



Belin Memorial UMC

Denominational Education
Team Presentation

February 11, 2024



Paths Forward & Options

Belin Path Forward

Belin has 3 options at this point:

1. Do nothing with intent to remain a part of the UMC
2. Do nothing now and “wait and see” what happens in the future
 - 2024 General Conference
 - Unforeseen future event
3. Begin discernment process this Fall – this process may or may not lead to disaffiliation



Paths Forward & Options

Belin Path Forward

- ❑ Do nothing with intent to remain a part of the UMC
 - ❑ Actions necessary now: None

❑ Benefits:

- ❑ “Status Quo”
- ❑ Continue our ministry uninterrupted
- ❑ Remain connectional through programs and organizations like Salkehatchie, UMCOR, Walk to Emmaus, Upper Room, Lay Ministries, UM colleges/universities, The Advocate, and more
- ❑ Have a seat at the table in the continuous evolution of the UMC
- ❑ Retain our funds; no need to buy our way out
- ❑ May gain Members

❑ Risks

- ❑ “Status Quo”
- ❑ Internal disagreements around theological perspectives, cultural contexts and biblical interpretations could become distractions
- ❑ Face institutional instability as the UMC potentially restructures; leads to uncertain governance structures, pastoral appointments, and ability to remain connectional at scale
- ❑ Miss out on going independent or aligning with another or new denomination
- ❑ May Lose Members



Paths Forward & Options

Belin Path Forward

- Do nothing now, and “wait and see” what happens in the future
 - Actions necessary now: None
 - Benefits/Risks:
 - Benefits
 - More clarity after 2024 GC
 - Potentially better options/less cost for disaffiliation
 - Risks
 - Potentially worse options/more cost for disaffiliation
 - Lose Members



Paths Forward & Options

Belin Path Forward

- Begin discernment process and/or Vote for Disaffiliation
 - Actions necessary: Requires simple majority vote of Belin Church Council to begin discernment process
 - Benefits/Risks:

Benefits

- Allows Belin members to have their say (yea or nay)
- Opens the door to independence or alignment with another/new ministry
- Potentially achieve more autonomy and freedom in governance, clergy, worship practices, and decision making
- Get full rights to all church property after meeting the financial obligations required to disaffiliate
- No or fewer apportionments going forward (depends on affiliation)
- Avoid potentially less options and more cost for disaffiliation after GC 2024
- May gain members

Risks

- Lose connection to UMC programs and organizations
- Lose a seat at the table in shaping the UMC of the future
- Enter an uncertain transition period that could damage short- and long-term ministry opportunities
- Miss out on potentially better options and less cost for disaffiliation after GC 2024
- Costs to disaffiliate are significant; we lose funds that could be used in ministry
- Potentially better options/less cost for disaffiliation at a later date
- May Lose Members

Disaffiliation Process



Summary:

- Church Council must vote (by simple majority) to begin discernment process
- Church Council must request that the District Superintendent call a Church Conference
- Belin must complete an intentional, 30-day (minimum) process of discernment to consider whether the congregation can continue to function as a United Methodist Church
- Must meet certain financial obligations
- Congregation votes at the Church Conference; 2/3 majority vote of members ***present*** required to disaffiliate
- **Vote must be completed prior to March 1st of the year Belin would wish to disaffiliate.**

