

# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Baltimore-Washington Conference

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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To: [REDACTED]  
From: Rev. Sheridan Allmond  
Chair, BWC Board of Trustees  
Date: March 27, 2023  
SUBJECT: **TERMINATING THE PROCESSING OF DISAFFILIATION REQUESTS MADE BY LOCAL CHURCHES THAT ARE PARTIES TO THE PENDING LAWSUIT**

Grace and peace to you this day. On behalf of the Conference Board of Trustees ("Trustees"), I am writing to clarify the position of the Trustees regarding the Conference's ¶ 2553 disaffiliation process and your church's continued involvement in that process at a time when your church is simultaneously suing the Conference, the Trustees, and Bishop Easterling in the disaffiliation lawsuit now pending in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. I thank you for your review and awareness of this position and the direct impact it has on your church.

Absent a fundamental change in circumstance, the Trustees will take no further action regarding your church's ability to disaffiliate under ¶ 2553, which the denomination's Judicial Council has held is the only approved mechanism for a local church to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. The basis for the Trustees' decision is that your church, along with 37 other churches, has elected to sue the Conference, the Conference Trustees, and Bishop Easterling in a lawsuit, the focus of which is precisely to attack the validity of the ¶ 2553 process as set forth in the *Book of Discipline*, as applied by the Conference, and as interpreted by the denomination's Judicial Council.

The Conference will not resume consideration of your church's request to disaffiliate unless, at a minimum, your church voluntarily dismisses, with prejudice, all claims it has asserted in the pending lawsuit. To be effective, any such dismissal must be verified by presenting the Conference with a Stipulation of Dismissal that has been date-stamped by the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. In addition, the Stipulation of Dismissal must reflect on its face that your church has voluntarily dismissed, with prejudice, all of its claims against all of the defendants.

If your church wishes to pursue that course – i.e., to withdraw its claims in order to re-ignite the ¶ 2553 process – it must do so quickly if your church is to have any hope of disaffiliating before ¶ 2553 expires, as all church conferences must be conducted no later than April 30, 2023, and that needs to be preceded by completion of the necessary discernment tasks.

Filing such a stipulation, and doing so quickly, would also be the appropriate path forward if the congregation's leadership believes that their church's inclusion in the lawsuit was undertaken without proper authority or under false or mistaken pretenses.

I thank you for your review and awareness of your church's status while the lawsuit is pending.

Blessings,



Sheridan Allmond  
Chair, Conference Board of Trustees