

# 2022 Annual Conference Session FAQs

We welcome your questions related to logistics, legislation and budget. These questions and answers will help us prepare for a strong collaborative effort when we meet virtually in May.

## Logistics

### **When does registration open?**

Registration will be open from Tuesday, April 26 until Saturday, May 14. Registration and procedures are designed to accommodate all voting members in the following ways:

1. Via Zoom video conference
2. Via Zoom dial-in conference

The registration form will ask you to select one of the above options. Registration is for voting members only. Guests and visitors can join and participate in the session through a live-stream on YouTube. If there are two individuals in a household who are both voting members, they will need to register separately to speak and vote. Registration information will be available soon.

### **What hours will the virtual conference be held?**

The 2022 virtual Annual Conference for lay and clergy conference members of Greater New Jersey, takes place May 23, 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and May 24, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

### **How can a visitor register for Annual Conference? I would be interested in other sessions too, including the ordination service.**

You can watch the service via livestream on the GNJ YouTube channel.

## Legislation

### **What legislation will be discussed at this session?**

All legislation can be found [here](#).

## A Call to Discernment

### **What will be done for churches that vote 50.1% to 66.9% to disaffiliate regarding the Missional Transition Support?**

As a congregation works with the guides and the Cabinet through the discernment process and voting regarding disaffiliation, if this occurred we would work with the congregation for a path forward that honors everyone.

### **Will churches who have signed a disaffiliation agreement be eligible to participate in Annual Conference actions and voting?**

Any person that is a clergy member of the annual conference has a vote regardless of their convictions if they continue as a clergy member of The UMC. Anyone elected from a congregation to be a lay member or equalizing lay member will have the right to vote if they continue as a member of the UMC. Once they cease to be a member of The United Methodist Church, they would no longer have a vote. We ask all clergy and lay members to annual conference who are leaving the UMC to be respectful for those who will stay and when voting, ensure you monitor your own conflicts of interest.

### **According to the Bishop's latest Letter, churches will have to pay the Guides where before they were provided from the Episcopal Office. Is that truly sustainable especially for smaller churches?**

The terms of disaffiliation are determined by the Board of Trustees (BoT). The BoT will work with all congregations going through the process and have been set up in such a way that they are credible and fair. The term sheet example of what the GCFA has recommended is that all costs for disaffiliation be borne by the disaffiliating congregation.

**The regular deadline for legislation is February 15. March 23 would be after that date obviously. Will there be any provision for an Annual Conference session in the fall of 2023 for churches that needed more time for discernment?**

We want to provide a sufficient time for churches to work through this. We do not see this as something that should be rushed. We've put together a schedule that starting in June and July congregations can request to disaffiliate and Guides will begin to work with them in the fall and up to six months, although it does not have to take up to six months for the Board of Trustees (BoT) to do their work. March 23 is the last date for items to be printed in the Preconference Workbook. Therefore, we generally take all legislation by February 15. We will have a standard disaffiliation piece of legislation and adding the names and addresses of the churches that are disaffiliating will be able to be published if it is all completed by March 23. All the work for disaffiliating as it relates to the discernment process, providing all the technical information that is requested in terms of the term sheet, making sure that everything is in order must happen by March 23. This provides sufficient time for churches to go through the process and vote at our regular session of Annual Conference with no need to call a special session.

**May we get a copy of the GCFA model to compare that with what is being presented?**

The minimum term sheet developed by GCFA is outlined in paragraph 2553 and is available to everyone and is posted on the GNJ website [GNJ website](#). As paragraph 2553 and the Judicial Council directs, the conference Board of Trustees (BoT) has the authority to develop the term sheet and add additional liabilities and costs for disaffiliation.

**Will there be any provision for promissory note or alternative to provide payments without doing severe damage? (Will the Board of Trustees or the annual conference approve promissory notes?)**

No. Payments by paragraph 2553 require payment in full by December 31, 2023.

**Missional transition support is not included in paragraph 2553. Where did that come from? It creates additional pressure in a difficult situation.**

When working through the different items, the Trustees decided that it was important to care and provide a path forward for members that are left behind when a church disaffiliates. The mission transition support will provide members a path forward so they can continue with the church. All should keep in mind; the General Conference has lessened the “pressure” and financial cost to disaffiliate. The suspension of the trust clause has allowed congregations to leave with their property without paying for the property which is held in trust by a congregation for the annual conference/denomination.

**Will mission transition support be kept in a designated fund for new faith communities?**

The Trustees, Connectional Table, CFA and Cabinet will collaborate to finalize the policies and procedures for the use of the funds that will be collected. The intent of the missional transition is the support for those member’s left behind from disaffiliating churches to ensure that their worship needs are met and develop new United Methodist ministries in communities.

**What exactly is causing churches to disaffiliate themselves from the UMC. Is it the UMC not following the book of Discipline? If so, what are they not following? Is it changes that are in the process of being made to the Book of Discipline? If so, what changes.**

Because of the current deep conflict within the United Methodist Church around the topic of human sexuality, and the further postponement of General Conference, some local churches and clergy may seek to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change (or lack of change) in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the ordination and/or marriage of persons who identify as lesbian, bi-sexual, gay, transgender, and/or or questioning their sexuality.

