

# **Kingsland First UMC**

## **Disaffiliation Task Force Plan & Updates**

**Update #2**

**July 2022**

# **Kingsland First United Church (UMC) Disaffiliation Meeting with Coastal District Superintendent (DS) David Thompson Sunday, July 10, 2022, 4:00 pm Meeting Notes**

**Attendance: 76**

Opening Prayer – Mark Kevan

Housekeeping – Mark Kevan

Clarification: DS Thompson will share background on the South Georgia Annual Conference (SGAC) Disaffiliation Policy. He will not comment on post disaffiliation options or actions.

The format we will use has two parts.

Part 1, Our first session will be a discussion of Disaffiliation. There will be opportunities for Q&A as we move through the first session. We will then pause for a few minutes so that our District Superintendent can leave.

Part 2, Our second session will first cover some of the possibilities should the Disaffiliation vote pass and a discussion of the ballot that must be used for the Disaffiliation vote at the Charge Conference. There will be time for Q&A opportunities during Part 2.

## **PART 1/Session 1**

1. This is a difficult time in the UMC. Don't mistake the pace of my remarks as not having a broken heart for what we are going through. But this discussion is both needed and difficult.
2. I serve as the DS for the Coastal District of the SGAC. We have 94 Churches all along the coast from South Carolina to Florida.
3. The current disagreement in the UMC about Human Sexuality has been debated every 4 years at General Conference since 1972. This is where we are today.
4. UMC is the most American of denominations in the United States. The UMC is even organized like the Federal Government.
5. The General Conference is the Legislative Body. This is where our 'Church Law' is made and recorded in our Book of Discipline.
6. The Executive Branch is composed of DS's and Bishops. They are responsible for church operations in our Annual Conferences (like the SGAC) and our Districts (like the Coastal District).
7. The Council of Bishops is our Judicial Branch. Just as the US Supreme Court rules on question relating to the US Constitution, our Judicial Council rules on questions related to our Book of Discipline.
8. Jurisdictional Conferences (normally held after each General Conference every four years), primarily elect and assign Bishops within a region. The SGAC and the Coastal District are part of the Southeast Jurisdiction.

9. The last regularly scheduled General Conference was held in 2016. Because some Annual Conferences and Jurisdictions were in outright violation of the Book of Discipline, in 2016 there was movement to hold jurisdictions accountable.
10. In 2019, a called General Conference was held to address the issue of the lack of accountability and the UMC position on Human Sexuality which basically is:
  - a. Sexual relations are to occur only in a monogamous marriage between one man and one woman; and,
  - b. The practice of Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching (celibacy in singleness).
  - c. The UMC position on Human Sexuality was affirmed in the passage of The Traditional Plan
11. However, as many as 1/3 of US delegates defied the decision and the outcome was a decision to 'divorce' or separate. The UMC reviewed how other churches went through separations and concluded it did not want to go to Court because it costs too much. Legislation for Disaffiliation was proposed for 2020 General Conference, delayed until August 2021 and then August 2022 due to COVID, and finally rescheduled for August 2024.
12. However, the 2019 General Conference passed §2553 in the Book of Discipline which provides a path for UMC churches to disaffiliate and keep their property. This policy expires in December 31, 2023.
13. The SGAC passed a Disaffiliation Policy based on 2553
14. The SGAC also asked for a ruling by the Judicial on whether or not an Annual Conference could disaffiliate as a whole. In May 2022, the Judicial Council ruled there was no provision for an Annual Conference to disaffiliate as a whole. (Note: The West Texas Annual Conference dissolved. It no longer exists. This was not a disaffiliation.)

## **Q & A**

Q: How many churches disaffiliated in SGC have gone to the Global Methodist Church?

A: Unable to answer.

Q: What impact will disaffiliation have on related SGAC Ministries?

A: None. Ministries like The Methodist Home, Magnolia Manor, and Epworth by the Sea are non-Profit corporations with their own Governing Boards and budgets.

## **Survey from the SGAC Delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conferences**

This was not a SGAC Survey. This was conducted by the SGAC Delegation in preparation for the SGAC Annual meeting in Columbus, GA in May 2022. The hope for Annual Conference (and KFUMC) was that the poll might reveal an indication of which way Annual Conference delegates (or KFUMC members) were leaning – or if they were.

Q: What happened in our church?

A: KFUMC was polled. The response was low, around 30 %. Of those responding, all or almost all aligned with a more traditional Wesleyan denomination on all three questions in the poll.

In preparations for this meeting, we examined what the Survey results were from the Annual Conference delegates. We chose the Laity grouping surveys as they better represent what KFUMC is made up of – Laity people and not Clergy.

