Discerning Pathways: Guidelines for Disaffiliation under ¶ 2553

1. During the discernment time the local church/ministry shall:

* Enter into an intentional time of prayer

On August 10th, 2022 the letter from the Church Council of Uvalde First United Methodist Church (UFUMC) was received by Dr. Ricky Sanderford, the District Superintendent of the Hill Country District of the Rio Texas Conference, indicating the church’s intention to begin the required period of discernment and prayer concerning disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church.

Dr. Sanderford conducted the first listening session on October 2, 2022. The second session was held on January 15th, 2023.

During this period the church held six additional meetings where the six videos of Robb Renfroe were paired with Adam Hamilton’s rebuttal and shown to the congregation. Each session was moderated for discussion.

2.

* Assess the impact of their decision upon the church, community, and conference and share a written assessment with its congregation and the District Superintendent.

To the First United Methodist Church of Uvalde and the District Superintendent of the Hill Country District of the Rio Texas Conference.

The Book of Discipline has maintained an expression of its current traditional understanding of human sexuality since 1972. In seeking to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church, FUMC-Uvalde will be maintaining the status quo. There is no impact when nothing will change except the name. The burden of impact assessment should rest with those who are innovating a new understanding of Methodism, and by extension, Holy Scripture.

Backed by an alternative interpretation of scripture, some United Methodist clergy are officiating same-sex weddings, Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry are recommending LGBTQ+ candidates for ordination, and bishops are ordaining them. Five jurisdictions have resolutions against the traditional understanding of sexuality and the Western Jurisdiction has ordained its second homosexual bishop. Some episcopal leaders are disobeying their charge to enforce the Book of Discipline as approved and instead preside as they wish it to be. The issues around LGBTQ+ inclusion is just one example of a much deeper problem within The United Methodist Church around core theological doctrines, compounded by a lack of consistent accountability between clergy and their episcopal leaders. The unorthodox innovation on sexuality and gender undermines all Methodists’ personal ministry by creating confusion about the United Methodist Church and its legislated tenets on the highest ideals of the Christian life. The failure to adhere to the Discipline increases anxiety, turmoil, and a potential lack of accountability to UM-accepted teaching on every subject.

Based on the inconsistent leadership of the United Methodist Church, It is the assessment of the FUMC- Uvalde Church Council that disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church will have the following impacts:

Conference Impacts: The primary impact upon the Rio Texas Conference is financial. The church will no longer send its apportionments. As there are no joint ministries between the Conference and UFUMC other than filling pastoral vacancies, the absence of the Rio Texas Conference will not be noticed by FUMC-Uvalde. After disaffiliation pastoral vacancies will be covered by the regional board of the Global Methodist Church.

Community Impact: For Uvalde the removal of “united” from the church’s name will not be noticed. Most non-Methodists in our town do not use this word when they speak of our church. In fact, we simply are “the Methodist Church” to them. As our services and ministries will continue as before, there will be no impact on the community.

Church impact: There are a few people who do not want FUMC-Uvalde to disaffiliate. Whether our transition to the Global Methodist Church will be the catalyst for these members to leave is unknown at this time. On the other hand, there would be a definite exodus of members if FUMC-Uvalde stayed in the UMC, particularly if the 2024 General Conference increases the denomination’s embrace of LGBTQ+ practices.

First Uvalde Methodist Church is not seeking to be an independent church but to remain in connection with an orthodox branch of the Methodist family. To this end, we will join the Global Methodist Church. Copies of the Global Methodist Church Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline have been provided to the congregation of FUMC-Uvalde. This includes the theological tenets, which are drawn directly from the 1939 Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church. It also includes the historic creeds and the Wesleyan Way of Salvation.

The Transitional Book of Doctrine and Discipline also provides the structure FUMC-Uvalde will follow for its governance structure, by which the church shall conduct its missional goals.

FUMC-Uvalde has retained the law firm of Dalton & Tomich PLC to write new incorporation documents. This process includes the funds held by the church and our obligations to donors.

The Global Methodist Church offers the Covenant Clergy Personal Investment Plan (Covenant PIP), a 403(b) defined contribution plan sponsored by the Global Methodist Church. Our church may also participate in Covenant PIP for our lay employees. We would have a menu of three options from which to choose: 1) allow employees to make discretionary contributions from their pay; 2) the church matching the lay employee’s contribution, up to 5% of the lay employee’s compensation; or 3) contributing 5% of the lay employees’ compensation plus a match of the employee’s contribution up to an additional 5%.

The Global Methodist Church provides health insurance for eligible clergy and lay employees of local Global Methodist congregations in the United States through “HealthFlex.” Health insurance will also be available to approved extension ministries of the GM Church like military chaplaincy. Our employees can choose from six medical plans. In addition, there are three dental plans and three vision plans available. HealthFlex utilizes the nation-wide PPO network of Blue Cross/Blue Shield, their widest network.

FUMC-Uvalde met with representatives of Church Mutual and Brotherhood Mutual. Each company is making a bid to insure our church.

The Transitional Book of Doctrine and Discipline of the GMC outlines its connectional funding requirements in Paragraph 349. According to this model, the cost to FUMC-Uvalde to operate as a Global Methodist Church will be significantly less than the current assessments from the Rio Texas Conference.

The biggest impact of disaffiliation on First United Methodist Church of Uvalde will be removing the cross and flame from our signs and our stationary. Once these material items have been replaced the Methodism of John Wesley, and the Gospel proclaimed since the ancient church, will continue at First Uvalde Methodist Church.