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Susquehanna Conference Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and Sandra L. Steiner Ball have ordered a Harrisburg-York PA area congregation to delay its vote on disaffiliation after concerns were raised about the fairness of the process and disinformation being used to argue for leaving the UMC.

"It is important for us to ensure that the information that you are using in your discernment is accurate so that your vote is valid," York District Superintendent the Rev. Catherine E. Boileau, wrote in a letter sent to members of the Fishing Creek-Salem congregation on Thursday, Feb. 2.

Concerns were raised with the bishops following an informational meeting that was held for members of the congregation in late January. In that and an earlier informational session, the church's lead pastor said he already decided to move to the breakaway Global Methodist Church.

Other information was presented that was inaccurate, according to persons who attended the meeting.

After the second informational session, a vote on disaffiliation was scheduled for Monday, Feb. 6. Rev. Boileau told members of the congregation that the vote that night was cancelled. Instead, at the same time on Monday, another informational session will be held, led by the conference's director of connectional ministries, the Rev. Dr. Kathleen Kind.

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"Rev. Dr. Kind will be clarifying the information which was inaccurate so that the congregation may continue in its discernment process and a new date for a church conference be set," Rev. Boileau wrote.

Kudos to the Susquehanna Conference bishops. There are numerous examples of plainly wrong and misleading information being used to argue for churches to disaffiliate. I hope they will look at other congregations and order remedies. I expect there will be many questions raised about fairness and disinformation when the full conference votes on individual congregation's disaffiliation at the annual conference in June.

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