Q: What happened at the SG Annual Conference?

A: 48% of Laity responded as follows:

1. Questions #1: 68% move to a new Wesleyan Denomination.
2. Question #2: 58% transfer to a new Wesleyan Denomination
3. Question #3: 80% go with SGAC to a new Wesleyan Denomination.

Q: Are you able to share how the lay results compared to clergy?

A: 57% of Clergy responded as follows:

1. Question #1: 68% move to a new Wesleyan denomination.
2. Question #2: 56% transfer to a new Wesleyan denomination.
3. Question #3: 75% go with SGA to a new Wesleyan Denomination.

Q: Do we know how many churches have expressed an intention to disaffiliate?

A: In 2021, 16 disaffiliated – mostly smaller churches. 2022: 18 churches disaffiliated in June; 40-65 churches could disaffiliate in August. June 2023, not sure.

Q: How many churches are total in SGA?

A: Was around 600. Now 560ish. By next 2023 Annual Conference, 400 or less. No talks about dissolving SGAC. North Georgia Annual Conference has about 340 churches slated to disaffiliate June 2023.

Q: Does that include Mount Bethel

A: Mount Bethel was not allowed to disaffiliate. Mediation was forced by the Court. NGAC willing to settle for 26 million. Judge threatened to make public some of the email correspondence from the NGAC leadership. They subsequently settled for 13.1 million.

**Disaffiliation Policy for SGC was discussed.** A copy had been provided to all in attendance.

**Key points:**

1. Adhere as close to §2553. No fees, “YET.”
2. Other conferences have pushed fees.
3. Steps. Decision and called church conference. Everyone on the roll can vote.
4. Only people who show up can vote. Vote once.
5. Anonymous vote. 2/3 majority of those present and eligible to vote.

6. No absentee or drive-by voting.
7. Abstentions count as a "No" ballot.
8. Recommends straw poll prior to vote.
9. One church missed the vote by 1 person. Word of caution.
10. "Yes" vote will trigger a Binding Disaffiliation Agreement.
11. Must pay all listed fees and 1 years of apportionments plus pay all apportionments not paid during the last 12 months (looking back from the effective Disaffiliation date.)
12. Legal fees are responsibility of the disaffiliating church.
13. Pension liability #. The June # for KFUMC is \$100k.
14. Pension Liability. Calculated by actuarial.
15. Valuations are calculated quarterly for pension liability.
16. Pension liability, legal fees, and apportionment amount are due 30 days after effective date of disaffiliation.
17. Failure to provide within 30 days will require a new SG Annual Conference vote.
18. Leave now or purchase property at Fair Market Value (FMV).

#### **KFUMC Costs to Disaffiliate**

1. Pastor pension Liability = \$100,000 (rounded to the whole dollar)
2. Past unpaid apportionments = \$0.00. We are paid up to date
3. 12 months Apportionments = \$46,176
4. Total for Disaffiliation = \$146,176
5. As of May 31, 2022 – Operating Account had \$303,827
6. That would leave us with \$157,651
7. Average monthly expenses = \$38,346
8. If giving were significantly reduced, we would have approximately 4 months cash to operate

Q: What happens to churches that do not have the money.

A: Policy stands as it is written.

#### **OPTIONS**

1. Stay in UMC. LGBTQ issue is going to happen.
2. Wait till 2024 General Conference to see if General Conference works out a better way for disaffiliation.
3. Conservatives are leaving the UMC. Liberals are becoming the prominent part of the delegation.

4. Option to disaffiliate. Act. When?
5. After 2024. FMV will likely be the way to get out.
6. If clergy stays in UMC, and church leaves UMC: church will pay the remainder of the pastor's yearly salary until next Annual Conference.

Q: Use of name "Methodist"

A: Disaffiliate. If Independent, then cannot use "Methodist". If Methodist cannot use United. Must buy new hymnal. Must remove or surrender material materials identified as United Methodist. Archival records must be surrendered to SGAC. All signage has to be changed; T-shirts; etc, etc, etc

Q: If disaffiliate how will we appoint pastors?

A: That will be on the church.

Q: If we remove names can we keep items?

A: Yes.

Q: Do council minutes remain with church?

A: May make copies. Forward to SGAC Archives. May refer to the historical UMC.

Q: Property?

A: Gets deeded to church. Church decides on what they do with property. Many Methodist denominations do not have a Trust Clause.

Q: Elect to stay UMC. Who pays legal fees for extended court battles?

A: Apportioned through the church.

