

1 **RECOMMENDATION 8 – Disaffiliation Policy**

2
3 South Georgia Conference UMC
4 Foundations for the Future Task Force

5
6 Proposed Disaffiliation Policy
7

8 1. **Introduction** – This Policy sets out a framework to be followed when a significant number of
9 members of a congregation express a desire to leave the South Georgia Annual Conference of the United
10 Methodist Church (the “Annual Conference”), pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 2553 of *The Book*
11 *of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (“The Discipline”)*. It is the intent of this policy that when a
12 congregation chooses to leave the Annual Conference, it be allowed to do so in as amicable a manner as
13 possible. The Annual Conference also recognizes a responsibility to members of a local church who want
14 to remain part of the Annual Conference, even if they are in the minority of their congregation. Under the
15 provisions of this policy, a local church shall have a limited right to exit the denomination to be complete
16 prior to December 31, 2023. The right expires on December 31, 2023 and the provisions of this policy
17 and paragraph 2553 shall not be used after that date.
18

19 2. **Approval by Annual Conference** – This policy shall be submitted to Annual Conference 2019,
20 and shall require approval by a majority vote of the annual conference.
21

22 3. **Time Limits** - The vote by a local church conference to disaffiliate under this policy shall be
23 made no later than April 1 of the year in which the local church intends to seek Annual Conference
24 consent to disaffiliate. If the decision is not made by April 1, the church may not request to disaffiliate
25 until the next year’s session of annual conference. The latest date by which a local church can elect to
26 disaffiliate under this policy is April 1, 2023.
27

28 4. **Decision Making Process** – If the church council of a local church determines that the church
29 wishes to consider disaffiliation, it shall notify its District Superintendent. The District Superintendent
30 shall call a church conference under ¶ 248 of *The Discipline* for the sole purpose of deciding whether to
31 disaffiliate. Such church conference shall be held within 120 days after the district superintendent calls for
32 the church conference. The call and conduct of the church conference shall be governed by ¶¶ 246-247.
33 In addition, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the
34 local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all
35 means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to
36 disaffiliate must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local
37 church present at the church conference.
38

39 5. **Terms and Conditions.** If the church conference votes to disaffiliate, the terms and conditions
40 for that disaffiliation shall be established by the Board of Trustees of the South Georgia Annual
41 Conference (the “Trustees”), with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual
42 conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries and the annual conference chancellor
43 or associate chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be
44 memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the

45 local church, acting on behalf of its members. That agreement must be consistent with the following
46 provisions, but may contain additional requirements, as determined by the Trustees –
47

48 a) Terms of Disaffiliation Agreement. The Disaffiliation Agreement shall be consistent with
49 the form to be developed by the General Council on Finance and Administration, and may
50 contain other terms as determined by the Trustees so long as they are not inconsistent with such
51 form.
52

53 b) Pension Liabilities – A disaffiliating local church shall contribute a withdrawal liability in
54 an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations, which
55 obligations shall be determined pursuant to the withdrawal liability formula to be adopted at 2019
56 Annual Conference in accordance with the Petition Number 90016 enacted at General
57 Conference 2019. It must also pay all pension and health care arrearages, if any.
58

59 c) Apportionments - The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12
60 months prior to the effective date of disaffiliation, as well as an additional equal amount
61 representing 12 months of future apportionments.
62

63 d) Salary and Benefits – The local church shall pay its appointed clergy’s compensation and
64 benefits through the date on which its disaffiliation is effective.
65

66 e) Property - A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal,
67 tangible and intangible, property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation.
68 All costs for transfer of title or other legal work, including any costs or fees incurred by the
69 Annual Conference in connection with the disaffiliation, shall be borne by the disaffiliating local
70 church.
71

72 f) Other Liabilities. A disaffiliating local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and
73 liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.
74

75 g) All payments hereunder shall be made prior to the effective date of departure.
76

77 h) A church that disaffiliates from the United Methodist Church shall not use “Methodist” in
78 its name, nor shall it use the Cross and Flame in its logo. The use of the name “Methodist” and
79 the use of the Cross and Flame implies that a church is part of a connectional denomination and
80 should not be used for a non-connectional, separate and distinct church organization.
81

82 i) Once the disaffiliating local church has paid the annual conference all funds due under
83 this policy and the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or
84 claims against the annual conference as a result of the disaffiliation, the Trustees shall release any
85 claims that the annual conference may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of *The Discipline*
86 commonly referred to as the trust clause.
87

88 6. **Approval by Annual Conference.** The Annual Conference shall vote whether to ratify any
89 disaffiliation agreement at the next session of the Annual Conference following execution of such
90 agreement. Ratification of such agreement shall require the approval by a simple majority of the
91 members of the annual conference present and voting. No disaffiliation shall be effective until ratified by
92 the Annual Conference.

93
94 7. **Re-establishment of local church as a local United Methodist Church**

95
96 a) If a local church that has disaffiliated determines that it wishes to re-enter the Annual
97 Conference, it shall notify the Presiding Bishop. The decision to become a member of the
98 Annual Conference can only be made with the consent of the Presiding Bishop and the
99 Cabinet and in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 259 of *The Discipline*. In
100 addition, the decision must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing
101 members of the local church present at a church conference called for this purpose.

102
103 b) If a local church is re-established as a local United Methodist Church, the Conference
104 Treasurer shall determine the amount of any funds paid for pension liabilities pursuant to
105 paragraph 5 hereof, plus any investment earnings and minus any investment losses, calculated
106 in accordance with the Annual Conference pension liability policy to be adopted at the 2019
107 Annual Conference and any subsequent revisions. The balance, less any funds paid to cover
108 pension obligations, shall be rebated to the local church within 6 months of the date in re-
109 enters the Annual Conference.

110
111 8. **General Conference action** – The Annual Conference recognizes that future action by General
112 Conference of the United Methodist Church may make it necessary or desirable to amend or revoke this
113 policy, and that this policy is subject to revision or revocation by a future Annual Conferences.

114
115 **Rationale:**

116 This policy creates a consistent process for local churches who desire to disaffiliate from The United
117 Methodist Church over disagreements related to human sexuality to receive their property while reducing
118 the impact on the Annual Conference by paying their portion of conference pension liabilities, and other
119 financial considerations. It is not intended to be an open-ended departure mechanism. The requirements
120 related to timing of notice and payment of an additional 12 months' apportionments allow the annual
121 conference to properly budget for departures. Funded ministries are not left unfunded by unplanned
122 departures. This policy is also consistent with new paragraph 2553 of *The Discipline*, enacted at the 2019
123 Special General Conference and with Judicial Council Decision 1379, upholding the constitutionality of
124 said paragraph.