

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PETITION 700.14 DISAFFILIATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES

1. Which local churches seek disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church and the Northern Illinois Conference and what is the disaffiliation costs for each?

The number of churches seeking disaffiliation is now 8, down from 10 in the original petition.

Prairie North District

Church name	City	Disaffiliation Costs	Loans	Church Vote
Calvary	Stockton	\$197,479.20	none	57-1
McConnell	McConnell	\$78,074.83*	none	28-4
Van Brocklin-Florence	Freeport	\$68,592.68	none	40-0
Willow	Stockton	\$66,923.78	none	18-0

*McConnell required to surrender ownership of parsonage to Pearl City: First UMC

Prairie South District

Church Name	City	Disaffiliation Costs	Loans	Church Vote
Fenton	Fenton	\$104,382.25	None	22-6
Plano	Plano	\$312,691.02	None	49-3

Prairie Central District

Church Name	City	Disaffiliation Costs	Loans	Church Vote
Faith Evangelical	Elmhurst	\$423,922.52	none	23-2-1
La Luz-El Mesias	Elgin	\$380,692.18	none	77-1

Lake North District: None Lake South District: None

2. What does disaffiliation mean in The United Methodist Church and The Northern Illinois Conference?

Congregations that disaffiliate will cease participation in the United Methodist connection. Unless an individual member transfers to another local UMC their membership in The United Methodist Church ends on the disaffiliation date. United Methodist clergy will not be appointed to serve the congregation. And the property and assets of the congregation will transfer to a newly organized local church not affiliated with the UMC.

Paragraph 2553 was added to The United Methodist Book of Discipline at the specially called General Conference in 2019 and it proscribes a process by which the annual conference can release the trust clause binding a specific local church to the connection. Judicial Council Decision 1422, which was issued February 9, 2022, confirmed that any church seeking to disaffiliate for reasons of conscience over matters of human sexuality may use ¶ 2553 to do so prior to December 31, 2023. The United Methodist Church has wrestled with matters related to human sexuality since 1972.

The Northern Illinois Conference lay and clergy leadership respects that the decision to stay or to leave the denomination should be one of conscience. Any church who chose to explore disaffiliation first contacted their district superintendent to learn more about the process established for Northern Illinois Conference churches. After a series of three discernment meetings with conference staff and hearing the conference trustees' presentation of the final terms of disaffiliation, congregation members met in church conference to address a motion to disaffiliate. An affirmative vote of two-thirds of those present was necessary for the local church to request disaffiliation and release of the trust clause. Annual conference approval of the request is necessary before the disaffiliation can be implemented. For churches that wish to remain in The United Methodist Church, no action is needed.

3. What is The United Methodist Church trust clause?

Since the time of John Wesley all pulpits and properties used by local churches are held in trust by The United Methodist Church. This connectional polity binds every congregation in our mutual mission of creating disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The trust clause gives the annual conference a role in starting, moving, and closing local churches.

The trust clause is specific wording in legal documents (deeds) and the Book of Discipline that declares that the property and assets of a local church or United Methodist entity are held "in trust" to benefit the entire denomination. It assures that the assets donated to the churches remains for the mission of The United Methodist Church. Courts agree that the trust clause applies to all United Methodist properties, even if it is not present in their legal documents. Holding property in trust for The United Methodist Church means the "holder" must use the property exclusively for the purposes and benefit of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Discipline sets forth detailed procedures a church must follow before taking most major actions affecting property and assets held in trust. Should the petition pass, the Northern Illinois Conference consents to release the trust clause for local churches who have followed the disaffiliation process and completed the requirements and stipulations of the disaffiliation agreement. This allows a new corporation of members the local church to assume title to the property, real and personal, tangible and intangible, subject to any third-party claims. [Learn more about the trust clause.](#)

4. What are the requirements for disaffiliation?

The provisions of paragraph 2553 require, at a minimum, a decision to disaffiliate by a two-thirds majority of the professing members present at a church conference; the payment in full of two years of that congregation's apportionment commitment as set by the conference; payment of debts owed to the conference; the church's payment of legal fees incurred by the process; and the payment in full of the congregation's pro-rata share of the conference's clergy pension liability. Northern Illinois Conference has these additional requirements (permitted by the legislation): that the disaffiliating church contribute to the [Repair the Harm Fund](#) to compensate Boy Scouts who suffered abuse while in troops sponsored by UMC churches, and a contribution to compensate for ways in which the conference adjusts to meet our mission in the absence of that local church.

