

Kingsland First UMC

Disaffiliation Task Force Plan & Updates

Update #1
June 2022

Kingsland First United Methodist Church

Disaffiliation Task Force

Update #1

At a KFUMC called Church Council Meeting Tuesday, June 14, 2022, the KFUMC Church Council unanimously voted to pursue disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church.

To that end, the Council appointed a KFUMC Disaffiliation Task Force to coordinate those actions. The Task Force includes:

- a. Tom Turner, Lay Leader, and Lay Member to Annual Conference
- b. Mark Kevan, Stewardship Coordinator
- c. Anne Wojcik, Finance Committee Chair
- d. David DuBois, Trustees Chair
- e. Manny Moreno

At the first Disaffiliation Task Force meeting on Wednesday, June 29th, members began reviewing various documents that provide information and guidance on the Methodist Disaffiliation Process. The two attached documents are provided for those worshipping at KFUMC to understand the Disaffiliation Process.

Disaffiliation Considerations

Potential Benefits, Challenges, and Unintended Consequences for Clergy and Local Churches Considering Disaffiliating

The reason for creating this list of benefits, challenges, unintended consequences, and other issues is to assist congregations that are considering disaffiliating. Some congregations that are considering disaffiliating see potential benefits, but they should also have their eyes open to potential unintended consequences. The reality is that all the congregations in our conference are in a season of discernment whether to stay, disaffiliate, or wait for the future to become clearer. Below is a list of variables that you will consider as you go through this list of benefits and challenges.

Variables

1. **Independent or Another Denomination:** There is a difference between being independent and being a part of a denomination. Being part of a denomination provides structure, guardrails, foundations, and an identity and sense of belonging. Churches considering going independent may be attracted to the freedom of making their own choices but building a church's congregational life from scratch will have challenges of its own. Whatever destination a disaffiliating church chooses, navigating from a connectional structure and belonging that has become familiar to something unfamiliar could bring unintended consequences unless these challenges are addressed in a congregation's discernment.
2. **Congregational Unity:** Congregations need to consider how unified they are when considering whether to stay, leave, or wait. Being unified around the decision is important, but more is involved than just the decision. When a congregation leaves its current structure, foundations, and identity, it may expose an array of differences in opinion and belief beneath the surface among members. Changes that disaffiliating congregations undergo may cause some people to leave. Potential membership losses should be considered, along with a potential decline in program, ministry, and outreach. The congregation should make a realistic assessment of their potential to replace the potential loss of members. Family and friendships may suffer damage and harm. This is true for either side of the decision. Even staying requires unity. If a minority wants to stay, but more people are voting with their feet to leave, that is a problem. The unity of some congregations choosing to stay is often based on an ability to appreciate their diversity as an integral part of their unity.
3. **Congregational Strength:** Churches that are unified and strong when they move into the future they have chosen—whether staying or leaving—will most likely stay strong and unified. Churches that are not so strong should not think that leaving will cure all their

problems. The number of unintended consequences of leaving will most likely be greater for churches that are not strong. Remember that large, medium, and small membership churches can be strong or weak. Congregational strength is not just about size, but vitality. While congregations have this internal conversation among their members, they should not lose focus on their relevance in the community, which often presents a more faithful barometer of a congregation's strength.

Potential Benefits of Leaving

1. Each church and pastor can be completely independent or choose to align with another denomination whose theology more closely aligns with theirs.
2. The church may be able to make its own decisions related to its minister and other clergy staff, subject to the practice of the denomination it chooses or if it chooses to be independent. This includes the selection of its ministers and the decision to keep them if there is good alignment.
3. Ministers can seek out their church subject to the practice of the denomination they choose, or if they choose to be independent. If the minister and church are in good alignment, the minister can choose to remain.
4. The church may be able to work out its own benefits structures—retirement, health insurance, disability, continuing education, and compensation subject to the denomination they choose or if they choose to be an independent church.
5. The church will be able to retain and make decisions about their property.
6. The church may be able to make independent decisions about their missional giving subject to the denomination they choose or if they choose to be an independent church.
7. Independent churches will be able to determine the requirements for ordination and leadership.
8. Disaffiliating churches will be able to make decisions about their leadership structure and governance subject to the denomination they choose or if they choose to be independent.

Potential Challenges & Unintended Consequences

1. An independent church will have the responsibility of searching for, vetting, and selecting their own minister. They will be responsible for determining the educational standards of future clergy while perhaps not understanding fully the value of theological education and ministerial training.
2. Churches which align with another denomination may have a pool of clergy from which their pastor can come. Churches which go independent should consider where they will find clergy leadership.

