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## Discernment Insert #2

**What is Paragraph 2553? What does Paragraph 2553 require? And how is the West Ohio Conference implementing Paragraph 2553?**

During the 2019 Special General Conference, petition 90059 was moved as a substitute for the One Church Plan. The petition was brought by Keith Boyette, who was the leader of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. The maker of the motion represented that the terms of petition 90059 provided a Gracious Exit. During the debate, the proponent stated the following: "We do not want to force any church to have to leave the denomination. This does not force anyone to do so. What it does, it says that any church that discerns that because of today's votes, they cannot faithfully live out the gospel, would have an opportunity to have a fair process to leave. The intended process is literally how I would want to be treated if I were the one hurting because of that." The petition passed 420-390 with traditionalists making up a significant majority of the 420 votes in favor and centrists and progressives making up a vast majority of the 390 votes against. The content of the petition gave rise to Paragraph 2553, which the Conference Trustees are using as guidance for churches wishing to disaffiliate.

For more information, please visit [www.icumc.org](http://www.icumc.org) and click on About Us, then select UMC Process.

The Conference Trustees appreciate that The Council of Bishops recently affirmed by an overwhelming majority that Paragraph 2553 in The Book of Discipline would be the primary paragraph used for disaffiliation and separation. It is understood that different contexts may require utilization of additional paragraphs in the current Book of Discipline, namely paragraphs 2548.2 and 2549; and that, if so, they would employ the values and principles as outlined in Paragraph 2553.

The process outlined in Paragraph 2553 requires the following:

- Apportionments (a tithe to the denomination) must be paid for 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments (the latter as a lump sum, not spread over the following year).
- The church's pro rata amount of Unfunded Pension Liabilities as determined by Wespath (UMC General Board of Pension and Health Benefits) and allocated by the annual conference. For West Ohio, this number is determined through the same formula used for general church apportionments. This must be paid prior to the effective date of departure.
- A church conference must be requested from the district superintendent for the purpose of considering disaffiliation. The district superintendent has up to 120 days to respond to the request, but they are typically responding much more quickly.

- At the duly called church conference, all professing members of the church who are present for the meeting will be allowed to vote. The vote to disaffiliate must receive a two-third (2/3) super-majority of those present to pass.
- With an approval vote, the church must engage in and bear all expenses towards establishing new legal entities, obtaining non-profit status, etc. Further, unless symbols of the United Methodist Church are embedded into the infrastructure of the church building, all signs and logos for the United Methodist Church must be removed from the property. This must be completed within three months of the disaffiliation date.
- The church must provide archives, historical documents, committee minutes and membership rolls to the Annual Conference.
- The Annual Conference must affirm the disaffiliation by a simple majority vote for disaffiliation to be finalized.
- Paragraph 2553 states that for this process to be used, it must be completed by December 31, 2023.

### What is the Trust Clause?

In the UMC, the local Annual Conference owns all the tangible and intangible assets of the local church (e.g. buildings, furniture, office equipment, etc. and all bank accounts). They are held in trust for use by the local church.

In the GMC, there is NO trust clause. All assets will be owned by the local church.

### What choices do we have if we disaffiliate from the UMC?

There are basically three (3) choices that are available for a local church's alignment:

1. Being **independent**.
2. Aligning with a **Loose Congregational Association**.
3. Being in full Connection to a **Connectional** Denomination.

Examples of **Independent**: Lakewood Church, TX (Osteen); North Point Community, GA (Stanley).

**Loose Association** examples are: Congregational Methodists; Independent Methodists.

Examples of **Connectional Churches** include the Global Methodist, Nazarenes, Baptists, Wesleyan Church, Lutherans, etc.

### Key Differences:

- **Trust Clause** – Independent (none), Associations (none), Connectional (UMC-yes; GMC-none)
- **Pastors** – Independent find their own; Associations find their own; Connectional (UMC-itinerant; GMC-modified call)
- **Seminaries** – Independent develop their own educational requirements; Associations and UMC utilize the 13 United Methodist seminaries. The GMC is in the process of developing agreements with various seminaries (e.g. Asbury Seminary)
- **Bureaucratic Structure** – Independent and Congregational Associations develop their own bureaucratic structure; UMC-significant “top-down” structure and support groups; GMC-minimal “corporate, bottom-up” structure
- **Apportionments** – Independent have no apportionments; Congregational Associations have smaller apportionments; UMC apportionments based on complicated formula relating to membership roles, assets and financial statements; GMC requirements are projected to be approximately ½ of the current UMC requirements

### Please take time to view the following video content:

Bishop Scott Jones on the United Methodist Church going forward at <https://youtu.be/pdYtH0tv13I>.

Rev. Jeff Greenway – 10 Reasons to consider the Global Methodist Church at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9tnPAbaVW4>

A print-out titled “Options for Churches that Disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church” is available providing additional details about each option. Please see the information table at the back of the sanctuary.