



United
Women
in Faith

Frequently Asked Questions on Disaffiliation

Disaffiliation and the United Methodist Church

The following are a few questions and answers regarding what is happening around disaffiliation in The United Methodist Church. You can also check out our article "[What Is Happening in The United Methodist Church](#)," and be sure to visit UMC.org and your United Methodist annual conference website for more information.

Has The United Methodist Church split?

No. Some local churches left the denomination, or disaffiliated. To date, [7,660](#) local congregations have disaffiliated since 2019. The United Methodist Church comprises [more than 40,000 United Methodist churches worldwide](#), with nearly 13 million members.

What is disaffiliation?

In 2019, after a [special session](#) of the United Methodist General Conference, a [new paragraph](#) was added to the denomination's *Book of Discipline* allowing local churches to leave The United Methodist Church, or disaffiliate, and keep their church building. Before 2019, leaving the denomination meant closing the church, with [church property given to the annual conference board of trustees](#). The provisions of the disaffiliation paragraph expired Dec. 31, 2023.

Who disaffiliated?

United Methodist News regularly updates the [number of churches that have disaffiliated per annual conference](#), and the United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration shares [monthly reports](#) on church closures by reason, including disaffiliation (see "Jurisdictional Conference Data and Reports). The Mississippi Conference had the highest number of churches disaffiliate, followed by Kentucky and Tennessee-Western Kentucky. Northwest Texas has seen the highest percentage of its churches leave, at more than 70 percent, with North Alabama and Texas the next highest at just over 50 percent. Per GCFA, just under 25 percent of total United Methodist churches in the United States had disaffiliated.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership [reports](#) that most churches leaving The United Methodist Church are majority white and led by male pastors.

Why did churches disaffiliate?

The Book of Discipline allowed local churches to disaffiliate “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.” However, conference boards of trustees were not required to verify a church’s reason for disaffiliating, so many churches left simply because they no longer aligned with the polity and practices of the denomination and/or feared changes would be made with which they would not align.

What is The United Methodist Church’s stance on homosexuality?

The worldwide church’s positions on homosexuality can be found in its Book of Discipline and is explained [on the denomination’s website](#).

How many churches have disaffiliated?

7,660 local congregations were approved to disaffiliate. The opportunity to disaffiliate ended Dec. 31, 2023.

Does my church have to vote on disaffiliation?

No.

If my church disaffiliated, can we keep our pastor?

Your pastor remains with your church only if your pastor surrenders United Methodist credentials and chooses to stay. If your church is considering joining a new denomination, members should familiarize themselves with that denomination’s practices. Pastors who remain United Methodist will be removed from a disaffiliated church and assigned to a United Methodist Church.

If my church disaffiliated, am I still United Methodist?

No.

Can I stay United Methodist if my church disaffiliated?

Yes, by transferring your membership to a different United Methodist Church. Some conferences have offered “[lighthouse](#)” or “[vine](#)” or “[safe haven](#)” or “[beacon](#)” churches/communities specifically for individuals seeking to remain United Methodist after a disaffiliation. Check out your conference website or reach out to your district superintendent for more information.

If my church disaffiliated, can I still serve in a leadership position in The United Methodist Church?

No.

What is the Global Methodist Church?

The Global Methodist Church is a new denomination formed by a conservative splinter group in The United Methodist Church. It launched in May 2022 and is not currently recognized as a denomination by The United Methodist Church. Leaders of the Global

Methodist Church are working to recruit local churches away from The United Methodist Church before the December 31, 2023, disaffiliation deadline. United Women in Faith is not affiliated with the Global Methodist Church.

Disaffiliation and United Women in Faith

Can I be a member of United Women in Faith if my church disaffiliated?

Absolutely. Any and all women can participate in United Women in Faith programs from the local to national level.

Can I be a leader of United Women in Faith if my church disaffiliated?

Yes, with a few exceptions: Conference presidents, district presidents, and members of our board of directors must be United Methodist. We are the official women's organization of The United Methodist Church and so have protected our representation in denominational decision-making spaces. We have many other official and unofficial leadership roles for any woman called to lead and advance the goals of United Women in Faith.

My disaffiliated church won't let United Women in Faith members meet in the church. What can I do?

Continuing to meet as a unit of United Women in Faith simply means you wish to make sure women, children, and youth are nurtured, supported, and empowered as whole people in Christ. If your church is not a safe place for women to gather, a neighboring group of United Women in Faith may invite you in, or another church nearby may have space to offer. Libraries and other public places often have free gathering spaces available to reserve. Coffee shops, restaurants, parks, homes, or virtual gathering platforms are also options.

A pastor or other leader at my church is spreading misinformation about United Women in Faith. What can I do?

This is a challenge our organization has faced since its founding. It can be frustrating and disheartening to hear United Women in Faith mischaracterized or slandered, but it can also be an opportunity for connection and conversation, especially if someone has reached out to you in good faith. You may not be able to change someone's opinion on what we do, but you can correct untruths.

Information about what we believe, do, and fund is readily available on our website. Don't hesitate to send folks to uwfaith.org to get correct information, especially uwfaith.org/what-we-do/what-we-fund and uwfaith.org/who-we-are/financials. You can also reach out to United Women in Faith's director of denominational relations, Tara Barnes, at tbarnes@uwfaith.org, if you have any questions.

What is the process for deactivating a unit?