Discernment Process Checklist	
	1) If the church council of a local church determines that it is in the best interest of the church to allow the congregation to pursue separation, the council must ask the district superintendent to call a church conference.
	2) Before the church conference takes place, the local church must complete an intentional, 30-day process of discernment to consider whether the congregation can continue to function as a United Methodist church.
	3) Representatives of the congregation will be assigned the responsibility of ensuring that certain financial obligations – as calculated by conference trustees – are satisfied before the congregation can vote on whether to separate. These payments include:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tithe equal to 10 percent of the appraised value of all church property and liquid assets. • All unpaid apportionment giving for the prior year, as well as for the year of closure up to the date of the Annual Conference vote to close the church. • An additional 12 months of apportionment giving. • All unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy appointed to the church. • A withdrawal liability equal to the church's proportional share of any unfunded pension obligations.
	4) Other financial considerations and legal liabilities of the local church – such as the disposition of any debts, loans, leases, endowments, foundations and cemeteries – must be satisfied or transferred to a new entity.
	5) At the church conference meeting, support of two-thirds of professing church members present and voting is required to formally declare that the church can no longer continue to function as a United Methodist church. This vote must take place by March 1 each year to be considered by Annual Conference members during their regular session the following June. (There is no “sunset” provision with the newly established Congregational Discernment Process, but there is an annual deadline that must be met. A congregational vote must be taken at a Church Conference meeting by March 1 of each year to be considered by Annual Conference delegates during their regular session the following June. Source: Local Church Discernment Process-FAQ-12-19-2022.pdf (umcsc.org))
	6) Once all terms of separation are satisfied, the members of the Annual Conference must vote on a resolution to close the local church and transfer its assets to a new entity. A simple majority vote in favor of the resolution is the final step before the local church separates from The United Methodist Church, maintaining its property.

Voting at Church Conference | Key Points



Only Belin members can vote



You must be present at the Church Conference to vote; no absentee ballots accepted



The DS will tally the votes at the Church Conference and announce the results



If the vote is held and **does not pass**, then there is nothing more to do until/if something precipitates Belin revisiting possible disaffiliation at a future date



If the vote is held and **passes**, then it comes with certain costs, concerns, and benefits.

Disaffiliation | What are the costs?



An appraisal of Belin's property was conducted in November of 2023



A tithe equal to 10 percent of the appraised value of all church properties (land/buildings) and liquid assets (cash).



Payment of Apportionments and unfunded Pension obligations



The funds necessary to meet these costs must be placed into an escrow type account prior to the SC Annual Conference vote

Approximate Total Costs to Belin= \$1,714,577.00

Disaffiliation | What are the immediate concerns?

- ❑ We may or may not have to replace our Senior Pastor and/or Associate Pastors. It would be each Pastor's decision as to whether to remain with Belin or to remain with the UMC.
- ❑ Disaffiliated churches no longer have access to UMC resources or clergy – which may impact our decision to go independent or join another Methodist denomination



Disaffiliation | What are the potential benefits?

- ❑ Total ownership of church property (no “in trust” clause)
- ❑ No or less apportionments (depending on future affiliation)
 - ❑ Belin’s apportionment for 2024 is \$291,791.00 (9% of budget)
- ❑ Control over appointment of clergy (depending on future affiliation)
- ❑ Being part of a church and/or denomination that upholds traditional viewpoints as to matters of human sexuality.



Disaffiliation | Who's in Charge?

- ❑ If Belin disaffiliates who would oversee upcoming decisions as it relates to the staff, clergy, BCLC, the endowment, the cemetery, etc.?
 - ❑ The current leadership of the Church i.e. the church council and the Board of Trustees, would establish a new Belin Church non-profit entity to hold any properties held currently by Belin Memorial United Methodist Church.
 - ❑ The Staff and Clergy would have to decide, along with the current leadership of the church, on whether they wish to remain with the denomination or continue employment with Belin's new church non-profit entity.
- ❑ This isn't the first time Belin has gone through a denominational shift.
 - ❑ Belin was part of the Methodist Church up until April 23, 1968, when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church joined to create a new denomination The United Methodist Church



Disaffiliation | Options after Disaffiliation



1. Remain an independent church
 - Total control but we fend for ourselves
2. Join an independent “Methodist network”
 - We could join something like the Association of Independent Methodists
3. Join another Methodist centered denomination
 - Global Methodist Church
 - Free Methodist Church
 - Others: Wesleyan Church, Church of the Nazarene, Congregational Methodist Church