**Does each church council need to discuss this?**

All church councils are strongly encouraged to spend time discerning God’s missional calling and a path to move forward with their ministry emerge from the pandemic. Only local churches that are in tension with the current stances on human sexuality of the

United Methodist Church and considering disaffiliation must speak with their District Superintendent and go through a disaffiliation discernment process to clarify and agree on a path forward, whether it is remaining a part of the UMC or disaffiliating.

**If a church were to take a vote to explore disaffiliation and start the process, would that require a simple majority of those present at the church council meeting?**

Before voting to disaffiliate from the UMC, congregations considering disaffiliation must undergo a discernment process. Following the discernment process, a Church Conference will be held to vote on disaffiliation. A 2/3's approval vote is required to disaffiliate as per paragraph 2553 in the Book of Discipline.

## 2023 Budget

**Every year there is a line amount in the budget for camping ministries. It is my understanding that the camp is in such disrepair that there will be no summer camp this year. What was the budgeted money used for that would allow the camp to be in such bad shape that we can't open for the youth? How did this happen?**

The Next Generation Ministry Board made the decision not to open The Pinelands Center in 2022 due to decreased engagement, staffing, and the need for several major repairs. In 2017 when GNJ approved the Next Generation Ministry 10 Year Strategic Plan, it laid out major renovations and maintenance projects to be funded by the Miracles Everywhere Campaign. While Next Gen did relaunch camping ministry and host summer camps in 2018 and 2019, due to a lack of registrations, additional income and fundraising, not all maintenance projects were completed. One major project, the underground water main, has emerged since that time. Unfortunately, while there has been a line in the budget for camping ministries, the costs of owning and operating a camp and retreat center have been more than the money allocated by GNJ and income brought from attendance for many years.

**Regarding the information regarding sale of closed churches. What non-real estate assets were acquired and used to fund our budget? What non-real estate assets were required?**

Property sales is not the only income; the details of all income are found on pages 79 to 91 of the preconference journal.

**What percentage of Shared Ministries for Conference was paid in 2021? How did that compare with Shared Ministries for the General Church?**

It was 93% on the shared ministry collection, and 86.5% on the general church. It is based on what we budgeted for 2021.

**Is it realistic to expect the cost of annual conference session page 88 to decline in 2023 when we are likely to need delegation elections for a general conference in 2024? Or are we carrying over surpluses from the last couple of years when we have met virtually?**

We don't carry over surplus on budgeted items. As we fine-tune the budgeting process and working with the budgeting managers who try to find savings such as our outstanding technology team has and everyone else doing their part, we are doing things more efficiently. We're optimistic that we can find that savings.

**It seems disheartening to have a camping \$200,000 deficit while we are having relatively few campers. Do we have any choices, (referencing page 91)?**

The \$200,000 deficit you see in Next Generation Ministries (Next Gen) on page 91, that is GNJ's complete investment in Next Generation Ministries. If you look at page 85, the mission and justice budget, this is the money that GNJ allocates to Next Gen that covers the cost of owning a camp and retreat center and other ministries would be included in that conference. While Next Gen has had challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Next Gen board, staff, and leadership have done an excellent job of kind of pivoting, engaging churches, resources churches. But ministry with the next generation will always be a little expensive and we're grateful that GNJ will invest \$200,000 in 2023 to continue that important missional priority.

**The deficit for Next Gen is being paid out of some source though.**

Yes, it is part of the justice ministry's budget, listed on page 85, total of \$200,000. Also, page 91 details the \$200,000.

## St. John UMC Fund

**Is a limit of \$60,000 per property a correct understanding? Is a limit of \$67,000 per property a correct understanding?**

It is up to \$65,000 for each property's transfer as well as related costs. That is the cap per property.

## BSA

**The Local Church Contributions to the BSA Bankruptcy Settlement legislation on page 34 of the Pre-Conference Workbook indicates that a church with a \$15,000 yearly shared ministry apportionment will pay \$1,024 or about \$340 per year over 3 years into the Survivor Trust fund. Does that mean that a church with a:**

- \$30,000 yearly shared ministry apportionment will pay \$2,048 or about \$680 per year over 3 years into the Fund or**
- \$45,000 yearly shared ministry apportionment will pay \$3,072 or about \$1,020 per year over 3 years into the Fund or**
- \$60,000 yearly shared ministry apportionment will pay \$4,096 or about \$1,360 per year over 3 years into the Fund?**

Yes, that is correct; the allocation will be proportional to each church's percent of the total 2021 shared ministry budget.

**In the example of a congregation's allocation to the Survivor Trust in the BSA legislation, is the example given on line 36 of page 34 equate for all congregations?**

This is referring to a sample for a church that had \$15,000 as their shared ministry apportionment in 2021. If your church has \$30,000 shared ministry apportionment, it will

be exactly double this number. The example is proportional for all congregations. We intend to start billing in 2022 as long as there are no major changes when the court rules on the BSA reorganization plan. We are not anticipating significant changes to dollar value at this current time.

## Episcopal Nominations

**Please explain how episcopal nominations will work if there can be multiple candidates recommended. There are multiple Bishops to elect. Can we nominate more than one?**

Yes, more than one nominee may be lifted up by the annual conference. There will be an explanation of voting and how the voting will occur. If one individual is nominated with the first five ballots, we may proceed to nominate a second person.