Q: Effective date if disaffiliation?

A: The date when the deed changes hands.

Q: Will there be a meeting to discuss the theology before the vote?

A: Yes. After the DS leaves. The ballot clearly states. Very clear that the vote is about issues regarding about sexuality.

Q: What is the probability of SGAC not voting for disaffiliation?

A: Not very high. So far 90% have been voting in favor of.

Q: Is this policy to disaffiliate specifically for human sexuality?

A: Yes. These provisions are specifically for that.

Q: If disaffiliation fails, how much power will we have to appoint a pastor?

A: That's on the bishop.

Q: Could we keep our clergy in our prayers?

A: Yes. Pray.

Q: Why can't the traditionalist stay?

A: Because the vast majority of the UMC leadership is not adhering to the Book of Discipline and its standards.

Q: Insurance? Would you advocate independence?

A: DS does not see that for a church. Does not recommend for a church.

## **PART 2/Session 2**

Prayer Pastor Bruce

Tom Turner: Trying to make the right decisions. This is not easy. Lots of pieces to the disaffiliation process. We have to stay focused. We are all in this together. Continue to pray for each other.

Q: Why now?

A: Scheduled Special Called Annual Conference on the 20th of August. Need paperwork in by August 5. Right now, we have supportive legislative leadership. It may not be that way in the future.

Q: Can we provide cost of disaffiliation in the bulletin?

A: Yes. We can provide the projected cost of disaffiliation and the current assets of KFUMC.

Q: Where do we go?

A: This is a 2-step process. 1st step- Do we disaffiliate or not? 2nd step- Where do we go? There are different Methodist organizations where we can affiliate.

Bruce: He will not stay with UMC and will retire from UMC. Then go where they will have him.

Q: Why can't we wait till June 2023?

A: We can. But there are no guarantees that we will have similar or better terms. The terms could, and are likely, to be worse based on the current trend in the UMC.

Q: Do we know how much we would pay to go to another affiliation?

A: At this time, No.

To Congregation.

Q: Do we have enough information to make a decision to disaffiliate?

A: Yes

Q: Would it be easier to make a decision if we knew where we were going?

A: Yes.

Dear Church Family,

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On Sunday July 10, 2022, Kingsland First United Methodist Church ("KFUMC"), hosted a meeting with our District Superintendent ("DS"), David Thompson, to discuss disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church ("UMC"). After the meeting, a Q&A session was held with the congregation. The meeting lasted 3 ½ hours. From this meeting, 3 important questions arose, that we feel need to be better addressed.

**Questions:**

1. Why not wait to disaffiliate? (Why Now?)
2. Why was theology not addressed?
3. Where do we go after disaffiliation?

Below are some short answers to these questions. We will go into more detail at the July 17 follow-up session. This meeting will only address these questions.

**Answers:**

1. We have the most favorable conditions to disaffiliate now. We cannot guarantee we will have favorable conditions in the future. Our Conference can, and has, increased the cost to disaffiliate.
2. The task force was created for the sole purpose of discussing what disaffiliation would look like. The theology question, along with the human sexuality issue, is whether or not we are going to continue to follow the Bible and the Book of Discipline as currently written. By their Words and Actions, leadership within the UMC has made it clear that they will not. Are we, as a church, okay with that?
3. We will affiliate with the Global Methodist Church. They follow the current Book of Discipline as written. The pros of joining the Global Methodist are: we can still be called Methodist, we do not have to put our property in Trust, there is no cost to initially join, and it is easier to leave.

We appreciate your continued prayers and thoughtful consideration regarding disaffiliation. The difficult decisions we make now, will determine the legacy we leave for future generations. If you have any questions regarding disaffiliation, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Blessings,

The Disaffiliation Team

Mark Kevan, Anne Wojcik, David DuBois, Manny Moreno, Tom Turner





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The Disaffiliation Team

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*We exist to glorify God by encouraging unbelievers to establish, and believers to build a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ.*

### **Kingsland First United Methodist Church financial status as related to Disaffiliation**

Questions concerning the financial status of KFUMC were expressed in the 10 July meeting with the District Superintendent. The following show the beginning balances of KFUMC accounts at the beginning of 2022 and the revenues and expenses year-year-to date as of May 2022.

