

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Why is our church considering our disaffiliation?**

The ongoing conflict over foundational principles and theological divisions within the United Methodist Church (UMC) has intensified over the last several months, leaving many UMC-affiliated churches wondering what the future holds. The hope was that the General Conference scheduled for August 2022 would pass a proposed *Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace*, allowing churches to separate amicably from the UMC and retain their assets. Now that the General Conference has been postponed until 2024, this appears unlikely. The Governing Board's goal is to provide objective, factual information to all members of the church so that we can discern God's plan for our Church together.

### **Why now?**

The Governing Board feels that the conflicts and divisions within the UMC have become a distraction to our vision, mission, and ministry of making disciples committed to "***Sharing Life, Sharing Christ, For Others.***". Currently, ¶2553 of the Book of Discipline is the only avenue for disaffiliation that would allow us to keep our property and assets, and this option will expire in 2023.

### **What is "disaffiliation" from The United Methodist Church?**

Disaffiliation is a process through which any United Methodist Church can separate from The United Methodist Denomination while retaining its property and assets. The process is spelled out in the *Book of Discipline*.

### **Why would Canton First consider disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church?**

It is no secret that The United Methodist denomination has been involved in an ongoing and intensifying conflict. The UMC is headed for a separation/split because of differences in theology. The Council of Bishops acknowledged this fact at their April 2022 meeting. Much of this conflict stems from deep theological *division*. While many will explain that the issue centers primarily on human sexuality, our pastors and Governing Board members believe the issues are much deeper and more complex. The Authority of Scripture is being challenged and parts of the *Book of Discipline* are under scrutiny. When these foundational principles are altered, the Church ends up in chaos and unable to present a life-changing Gospel message to the world.

In addition, the conflict within the United Methodist Church has become a significant *distraction* for Canton First's mission and ministry of "***Sharing Life, Sharing Christ, For Others.***" Our Governing Board has spent time focused on the conflict and impending split in the UMC. They have done this to protect and preserve our local church and its future mission and ministry in this community and world.

### **Who made the recommendation for our church to begin the process to consider disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church?**

The members of the church's Governing Board made the decision. This process will include inviting guests from the United Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Covenant Association to present information to our congregation in an "information-session" type of meeting, as well as small group meetings for interested congregants. These small group meetings will span many weeks to ensure that every member of Canton First has been afforded an opportunity to learn about disaffiliation and what it means for our church. Members of the Board have been prayerfully discerning our church's future and options for several months, but any decision will be made by the church membership. Our members have the final vote on whether the church should disaffiliate or remain in the United Methodist Church.

### **Why have I not heard more about this until now?**

Our pastors, lay leader and Board chair have shared general information about the state of the United Methodist Church in past church-wide emails. At that time, we outlined the ongoing issues and conflicts within the UMC and stated that our church leaders were monitoring these issues, and that we wanted to maintain our focus on the mission and ministries of Canton First. With the third postponement of the General Conference, the leadership of the United Methodist Church has failed to address these issues, which has only deepened the divide within the UMC. On April 29, 2002, the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church acknowledged publicly that a split in the UMC is inevitable. Our church membership will ultimately decide whether Canton First disaffiliates with the UMC or decides to remain within the current UMC denomination.

### **What happens next after the sessions with the representatives from the United Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Covenant Association?**

Canton First will schedule small group meetings so that our members can meet with representatives from the Governing Board and church staff to learn more about the future affiliation options for our church. These sessions will include time for Q&A and will be scheduled throughout the summer, starting after Dan Parr meets with the congregation on June 15. Our goal is to be as open and transparent as possible, and to give each member an opportunity to learn all you can before any decisions are even considered. You will be able to register for these online, and Board members will be available to meet with small groups, upon request and as time allows.

### **Who determines if Canton First stays in the United Methodist Church or leaves?**

The members of Canton First will make this decision by vote at a specially called church conference.

### **How is that done/decided?**

If the Governing Board votes to pursue disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church, a church conference would be scheduled so that members can vote to either disaffiliate or to remain in the United Methodist Church. A “yes” vote of ***2/3 of those members present at the church conference*** must be made for the church to leave the United Methodist Church.

### **Who can vote?**

All current members of Canton First United Methodist

### **If I am a member, do I have to be present to vote?**

You must be present at the church conference to vote on this matter.

### **What future affiliation options are under consideration?**

Some of the options under consideration by the Governing Board include remaining in the United Methodist Church, affiliating with the Global Methodist Church or one of several other Methodist denominations or becoming an independent church/congregation.

### **If Canton First UMC votes to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, will be able to keep our building and property?**

Yes. The UMC Book of Discipline, ¶2553, allows for churches to leave the UMC denomination and retain their property and assets, provided the church meets all of the requirements and financial obligations stipulated in ¶2553. It is important to remember that ¶2553 expires in 2023, and this option will no longer be available to churches after the expiration of ¶2553.

**What financial requirements must a church meet under ¶2553 of the Book of Discipline for disaffiliation?**

- A church must be in good standing, including being current on all church apportionments, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments to the annual conference.
- A church must pay an amount equal to the unfunded pension liability of that church, as determined by the annual conference, using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider.
- A church must satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.