Disaffiliation | Comparison of Options

	UNITED METHODIST CHURCH	GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH	FREE METHODIST CHURCH	INDEPENDENT METHODIST/NETWORK
CHURCH DOCTRINE/THEOLOGY	Current book of discipline	Transitional book of doctrines & disciplines in effect until the conference of the global Methodist church occurs, at which time a book of discipline will be adopted	Free Methodist church has its own book of discipline based largely on UMC book of discipline	Based on same doctrine/theology currently followed; connectivity
CURRENT CHURCH STRUCTURE/GOVERNANCE	Bishops supervise annual conferences. Bishops appointed for life. <i>2016 book of discipline, sections 402-409</i>	Fewer bishops; no lifetime appointments. Presiding elders who pastor a local church and also serve as mentor/guide within conference. <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, sections 501-503, 506-507, 510-511</i>	Three bishops in US who are elected every 4 years. Superintendents with responsibility for churches <i>2019 book of discipline, sections 4110, 5120;</i> https://fmcusa.org/leaders/superintendents	Governed by existing church leadership
APPORTIONMENTS	Annual conference requests, but does not require, 10% of unrestricted receipts. Our amount is reported annually to the district superintendent. https://www.umc.org/en/content/how-are-local-church-apportionments-figured	Requires 6.5% of operating income (5% to conference; 1.5% to global church). <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 349</i>	Capped at \$180,000	None If in network, churches contribute to agreed-upon ministry objectives
CHURCH PROPERTY	Held in trust for the UMC <i>2016 book of discipline, section 2501</i>	Belongs to local church <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 902</i>	Belongs to local church during affiliation period. May continue to belong to local church when church officially joins FMC and receives approval from board of bishops <i>2019 book of discipline, sections 6400, 6830, 6840.</i>	Belongs to local church
PASTORAL PLACEMENT	Decided by bishop with input from pastor and congregation <i>2016 book of discipline, section 428</i>	Decided by bishop/presiding elder with input from congregation <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 510</i>	Decided by conference and local church	Local church

Having just started in May 2022, the Global Methodist Church is still in transition and working under a “Transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines (BODD).”

Regionalization

- ❑ A legislation that the Standing Committee has brought to the upcoming session of the General Conference takes several steps toward the goal of regionalization:
 - ❑ The result would be four regional conferences: Africa, Europe, Philippines, and the United States.
- ❑ It creates a regional conference for the United States, with powers parallel to that of the other regional conferences worldwide, and makes room for regional conferences outside the United States to create jurisdictions within their central conferences if they so wish.
- ❑ It provides greater clarity about the power these regional conferences have, to customize the denomination's Book of Discipline as adopted by the General Conference for the sake of mission and ministry in their own areas.



Regionalization

- ❑ The legislation submitted by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters would grant new, specific authorization to regional conferences to take full responsibility for setting the following standards as part of its own regional Book of Discipline.:
- ❑ Criteria for ordained and licensed ministry: Regional conferences would set the minimum qualifications and educational requirements to ordain, commission, and license clergy within their bounds. Annual conferences within each regional conference could include additional qualifications and educational requirements as well.
- ❑ Criteria for specialized lay ministries: Regional conferences would also set the minimum qualifications and educational requirements for specialized lay ministries within their bounds.
- ❑ Criteria for admission of and care for lay members: Regional conferences could set their own criteria to determine whether persons qualify for professing membership in The United Methodist Church within their bounds, as well as set expected standards of character and conduct for persons to be continued as professing members.



Regionalization

❑ Why is Regionalization important?

❑ Voting Numbers at 2019 General Conference:

- ❑ The Traditional Plan received 438 yes votes (53 percent) and 384 no votes (47 percent).
 - ❑ This means our current statements about homosexuality, same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQ persons was not fundamentally changed.
- ❑ However, 60% of the votes to impose the Traditional Plan were cast by international delegates.

❑ What does this mean?

- ❑ If the regionalization legislation proposed passes, the United States as a regional conference have a much easier path to changing the book of discipline as it relates to homosexuality in the church.





Belin's Options Prior to a Discernment Vote

- Straw Poll or Survey of Belin Membership
 - This could provide clarity as to where the membership stands as to the issue of disaffiliation
- Additional Educational Meetings
 - The 2024 General Conference meets April 23rd-May 3rd.
 - If there are changes to the Book of Discipline, Regionalization, and/or disaffiliation processes new education meetings may need to be held to update the congregation on any new information



QUESTIONS?



COMMENTS?



CONCERNS?