5. How many churches in the Northern Illinois Conference are seeking disaffiliation?

At the time of writing the petition ten churches had voted to request disaffiliation from the Northern Illinois Conference. Since that time, Wheeling: First Korean UMC has withdrawn because they were unable to secure a new loan to refinance the loan extended by the annual conference through the Red Door program. Also, Naperville: Korean UMC is unable to continue on the disaffiliation petition because they did not produce a letter of commitment from a local lender to refinance the current mortgage, which is guaranteed by the Northern Illinois Conference. The conference is unwilling to take on the financial risks for a separated congregation's debt. This refinancing requirement was communicated early and frequently and these two churches attempted, but could not secure, the necessary financing to separate free from Northern Illinois Conference financial commitments.

On June 6, 2023, the Northern Illinois Annual Conference lay and clergy members will consider eight churches' requests to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553. The Northern Illinois Annual Conference currently comprises over 350 churches.

6. What will be the voting procedure at the Annual Conference for Legislation 700.14? What is the Disaffiliation Agreement named in the petition?

Legislation 700.14 will be presented by the Board of Trustees. The names of each church requesting to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553 will be read by Bishop Schwerin. The Annual Conference members will be given the opportunity to vote "yes" or "no" on each church. There will be no amendments to the Disaffiliation Agreement for those churches seeking to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553. Time for debate will follow. A simple majority of the body will prevail on the vote. This process was approved by Judicial Council Decision 1420 on February 9, 2022.

All eight churches named in the petition have signed a Disaffiliation Agreement. Northern Illinois Conference officers will also sign the Disaffiliation Agreement upon approval of the petition. This agreement specifies all the details of separation and sets out the terms in compliance with ¶ 2553. It includes: termination of the local church's participation in clergy benefits, property insurance, conference tax exemptions, and other connectional programs; a release of claims, indemnification, and a promise to not sue each other; an itemization of the costs of disaffiliation for the local church; specification of the properties, assets, and liabilities that transfer to the local church; termination of the local church's use of UMC intellectual property, though the church can continue to use UMC hymnals and worship books; release of The United Methodist Church trust interests in local church assets with consent of the annual conference; and other specific legal and practical matters.

7. What are the costs of disaffiliation to the Annual Conference? Will it impact my local church apportionments?

Disaffiliation will not impact your local church's apportionment. Apportionments are set by formula using only the statistics reports of your local church. Only your local church's financial experience will impact your apportionments.

Petition 700.14 includes details on the financial impact of disaffiliation for 10 churches. Here is an update on those results for the eight churches under consideration:

Membership	1,375	2% of conference
Average attendance	416	3% of conference
Balance of 2023 Apportionments	65,096	76% historic payment rate
Additional Full Year of Apportionments	82,812	1.1% of conference
Clergy Benefit Liability Contribution	969,136	
Balance due on Clergy Benefit Programs	5,705	
Past Due Property Insurance	28,913	
Balance Due on Property Insurance Program	5,096	
Contribution to BSA Settlement	8,000	
Return of Prior Grants to local church	35,950	
Contribution to Continuation of UMC mission	432,050	Plus 50% share of a parsonage
Total Obligation	1,632,758	

8. What is the process for clergy choosing to withdraw from The UMC?

The decision of clergy to withdraw from the UMC is separate from the decision of a church to disaffiliate. Following the procedure as outlined by ¶ 360.1 of the Discipline, clergy must submit a written request to withdraw their membership to the bishop and copy the Board of Ordained Ministry, their district superintendent, and the Office of Pensions and Health Benefits.

Retired clergy who wish to participate in any capacity in a disaffiliated church is expected to withdraw their conference membership as they are unable to honor the covenantal commitment to steward The United Methodist witness nor able to fulfill the Disciplinary requirement (¶ 357.5) of holding a charge conference membership in a United Methodist Church.

9. If a church is disaffiliating on June 6, 2023, should lay membership who want to remain in The United Methodist Church move their membership prior to that date?

The disaffiliating church is a UMC until the effective date of the disaffiliation agreement, which is June 30, 2023, for this group of churches. Lay people who wish to move their membership to a new church should do so before this date. Those persons wishing to remain United Methodist but are uncertain of their new church home can offer their names to the General Church Roll for one year as they discern next steps. To do this, contact Rev. Martin Lee in the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment. District superintendents will gladly help members find a new United Methodist Church home and welcome their contact.

Our expectation is for a smooth and healthy process of separation for those leaving. While we understand some may have very strong feelings about the disaffiliation process, we seek to do our part to maintain integrity and a mindset of peace. In this way, we honor the grief and pain of those whose churches are leaving while they desire to remain, just as we are honoring a process for a church to choose to leave.

10. What is the effective date of disaffiliation for the churches being voted at 2023 Annual Conference?

Disaffiliation is complete only if all obligations of the Disaffiliation Agreement are met by the effective date. For churches being voted on at the June 6, 2023, session of annual conference, the effective date is June 30, 2023. Until the effective date, the local church remains a United Methodist Church with their appointed pastor. The Annual Conference approval of the Disaffiliation Agreement is one step, but it is not the final step.