#### **Beginning Account values:**

Operating Account =	\$299,409
Designated Account =	\$54,983
Benevolent Account =	\$3,708
Total Beginning of January =	\$358,100
Total Income year-to-date May =	\$212,254
Total Expenses year-to-date May =	\$191,430

#### **As of May 31<sup>st</sup>:**

Operating Account =	\$303,827
Designated Account =	\$67,458
Benevolent Account =	\$4,221

# One Assessment of the GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

## Ten Reasons Why I'll Join the Global Methodist Church

*By Jay Therrell*

*July 8, 2022*



As more and more congregations are discerning where their future lies, I offer some of the things I considered as I made my decision to join the Global Methodist Church. I was humbled to be one of the initial drafters of the GMC's Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline. I invite you to focus on the future as I share ten reasons why I joined the Global Methodist Church ("GMC") when it launched. (All paragraph references are to the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline which you can access by [clicking here](#).)

### 1. Orthodox Theology That Stands on Scriptural Authority

The Global Methodist Church has a strong, orthodox doctrine squarely in the center of the 2,000-year tradition of the greater church: Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox. It is a creedal church that proudly stands on the rich tradition and history of our church fathers and mothers. Intentionally, the GMC includes as official doctrine the Nicene Creed (§105.2), the Apostles' Creed (§105.1), and the Definition of Chalcedon (§105.3). It may surprise you to know that the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds are not official doctrine of The United Methodist Church. They're in The United Methodist Hymnal, but not the Book of Discipline.

Moreover, the GMC has added the Definition of Chalcedon adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. The Chalcedonian Definition cements our understanding of who Jesus is. It ensures that the GMC's Christology will be orthodox and clear. To me these items are foundational. They signal that the GMC is deliberately aligning itself with the wider, ecumenical, historical authority of the greater church. I give thanks for this.

### 2. A Leaner and Simpler Church with Less Top-Down Decisions

The Global Methodist Church is a church that is dramatically streamlined. GMC leaders have done their best to create a flatter, simpler, more decentralized church where the local church will be empowered to make decisions that best enable it to carry out its mission. As a result, local churches will have greater control and keep more money in their church treasuries. Less bureaucracy and institution mean less apportionments. Your local church will spend its money

better than a denomination, and the GMC understands that. The general level of the church will be significantly smaller. The Global Methodist Church will have no more general agencies with their large budgets and many employees. Instead, it will have a few connectional commissions primarily led by laity and clergy volunteers. The GMC will be a denomination with a smaller footprint but a greater impact for God's kingdom.

### 3. An Emphasis on the Local Church as the Front Line of Ministry

I've been a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. I've been to more annual conferences than I can remember. I've been a district superintendent. I've never seen a new disciple made at those levels of the church. The Holy Spirit makes new disciples through the local church. I chose to join the Global Methodist Church because it views the local church as the front line of ministry and has done its best to orient the entire denomination around the local church. Presently, it can seem like one of the main reasons local churches exist is to pay apportionments and complete forms to supply the upper levels of church bureaucracy. In the GMC, the districts, annual conferences, and General Conference will do their best to ensure local churches are equipped to lead people to Jesus. This shift is important because it means that extra agencies, commissions, and institutions are no longer needed. Moreover, the funding for those entities will stay at the local church to be used to further its mission.

### 4. A Simpler, Fairer Ordination System

Local churches will become the entity that certify candidates in the Global Methodist Church (§406.1). This fits with the idea of making the local church the front line of ministry. It also negates the need for a district committee on ordained ministry – eliminating an entire level in the ordination process. Certified candidates will also have a six-month internship/employment in a local church to aid in their discernment that God has indeed called them to set-apart ministry (§406.2).

The Master of Divinity will no longer be the sole path to ordination as an elder. In the GMC, there will be multiple educational routes including completion of the Course of Study, a bachelor's degree in the practice of ministry, a Master of Arts degree in the practice of ministry, or a Master of Divinity degree (§407.1). Multiple routes mean greater flexibility that can better accommodate the varied family and employment situations of candidates.

For decades, licensed local pastors have been treated institutionally as second-class clergy. They aren't given the same pay, voting rights, or benefits. The GMC will not have any second-class clergy. Depending on their level of completion of the UMC Course of Study and/or Advanced Course of Study, current local pastors will transfer into the GMC as either deacons or elders with full ordination (§417.3).

### 5. Greater Accountability for Bishops, Clergy, and Churches

One of the mainstays of our current denominational drama is the extreme lack of accountability for bishops, clergy, and churches. Christians are called to live in accountable communities – accountable to God and to one another. The GMC will ensure that accountable community is strong.

Bishops will be term-limited to ensure that once a person is elected bishop, they no longer have a lifetime warranty on the office (§501). Additionally, bishops will no longer be accountable only to one another. During the transitional period of the GMC, bishops will be held accountable by the Transitional Leadership Council (§§807, 809). The first General Conference will determine an ongoing method for accountability, but it is presumed that a similar arrangement will be made with some sort of episcopacy committee related to episcopal accountability.

