy person. You can find more details about GMC pension and healthcare in this FAQ: <https://globalmethodist.org/faqs/#1653420694960-f5145d9a-665d>

The Global Methodist Stance on Homosexuality

Many have and will paint the GMC as “anti-gay,” while the truth is that theologically the GMC matches the stated beliefs of the UMC. As a result, leaders in the GMC have voiced their desire to focus more on what the GMC is *for* not what they are *against*. It is my personal estimation that this is what led to the decision to give no explicit reference to homosexuality in the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline (*Transitional Book*). However, this does not mean that the GMC is unclear on the topic.

The GMC Transitional Book *Paragraph 202.7* states: “We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman.” This phrasing leaves no ambiguity that any sexual practice exercised outside of this particular boundary is disordered and contrary to the *Transitional Book* and the GMC’s sexual theology. You can read more, and the subsequent paragraph regarding sexual expressions that “do not recognize the sacred worth of each individual” by searching “sexuality” here: <https://globalmethodist.org/what-we-believe/>

Why now?

There is a window of opportunity to disaffiliate and that window is expiring. There is a hard deadline of December 31, 2023, a practical deadline of May 2023 (the next regular session of the Texas Annual Conference), and an ideal deadline of December 3, 2022 (a special session of the Texas Annual Conference for the purpose of voting to allow churches to disaffiliate).

If you feel I’ve missed a glaring topic that came up, please let me know. As more topics and questions come up that are consistent throughout our ongoing discernment conversations, I will seek to address them in this or a similar way.

Please do not hesitate to reach out. My first interest is helping you see the ways that God is calling you and our church into deeper relationship with each other and our community.

Blessings,
Pastor Mark