Notify your district and/or conference leaders, offer each individual All Access membership, and send all member names and reason for deactivating to membership@uwfaith.org. Your local treasurer will send a giving report from the

previous four years to the district and conference treasurers. ***Any funds remaining in your unit's treasury must be sent to your district or conference treasurer, as those mission dollars were raised for United Women in Faith*** and must not be used for any other purpose. For more detailed instructions, contact membership@uwfaith.org.

Can my deactivated unit call itself the Woman's Society of Christian Service or another former name?

No. United Women in Faith is the successor organization to all previous women's groups of the denominations that became The United Methodist Church, including Woman's Society of Christian Service, Wesleyan Service Guild, and others listed in Paragraph 1905 in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (which itself is not a full list). Use of previous names by deactivated units would be unauthorized and misrepresentative.

If my United Methodist district or annual conference merges, does my district or conference United Women in Faith need to merge too?

Yes. We mirror the structure of The United Methodist Church intentionally. We are the denomination's official women's organization and so work to ensure our voices are heard in all decision-making spaces of the church.

Mergers and reorganization are not always easy, but they are also not new. The national office and fellow members who have gone through the process before can help. Like any change, a merger will have challenges but also opportunities for new, reinvigorated, and vital mission and nurturing.

With whom do I talk to stay connected?

Contact the United Women in Faith Office of Membership at membership@uwfaith.org. We'll help connect you to the people and programs you're interested in, from a local group to national campaigns and resources, and help make sure you can remain a part of the sisterhood even if your church disaffiliates.

I live far away from other United Women in Faith groups. Can I still participate?

You bet. Start by [signing up as an All Access member](#) and connect to our national programs like podcasts, Reading Program, webinars, advocacy campaigns, digital community, regional events, and more. Choose any or all membership paths to be notified about resources to inspire, influence, and impact your church and community. Our "[Get Involved](#)" page offers different ways to plug in, including our daily prayer guide and ways to give, act, connect. Be sure to sign up for e-mails there, and follow our social media for news and events.

We can also put you in touch with district and conference leaders to find out what virtual or in-person gatherings and programs you can join.

What is an All Access member?

All Access is a new membership option that begins at the national level and opens the door for women to choose their path to participation in United Women in Faith. It's also

a great option for women whose churches—United Methodist or other—do not have a United Women in Faith group. Being an All Access member means access to a members-only portal, spiritual growth resources, trainings, actions, community, and opportunities to use your talents and gifts to uplift women, children, and youth. It's a great option for new women looking to be a part of our movement and for women whose churches left The United Methodist Church and aren't sure yet where to connect with other members or groups. Check out [our video](#) to learn more.

How can I become an All Access member?

It's easy! Just sign up [online](#) via an influence, inspire, and/or impact path and we'll follow up with resources to help you be part of our movement. Email membership@uwfaith.org for more information.

How can my group become an All Access group?

First, join [online](#) to become an All Access member. Then determine the type of group that you would like to form: Will you be an inspire, influence, or impact-focused group? Will you meet online, in-person, or hybrid? Once you've made those decisions, fill out our [All Access registration form](#): either to print, scan, and e-mail the downloadable form to membership@uwfaith.org, or you can [fill it out online](#). If you need help or have questions, you can also call 332-240-6506.

Be sure as well to plan for a celebration! And download the [membership welcome kit](#) to learn more about opportunities to engage and act.

How can I connect with other All Access members?

Our [members-only portal](#) will not only connect you to exclusive resources but to one another via our digital community! You can meet other members at annual events like Leadership Development Days and Mission u and at our quadrennial Assembly. Many of our live events like Faith Talks and Voices From the Field allow for interaction, as do our social media spaces. Reach out to our membership office at membership@uwfaith.org or 332-240-6506.

Where am I going to belong if I sign up online? How will I be connected to the organization?

By signing up online you become a national member and plugged into our member portal, digital community, resources, actions, and events. From there we can also connect you to regional leaders if you'd like to be part of a group in person closer to home.

Can I be an All Access member with limited or no broadband access?

Sure! If you don't have access to reliable Internet, our membership office can help connect you with resources and/or with regional leaders to help you join gatherings and groups local to you. Call 332-240-6506.

What is a cluster group?

A cluster group is formed by women from more than one church (including churches that have left The United Methodist Church).

How can I join a cluster group?

Reach out to nearby churches and see if they have a United Women in Faith group, or consider starting your own!

Why should I be a member of United Women in Faith if I'm not United Methodist?

While the Christian religion is expressed in various ways, many Christians—and non-Christians—have common beliefs and goals. Study, support, and service are hallmarks of Christian small groups, which women find as part of a United Women in Faith circle. In addition, local groups are connected to larger regional groups as well as to the national organization for worship, events, gatherings, retreats, education programs, social justice advocacy, spiritual growth resources, Reading Program, and more.

Together we raise funds not only for member nurture through leadership development, spiritual growth, transformative education, and service and advocacy, we support regional missionaries, deaconesses and home missionaries, national mission institutions, and national and international grants, scholarships, and trainings, all with the goal of uplifting women, children, and communities down the street and around the world. We're a movement working to build beloved community based on Christ's teachings and example, called especially to uplift women, children, and youth.

Our practice of faith follows United Methodist theology, which, when done right, is inclusive, accountable, embracing, communal, grace-filled, friendly, and holistic. Learn more about United Methodism at UMC.org.