



Centenary United Methodist Church
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Dear Centenary Family,

The Discernment team has been meeting on Sunday afternoons to prayerfully discern God's direction for Centenary and our status as a United Methodist Church. We want to hear God's voice above all others, especially our own. We are using the book "Pursuing God's Will Together" by Ruth Haley Barton as our foundation. Please know this process is very difficult for each one of us. We love our church. We desire unity. We understand the differing perspectives. Below are some Frequently Asked Questions we want to address.

Why are churches voting to Disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church?

The basis of the disagreement revolves around human sexuality. The special called General Conference in 2019 provided a temporary way for churches to disaffiliate under these circumstances. Paragraph 2553 states "Because of the current deep conflict within the United Methodist Church around the 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."

Is human sexuality the only reason churches are disaffiliating?

Yes, and no. Under paragraph 2553, churches must vote regarding human sexuality. However, there is also disagreement around the direction of the denomination as a whole in regards to teachings, doctrine, and scripture which is considered the "real" issue, with human sexuality being the "presenting" issue. In Missouri, churches are also able to leave the denomination under a broader paragraph (2549) with the same provisions as 2553.

Did the language in the Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality change at the 2019 General Conference?

No, the language in the Book of Discipline still states that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, bans the ordination of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals," and forbids the performance of same-gender marriages in the denomination's sanctuaries and by its clergy in any setting. However, there are examples of Clergy/Bishops around the country that are violating the Book of Discipline. There is wide speculation that this language in the Book of Discipline could be removed at the 2024 General Conference. The UMC is still a church that affirms that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God and need the ministry of the church.

Does Centenary need to vote?

The short answer is No. By not voting we would remain a United Methodist congregation. However with the differences of opinions within our congregation we believe a vote is necessary so all voices can be heard. The decision to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

When do we need to vote?

There are several options here. For churches who vote to disaffiliate under paragraph 2553 and want to disaffiliate by the 2023 Annual Conference in June, Centenary would need to provide a decision to the Conference by May 1, 2023. However, if Centenary is not ready to vote in time for that deadline, Bishop Farr stated in a letter to us that he will hold a special session this fall and that vote deadline would be Sept. 1. If Centenary decides to delay a vote and use paragraph 2549, there is no current deadline since this process has been used for decades.

What is the cost for Centenary to disaffiliate?

It has been calculated by our Conference Trustees that Centenary would owe approximately \$189,000 in apportionments and unfunded pension liability if we choose to disaffiliate this year which is due upon approval at the Annual Conference Session. We would also assume any legal costs.

Will Centenary own our Property if we disaffiliate?

Yes, we would own our property and be released from the UMC trust clause once all our disaffiliation requirements are complete.

Will Pastor Jennifer remain our Pastor if we disaffiliate?

No, Pastor Jennifer has prayerfully discerned that she will remain a United Methodist Pastor and would be appointed to another congregation.

What will happen to our staff if we disaffiliate?

Each staff member will decide if they want to stay or leave Centenary based on their personal convictions.

What happens if we vote and it doesn't pass by a 2/3 majority?

We will remain United Methodist and there will be no second vote. We realize some have strong convictions one way or the other and depending on the outcome of a vote, we will lose some congregants. However, it is our hope and prayer that we will come to a closer consensus one way or the other before we vote. What we would not want to see happen is a split vote or a small margin of passing. We feel strongly that one of our greatest strengths as a church is how much we love being together and we want to protect that. We hope that even if the vote doesn't go the way you would have hoped, that we can continue to be the church together. "United" one way or another – United Methodist, or united otherwise.

What happens if we pass a vote to disaffiliate?

Currently Centenary UMC is identified as a part of the United Methodist Church and as such falls under its Federal EIN and incorporation status. If the church disaffiliates it will have to decide to become part of another denomination or to become an independent congregation and create a new non-profit corporation. Some of the known specific tasks will be:

- Choose a new name
- Provide UMC Conference with all required membership and historical documents identifying all funerals, baptisms, weddings, and charge conference meetings as a UMC
- Provide financial obligations to the Conference
- Property deeds & titling changes for new ownership
- Remove all UMC logos from buildings, signage, websites, social media etc.
- Establish criteria for and hire a Pastor and any needed support staff
- Establish a board of directors & create articles of incorporation for a new church
- Apply for a Federal and state employer identification number (EIN)
- Apply for Federal and state tax-exempt 501(c)3 status

I missed the meetings with the guest speakers. How can I see them?

The videos are only available on our church network and therefore only viewed onsite. If you would like to see any of these meetings, please call the office (573) 334-2869 to schedule a viewing at the church.

If you have a question for the Discernment Team you can go to www.centenarynow.org and click on the Discernment tab.

In Christ's Love,

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Sherry Brookover

Frances Gould

Cherie Henson

Kristi Howard

Scott McClanahan

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