3. Independent churches may lose momentum due to extended periods without pastoral leadership, which can take anywhere from 6-24 months during which time an interim person or a lay person leads.
4. United Methodist local pastors and provisional members who disaffiliate must surrender their pastoral license, and clergy who are ordained will no longer be considered ordained in the UMC. Former UM clergy will need to find and/or learn a path for clergy credentialing. Independent churches retaining or receiving these pastors will need to determine their own system of ordination/licensing for their pastors.
5. If a church votes to disaffiliate, they may lose a beloved pastor if the pastor chooses to stay in the United Methodist Church.
6. United Methodist clergy who leave the denomination may be responsible for finding their own ministry position unless the new affiliation provides the appointment. There is no guarantee that their current church will call them to continue to serve if the church also disaffiliates.
7. Clergy may have extended periods of unemployment, with the average being 6-24 months in non-itinerant systems.
8. The pastor and church will have to negotiate salary, benefits, medical leave, family leave, vacation leave, and housing without the structure and support they have relied on unless they join with a denomination that sets that structure.
9. Independent congregations have been known to go from having democratic processes to authoritarian processes (which may be headed by the pastor or powerful lay person). Deciding what church structure should look like will be important but also difficult as a church seeks to find consensus in these matters.
10. Deciding what theological perspective your church will stand on will be imperative. This is especially true for independent congregations, which have been known to go from Wesleyan theology to a Reformed or Pentecostal theology because they didn't decide this and use it to vet their pastors and leaders. This decision will impact everything from selecting clergy to choosing Revival speakers and youth leaders to choosing VBS and Sunday School materials.
11. Familiarizing the leadership and/or whole congregation with the polity, doctrine, and theology of other denominations or affiliations will be a challenging task since these issues will be unfamiliar or unknown to many members, especially in relation to church polity.
12. Disaffiliating churches will be severing their church from the connectional benefits of the United Methodist Church (like UMCOR, World Service, Ministry Grants, Ministerial Education Fund) and the more localized benefits of our Conference staff and resources (like equitable compensation support, CLM training, other leadership training events, clergy continuing education, our online communications and resources, disaster relief, camps, campus ministry, conference-led missions, and shower trailers).

13. Disaffiliating churches will lose denominational and conference support for legal matters and strategic decisions concerning their property unless they join another denomination that provides such support.
14. There will be no access to the UMC Course of Study and this mode of ministerial education which has proved to be such an affordable and available alternative to seminary.

Other Issues to be Considered

1. Parsonage—the conference has rules about pastoral housing and what is in the parsonage. How will that be handled in a new situation?
2. Churches are advised to incorporate. Incorporation may mean a new leadership structure. Someone must be responsible for maintaining the corporation. Incorporation also involves creating a set of by-laws which will govern how the congregation makes and implements decisions.
3. Church insurance may be impacted by loss of denominational affiliation. Consult your insurance agent.
4. Full-time and $\frac{3}{4}$ time clergy in the UMC have a death benefit and disability insurance provided through the CPP apportionment. They have access to group health insurance, including dental and vision. How will the church replace these benefits for their clergy?
5. The church should apply for its own 501(c)(3) and make sure it maintains its county tax exemption.
6. Churches should create a personnel policy manual, unless they join a denomination which provides such structure.
7. Churches should create a financial policy manual, unless they join a denomination which provides such structure.
8. Denominations typically have vetted international missions, where congregations sending support can be reasonably sure their funds will be used as intended. How will the congregation determine which international missions it can support, and that the funds they send are used as intended?

Perspectives on the Methodist Division

NOTE in using these videos.

When first linking to these YouTube videos, it may take you to an advertisement. Watch on the right hand side of the screen and you will see a button labeled 'SKIP AD.' Push the button or you will have to watch through the Advertisement.

Methodist Split from Good News Rob Renfro Perspective (biased toward split)

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| 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5g48onYSqgQ | Opening comments about why he, as a |
| Methodist for generations, is now leaving | |
| 2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P35XdF873NQ | Differences in how we view the Bible |
| 3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNpmGxE8D88 | Differences in how we view Jesus |
| 4. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjOd-fOgAJI | Differences in how we view sexuality |
| 5. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw5Y4fMRJtQ | Why it's time we leave |
| 6. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzAVdE9wqY0 | Why to join GMX |

Methodist Split from a former Methodist Pastor perspective (unbiased)

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| 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymNiv02vR0I | about 15 minutes |
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Methodist Split from a perspective (biased toward staying)

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| 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1unw5LwdiQ | Rev Adam Hamilton |
| 2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI6VhNUdFbo&t=1097s | Bishop Ken Carter fm Florida |