Clergy and churches will also be under greater accountability. Incoming clergy from the UMC will have to pledge that they agree with and will uphold the Doctrines and Discipline (§417.1-2). The GMC also has a new administrative complaint process for bishops and pastors so presiding elders and bishops could address issues of ineffectiveness (§§806-7). Lastly, a new provision ensures that local churches will adhere to church doctrine. After being warned for not preaching and teaching orthodox doctrine, local congregations can be disaffiliated by an annual conference (§354).

#### 6. A Less Expensive Church = More Money for Local Ministry

The four-year budget for the general level of The UMC from 2016-2020 was approximately \$604 million. That figure is staggering to me. I don't deny that there is some ministry and kingdom-good that is done through that money, but the sheer fact that we've created a general bureaucracy that requires those kinds of resources to sustain it boggles my mind. The Global Methodist Church intentionally has a general level of the GMC that will take a small fraction of that money (§§704-5). Additionally, annual conferences will be encouraged to downsize and re-orient around empowering the local churches (§§610-13). With a flatter and simpler annual conference structure, those budgets will decrease as well.

The bottom line: significantly more money will remain in local church treasuries. Many have estimated that most local churches will see a reduction in apportionments of at least half (§349). Local churches will soon be better resourced to carry out their mission.

#### 7. No Trust Clause

Almost three hundred years ago, John Wesley wrote the first trust clause to protect Methodist meeting houses and buildings. Wesley's intent was to ensure that those buildings – key resources in the Methodist mission of making disciples – would be used for orthodox purposes. Today, I would argue that The UMC uses the trust clause as an institutional method of survival and a weapon against theologically conservative churches. It has almost nothing to do with ensuring orthodoxy and instead has been the primary instrument used to keep traditionalist churches in a denomination that, in many places, is no longer following church law. I joined the Global Methodist Church because it wants to be a cadre of the called, not a company of the constrained. There is no trust clause in the GMC (§902). Local churches will own their assets for the glory and service of God to do with as they discern.

#### 8. Greater Autonomy for Local Churches

Making disciples in Jacksonville, Florida looks quite different than making disciples in Miami, Florida. It looks still different than making them in Chicago. It looks WAY different than making new followers of Jesus in Liberia, Russia, and the Philippines. If the denomination is truly to be

oriented around the local church as the front line of ministry, then it makes sense that we must empower local churches more. That's one more reason why I joined the Global Methodist Church. Local churches will be able to structure themselves in a way that best enhances their mission (§337). Moreover, when it comes to the appointing of clergy, local churches will have greater say in who their pastor will be (§510). The bishop will still have the final say on appointing clergy guaranteeing that female clergy and clergy of color will not be discriminated against. That said, churches will now have true consultation instead of simply being notified of who their new pastor is – as has happened recently in some places.

#### 9. More Freedom and Less Duplication

I was once told by a friend who is a leader in another non-Methodist denomination that Methodists don't play well with others. I asked him what he meant by that, and he said, "You all don't use the same ministries that most other churches do. You always must create your own." That statement has stayed with me over the years. Instead of partnering with other local, national, and international ministries that already have wide distribution and scale, we often try to reinvent the wheel. The results are more and more institutions that require funding from local churches. Those same local churches have little to no input into the direction or mission of the institutions they're required to support.

I joined the GMC because it won't do that. The Global Methodist Church encourages local churches to partner with ministries that already exist and that they choose because they fit the local church's process for making disciples. The result is less duplication of kingdom efforts and greater ability for local churches to align with organizations that represent who they feel God is leading them to be.

#### 10. The New Church is Global in Nature

The Global Methodist Church is presently active on four different continents: North America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Already the Transitional Leadership Council is a diverse group of global traditionalists including Americans, Russians, Africans, Filipinos, and Koreans. While it's impossible to know what the eventual makeup of the GMC will be, I will not be surprised if Anglos are eventually in the minority. Some of the most effective and orthodox leaders I know come from Africa, Korea, Russia, and the Philippines. I look forward to their greater influence, leadership, and teaching. This is yet another reason why I've joined the Global Methodist Church.

The future is bright! I know that I know that I know that our best days are ahead. The bottom line for me is that moving to the GMC will enable traditionalists to better share the saving Good News of Jesus Christ and make the realities of heaven the realities of earth. This is a future worth working towards.

*The Rev. Jay Therrell is president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and an elder in the Global Methodist Church.*