

The Baltimore Washington Conference of
The United Methodist Church, *et al.*,

Petitioners,

v.

The Methodist Church of Cape St. Claire,
et al.,

Respondents.

*
* **IN THE**
* **SUPREME COURT**
* **OF MARYLAND**
*
* September Term, 2024
* Petition Docket No. **225**
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PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioners The Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church (the “BWC”) and LaTrelle Easterling, in her capacity as Bishop of The Baltimore-Washington Conference (“Bishop Easterling”) (together, “Defendants” or “Appellants”), move the Court under Maryland Rule 8-301 for a writ of certiorari to the Appellate Court of Maryland.

MD. RULE 8-303(b)(1)(A)-(E)

In accordance with Maryland Rule 8-303(b)(1), Appellants state as follows:

(A) This action originates from the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County, Maryland, Case No. C-02-CV-23-000500.

(B) This appeal was dismissed by the Appellate Court of Maryland, Appellate Court Docket No. PetACM-REG-2336-2023.

(C) The case is no longer pending in the Appellate Court.

(D) The order of the circuit court – granting in part and denying in part Defendants’ motion to dismiss – did not adjudicate all claims in the action in their entirety. This is an appeal under the collateral order doctrine. The underlying case remains pending in the Circuit Court.

(E) The order from which Appellants appeal was served and effective in the MDEC system as of January 2, 2024, but was determined by the Circuit Court to have been available to the public as of December 29, 2023. The Appellate Court’s Mandate was e-filed on July 23, 2024.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. In an MDEC County, is an appeal timely if the notice is filed within 30 days of the “Effective Date of Filing” of the order as defined by Rule 20-202, notwithstanding the fact that the order was made publicly available to the public through the CaseSearch feature on the Judiciary website (but not served on the parties) more than 30 days after the notice was filed?

2. Is a Circuit Court required by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, as set forth in the Ecclesiastical Abstention Doctrine, to dismiss a civil complaint against an ecclesiastical defendant alleging solely matters of church government, faith and doctrine, insofar as it seeks to override the determinations of the denomination’s highest legislative and judicatory bodies as to matters central to church doctrine?