



The **Evangelical Methodist Church** is a denomination of local churches that embrace the present while working to prepare for the future. Building on a sound biblical base, and with God's guidance, we strive to vibrantly serve Christ in our local communities.

We are convinced that Jesus Christ can radically transform a life resulting in a vital, personal relationship with God and a transformed relationship with people from all cultures and ethnicities.

## From the Evangelical Methodist Church ...

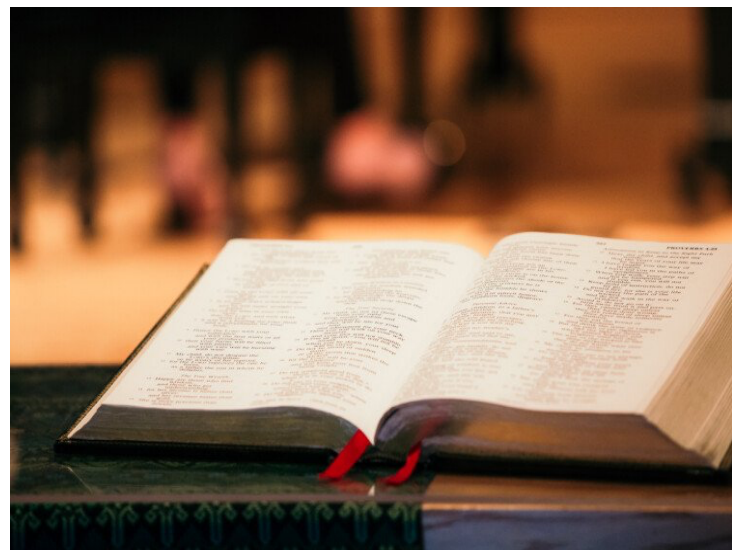
### Guidance Regarding the Process of Disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church

**Provided by:**  
**Rev. Dr. Lynn Malone \***



Many United Methodist churches are asking "What is all this talk about disaffiliation?" The question is asked because of actions at the United Methodist Church General Conference called Special Session in February 2019. The General Conference passed legislation (known as ¶ 2553) allowing congregations to "disaffiliate" from the United Methodist Church if the congregation was in disagreement with the Church's stance on homosexuality. Though the UMC's official positions on the ordination of homosexual clergy and same-sex marriage remain unchanged, the paragraph has been broadly interpreted to allow congregations who do not currently disagree with the Church's position to depart because some areas of the Church have ignored the Church's official position and have ordained homosexual clergy, consecrated homosexual bishops and allowed same-sex marriage in UMC congregations.

Many UM congregations have already utilized ¶ 2553 to disaffiliate. Others are asking for more information. The purpose of this brochure is to provide basic information to those congregations who have reached out to the Evangelical Methodist Church with questions concerning UM disaffiliation. We are not experts on United Methodist polity, but in an effort to minister to questioning congregations, we provide this basic information to aid local congregations in their discernment.



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The use of the word discernment is very intentional. The disaffiliation process allowed by ¶ 2553 begins with each local congregation entering a period of discernment that begins when local church leadership makes a request to their District Superintendent in an official manner. The issue for local congregations to keep in mind is that the “process” is different from Annual Conference to Annual Conference, and is directed by the Bishop, Cabinet and Board of Trustees of each individual Annual Conference. There is no uniform application of ¶ 2553 across the denomination, but the process cannot officially begin until a congregation has notified the District Superintendent of its desire to explore disaffiliation, and the DS has set a date for a called church conference (¶ 248). The congregation then has up to 120 days to satisfy the terms of any disaffiliation agreement set forth by the Annual Conference. Those terms are not likely to be less than the following (but could be more based on the Annual Conference):

- The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.
- 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.
- 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.
- The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.
- Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure.

**It is also important to note that the provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023,** so the timeline is short for local congregations to begin (and be able to complete) the process. Your Annual Conference leadership should be able to provide a timeline of specific dates for steps to be completed to match the Annual Conference calendar.

Another avenue that a limited number of congregations in select Annual Conferences have been allowed to utilize is ¶ 2548.2 wherein a local congregation can be released from the “trust” clause to join another evangelical denomination (open to the interpretation of each individual bishop). The Council of Bishops of the UMC has rejected this paragraph as a legitimate means of departure, though two bishops specifically have allowed

congregations to exit via this paragraph. The likelihood of a large number being successful using this Disciplinary provision is small. It is best to check with your Annual Conference leadership to gauge its acceptability.

Please note: **DO NOT ENTER THE PROCESS WITHOUT ENGAGING AN ATTORNEY**, preferably one who is knowledgeable in real estate trust law. Do not attempt to navigate the process without appropriate legal counsel. Yes, it is costly, but failing to do so may be more costly.

An important component of any discernment is: How will a congregation move forward after disaffiliation (if that is the chosen path)? Remaining connectional is rooted deeply in the Wesleyan tradition, so exploring affiliation or association with another Wesleyan denomination is strongly encouraged. Deciding your future needs to be a part of any discernment process.

We encourage you to engage graciously throughout the process of discernment. Do it in the right way. Everyone deserves to be heard, even if everyone can't agree. Everyone must be fully informed by diverse voices and opinions to make their most thoughtful and theologically circumspect decision. Everything needs to be done in full light.

In the interest of transparency, please permit me to share my own experience with the Evangelical Methodist Church. I left the UMC after 28 years as a pastor. I began to explore other Wesleyan denominations looking for a place to call home. I eventually found my home in the Evangelical Methodist Church. There are primarily three reasons I was drawn to the EMC: a solid understanding and commitment to traditional Wesleyan/Arminian theology, the embrace of a rich orthodox interpretation of scripture and a denominational polity wherein local congregations own their church property (in distinction from the “trust clause” of the UMC).

Every congregation is a unique part of the body of Christ and must pray and discern God’s future and calling for their congregation. As you go through your period of discernment, do so with the knowledge that the Evangelical Methodist Church is here to share with your congregation the advantages of becoming Evangelical Methodist. Please feel free to arrange for a visit or a video chat with an EMC leader if you have questions or wish to explore the possibilities. They will be happy to meet with you and/or your church leadership.

Please see the helpful websites below:

[www.emchurch.org](http://www.emchurch.org)

<https://www.ctcumc.org/discipline-disaffiliation-paragraphs>

*\* Rev. Dr. Lynn Malone pastored United Methodist congregations for over 28 years before transferring his Elder’s Orders into the Evangelical Methodist Church (EMC) of Indianapolis, IN. He and his wife Vanessa are founding pastors of “The House Church Movement” for the EMC. He holds degrees from Louisiana Tech University, and Asbury Theological Seminary, as well as an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from The New Testament Bible Church Biblical Seminary.*

*Before answering God's call into pastoral ministry, Lynn served more than eight years as a deputy sheriff with the Jackson Parish Sheriff's Office. During his years in vocational ministry, Lynn served 6 UMC charges, mostly in Louisiana, and was chosen to serve a short term as the District Superintendent of the Monroe District in Northern Louisiana.*