

CLERGY BILL OF RIGHTS

In conversations initiated by the cabinet on a clergy person's relationship to the annual conference that impacts status and benefits, all clergy have certain rights. You have the right to:

1. Request an additional person of your choice in the conversation – to help you understand what is being said. *
2. Request the presence of legal representation – to help you discern the impact of the conversation on laws governing employment and benefits.*
3. Request permission to record the conversation for the benefit of accurate recollection of what is said.*
4. Request the specific clauses, statements, and paragraphs of the Discipline that are being enforced or enacted by the bishop and cabinet.
5. Request the precedent of these actions – where have these actions been used before and upheld by the Judicial Council.
6. Request, as retired clergy, full retirement benefits earned by you in the annual conference (or their economic value) if you should choose to withdraw your membership in the annual conference.
7. Request additional conversations to negotiate your exit from the annual conference if you so choose.



** If any of these permissions or requests are denied, note the date and restrictions, and have the bishop or representatives confirm them in writing. A simple email, stating what is and what is not permissible, should suffice.*

A PERTINENT QUESTION: Why is the bishop withholding disciplinary actions toward clergy acting on their conscience on one side of the human sexuality issue (in violation of the Book of Discipline) and pursuing disciplinary actions toward clergy acting on conscience on the other side of the same issue (where there is no violation)?

A HELPFUL RESOURCE: The Minnesota Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association can provide help through partnerships with people skilled in navigating the disciplinary processes of The UMC. Contact us at MinnesotaWCA@gmail.com for referral.

WHY IS A CLERGY BILL OF RIGHTS NECESSARY?



In May all UM clergy from Minnesota, retired (outside of the appointive authority of the bishop) and active, received an episcopal letter requiring approval and threatening disciplinary action if they offered even unpaid pastoral services to most churches outside the current UMC. The exceptions were the ones listed with an official ecumenical relationship in the Book of Discipline.

The Book of Discipline does not forbid but actually encourages ecumenical relationships and ministry from our clergy with churches that have no formal agreement with the UMC; however, we learned that the Council of Bishops decided together to restrict this ministry of Christ and discipline pastors. In Minnesota, Bishop Plambeck required active and retired UM clergy to no longer provide pastoral service

to disaffiliated churches if they wish to stay United Methodist. Several pastors were immediately affected. The bishop's office has now contacted retired clergy who provide pastoral service to disaffiliated congregations and forbade them from preaching and other acts of service if they wish to stay UMC. In the Dakotas, a retired UM pastor, providing volunteer help for the Global Methodist Church, was declared no longer United Methodist by letter and removed by Bishop Plambeck. It happened so quickly that the pastor asked for a month extension to utilize his Health Reimbursement Account. The request was denied. He lost \$6,000 in conference health benefits due him in 2023 and \$8,000 a year for the remainder of his and his spouse's lives. Do retirees not earn their benefits? How then can benefits be forfeited when they serve Jesus and violate no provisions of the Discipline?

It appears that we are witnessing a UM Inquisition by the bishops and their boards of ordained ministries, not to torture or kill, but to restrict and purify the UM church from both retired and active clergy who threaten their influence. A council of religious leaders similarly mistreated Jesus and his apostles to preserve their institution and influence. In acting this way, our bishops no longer focus on spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and creating partnerships within the family of God to that end. And, in acting to preserve what they have, they ignore the polity and doctrine they claim to uphold, and most importantly, ignore the Lord of The UMC in a way reminiscent of the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:20 – a church seemingly possessing everything to do ministry except...Jesus...who is standing on the outside of His church knocking on the door desiring to be let in.

For not only do these actions evince the viewpoint that the Council of Bishops lack the courage of their own convictions that God will bless the UMC and its liberal view on human sexuality with growth in membership and stewardship finances, they reveal why more than 6,100 congregations have already left the UMC – a number that would be far greater were it not for the fearful and vindictive actions of the bishops that effectively block their exit from the UMC. It is hard to square with Jesus's teaching to "love one another as I love you," let alone fathom the mindset of those who act simultaneously to force congregations to stay in a relationship they want to leave or conversely, expel or strip away promised benefits of those clergy who want to stay.

Please stand with the active and retired pastors who suffer loss from the punitive works of UM leadership. Pray for them, and pray for Bishop Plambeck, the UM bishops, and the boards of ordained ministry who are misguided and harmful in this conduct. Let the bishop's office and other UM people know your concern. Join us in drafting and supporting legislation that calls for a stop to this abuse of power and assures that retired pastors lose no benefits or the economic value of them when they act in conscience and faith in serving Christ, including switching denominations. Pray that God turns "what is intended for evil" to good!



**The Minnesota Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association
(www.mn-wca.org)**

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No church left behind. No believer unsupported. Christ proclaimed!