

Council of Bishops  
Best Practices on Disaffiliation Matters

Financial Terms (2553 does not apply to Central Conferences)

The Council of Bishops recommend the annual conference leadership to allocate the withdrawal pension liability provided by Wespath, and required in paragraph 2553, in a consistent manner to disaffiliating churches within the annual conference. Further, we recommend the annual conference leadership to request routine valuations from Wespath, on a set frequency, to aid in consistent allocations to disaffiliating churches.

The Council of Bishops confirm that neither promissory notes nor other means of extending credit will be utilized to satisfy payments outlined in the terms of an annual conference's disaffiliation agreement in order to meet full payment as required by paragraph 2553.4.f.

The Council of Bishops request annual conference leadership to add additional terms to the standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements, as approved by the General Council on Finance and Administration and required by paragraph 2553, only when those additional terms help to strengthen the capacity of the annual conference to equip local churches and advance the mission of The United Methodist Church, and when those terms cover the expenses that the conference incurs due to the church's disaffiliation.

Clergy Withdrawal (360.1)

The Council of Bishops recommend that ¶ 360.1 be used whenever ordained clergy members in good standing wish to withdraw either to unite with another denomination or simply to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church. In all such cases, ¶ 360.1 requires that the clergy member deposit their certification of conference membership and deposit a written request to withdraw their membership with the conference secretary.

If a withdrawing clergy member wishes to retain their ordination credentials, we recommend that their certificate of ordination be inscribed on the face of the credentials by the conference secretary with the following inscription, and that a copy of the ordination credentials, so inscribed, be deposited with the conference secretary:

“The \_\_\_\_\_ Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church recognizes that (name of clergy member) has withdrawn from conference membership and altogether from the ministry of The United Methodist Church.”

If a certificate of ordination no longer exists, a letter should be presented to the clergy member stating the same (signed by the clergy member and conference secretary, and notarized) and a copy of the letter will be deposited with the conference secretary.

### Clergy Withdrawal (360.2)

The Council of Bishops recommend that ¶ 360.2 be used when an ordained clergy member in good standing is withdrawing from conference membership and from the ministerial office entirely. In those instances, the clergy member shall surrender both their certification of conference membership and certification of ordination, giving both to the District Superintendent to be deposited with the conference secretary.

### Discernment Process

The Council of Bishops recommend each Annual Conference to encourage an intentional discernment process that engages the whole congregation, provides an opportunity to receive information about our Wesleyan heritage and The UMC, reflects an openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cares for the members' relationships, and provides space for conversations about the local church's future.

The Council of Bishops recommend each Annual Conference to encourage the Church Council (or applicable leadership structure) to document key learnings and insights that summarizes the discernment period.

### Clergy Files

The Council of Bishops recommend that annual conferences may make copies of clergy personnel files available, as determined by the Annual Conference, to clergy who request their file in writing.