

Second - Navigation Team Questions and Answers Document

Q: Who gave authority to the Susquehanna Annual Conference to establish the protocol for disaffiliation of local churches based on human sexuality?

A: The **2019 General Conference** of the United Methodist Church approved Article 2553: “Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality”. Copies of this printed document can be found in our church narthex in the distribution box labeled Navigation Team Information.

Q: Is the Council of Bishops the hierarchy over the annual conferences?

A: Yes, according to the UMC Book of Discipline and the structure of the connectional UMC, the **Council of Bishops** functions as both spiritual and administrative leaders for their respective geographical areas and participate in governing the entire church organization.

Note: Similar to our American government, the Council of Bishops represents the Executive Branch; Conferences (General, Annual, and Church) represent the Legislative Branch, and the Judicial Council (a nine member lay and clerical body) represents the Judicial Branch.

Q: Who oversees our Bishop?

A: The answer is two-fold:

1. First of all, the Susquehanna Annual Conference has two bishops at the present time. They are: Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, who also represents the West Virginia Annual Conference and Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, who also represents the Northeast Annual Conference.
2. From an oversight perspective, the Book of Discipline, Article 427 states that: “By virtue of their election and consecration, bishops are members of the Council of Bishops and are bound in special covenant with all other bishops. In keeping with this covenant, bishops fulfill their servant leadership and express their mutual accountability.” Ultimately, UMC Bishops are accountable to God and their fellow bishops.

Q. How many new bishops were elected by the five regional Jurisdictional Conferences in the Nov. 2-5, 2022 Sessions and what are their beliefs?

A. According to UMNNews.org – Fair. Faithful. Trusted website, thirteen new bishops were elected within the five regional areas and will be assigned to respective annual conferences in January 2023. The bishops' names and backgrounds can be found on the website.

Note: On the same website under Bishop News there is an article by Heather Hahn entitled "Complaint filed against gay bishop's consecration" which includes the following:

1. "United Methodist bishops in the Western Jurisdiction are facing a complaint accusing them of violating church law with the consecration of the denomination's second openly gay and married bishop." The complaint is filed by Rev. W. Timothy McClendon, a senior pastor in South Carolina.
2. "However, the jurisdictions also elected 13 new bishops-none of whom identify with The United Methodist Church's traditionalist wing that has sought to maintain and enforce those bans. A number of traditionalists expect the elections and resolutions to hasten theological conservatives' move to the exits."
3. <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/complaint-filed-against-gay-bishops-consecration>

Q: Why don't the progressives have to leave the world-wide United Methodist Church when they are in the minority?

A: Since the General Conference in 2016 an ad hoc group of a broad range of United Methodist leaders met in 2019 to formulate a plan of amicable separation called a Protocol of Grace and Reconciliation through Separation. At that time the world-wide UMC had a majority of traditionalist members and the progressives were in the minority. However, their plan recommended that the traditionalists must separate and that the progressives will continue on as the United Methodist Church.

Q: Are all of the world-wide United Methodist Churches going through the same discernment process for disaffiliation at this time?

A: Yes, all UM Churches world-wide have the option to go through the same discernment process of exploring the guidelines for disaffiliation as stated in Article 2553. However, each Annual Conference has different costs for buying out the Trust Clause covering buildings, land, tangible and intangible property; should the local church decide to disaffiliate, along with other differences.

Q: What are the options should First United Methodist Church decide to disaffiliate?

A: If FUMC decides to disaffiliate by a 2/3rds (66.667%) vote of those professing members present at the Church Conference; soon after that meeting our FUMC congregation must vote again on the future direction of the Church. There appear to be several options:

1. Become a totally independent, non-denominational Church.
2. Become an independent Methodist Church with no connections to the United Methodist Church.
3. Become a connectional Global Methodist Church.

Q: Is FUMC currently progressive or traditionalist?

A: At this point in time, the Navigation Team has no idea of the number of progressives, traditionalists or centrists (those in the middle). However, the Team is sending out a survey to be completed by all members of our Church Family to get a sense of people's feelings and beliefs. This survey is not, in any way, a substitute for the vote which will be taken at a duly authorized church conference sometime in January 2023.

Q: In the first Navigation Team Q&A Document, it was stated that there would be an approximate cost of \$ 376,032 to disaffiliate. If we choose to disaffiliate, how will we pay for this?

A: First Church-Hanover has a number of ways in which to fund disaffiliation. Examples include, but are not limited to using funds from the current Endowment Fund after following the proper procedures to access those funds or borrowing funds from a financial institution while collateralizing the loan with assets we will obtain as a result of the disaffiliation (i.e., use a Church property as collateral).