



## Illinois Great Rivers Conference (IGRC)

### FAQ: Disaffiliating Pastors

Information sessions regarding the process for a church that seeks to disaffiliate from the annual conference have been offered. As updates occur, new information will be shared via the conference website and conference supported media formats. This FAQ seeks to answer questions concerning pastors that may seek to disaffiliate from the IGRC.

#### FAQ's for Full Connection Elders and Deacons

##### [What is the \*Book of Discipline\* process that a disaffiliating pastor would follow?](#)

The process a pastor must follow is found in ¶360.1-2 of *The Book of Discipline-2016*. Those paragraphs state:

¶ 360. Withdrawal—1. *Withdrawal to Unite with Another Denomination*—When ordained members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination, their certification of conference membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.

2. *Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office*—Ordained members of an annual conference in good standing who desire to leave their ministerial office and withdraw from the conference may be allowed to do so by the annual conference at its session. The ordained minister's certifications of ordination and conference membership, and their written request to withdraw, shall be given to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference, and his or her membership may be transferred to a church which he or she designates, after consultation with the pastor, as the local church in which he or she will hold membership.

Persons seeking to serve in another denomination would choose ¶360.1. Those persons that seek to leave the ministry altogether, would choose ¶360.2.

##### [What do I have to submit if I withdraw to unite with another denomination?](#)

The Council of Bishops has stated that under ¶360.1 that persons must submit their certificate of conference membership and their certificate of ordination. If requested, the certificate of ordination can be returned with an inscription stating that the clergy person has withdrawn from the UMC.

## How can I signify my intent to withdraw?

Your intent to withdraw must be in writing. The annual conference has created a **Notification of Intent to Withdraw Form** that must be completed by all persons seeking to withdraw. This will satisfy the BOD requirement that a “written request to withdraw” will be given to the AC secretary.

## What is a Certificate of Conference Membership?

Not all ordained clergy hold a membership certificate. That practice began about 2005. For those persons ordained prior to that date or for those that cannot find their certificate, please complete the **Substitute Membership Certificate Form**. This form would need to be printed, notarized and then submitted if there is no certificate.

## What is a Certificate of Ordination?

It is important to make a distinction between conference membership and ordination. Conference membership is an action of the clergy session wherein a person is granted membership in the annual conference. Ordination is an action of the church whereby the Bishop, after the person is granted conference membership, ordains the person on behalf of the church. These are two distinct actions. All those that are ordained are given a certificate of ordination.

By withdrawing to unite with another denomination, a person is severing their relationship with the annual conference, but the person is not relinquishing their ordination. The person will remain ordained, but will no longer be an ordained United Methodist minister, since the relationship with The United Methodist annual conference has been severed.

## What is the relationship between the certification of conference membership and the certification of ordination?

The certification of conference membership (voted on during Clergy Session and documented in Part II of the Business of the Annual Conference during Clergy Session, whether or not a physical certificate is provided) and certification of ordination (ordained by the Bishop in a sacred ritual, with a physical certificate provided) are distinct, yet related documentation of the completion of the overall ordination process.

When ordained members (active or retired) in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination pursuant to ¶1360.1 (Book of Discipline), that withdrawal from membership also constitutes a withdrawal altogether from the ministry of The United Methodist Church.

“There is no disciplinary provision authorizing an ordained United Methodist minister to hold membership simultaneously in another denomination. Upon joining another denomination, membership in The United Methodist Church is terminated.” (Judicial Council Decision 696)

## What will be inscribed on my Certificate of Ordination if I withdraw?

The following will be stamped upon the face of your Certificate of Ordination:

“The **Illinois Great Rivers Conference of The United Methodist Church** recognizes that (insert name of clergy) has withdrawn from conference membership and altogether from the ministry of The United Methodist Church.”

### What if I cannot find my Certificate of Ordination?

In the event that you cannot find your Certificate of Ordination, please complete and submit the **Substitute Ordination Certificate Form**. This form would need to be printed, notarized and then submitted if there is no certificate.

### What if I do not want to allow the annual conference secretary to inscribe my Certificate of Ordination?

A letter will be written and placed in your file signifying your action. In addition, **IGRC** will not signify such a person as having left in good standing, since they were unwilling to comply with the procedures as determined by the annual conference.

## FAQ's: Associate Members

### How can I signify my intent to withdraw?

Your intent to withdraw must be in writing. The annual conference has created the **Intent to Discontinue Form** that must be completed by all Associate Members and Local Pastors seeking to withdraw.

### What must I relinquish if I unite with another denomination?

As an associate member, you have been issued a membership certificate which must be submitted. We also request that you submit the license you held prior to being received as an associate member. You would be considered a lay person in The United Methodist understanding and you would be transferring as a lay person to the denomination that you have chosen. Upon request, IGRC will supply a statement of good standing to the other denomination. A copy of your service record can be found in the most recent edition of the IGRC Journal. If you are unable to find the certificate, please complete the **Substitute Conference Membership Certificate Form**. This form would need to be printed, notarized and then submitted if there is no certificate.

## FAQ's: Local Pastors

### How can I signify my intent to withdraw?

Your intent to withdraw must be in writing. The annual conference has created the **Intent to Discontinue Form** that must be completed by Local Pastors and Associate Members who are seeking to withdraw.

### What paragraph of the Book of Discipline governs a Local Pastor's withdrawal to serve in another denomination?

While no paragraph specifically covers withdrawal to unite with another denomination, ¶320.1 states:

¶ 320. *Exiting, Reinstatement, and Retirement of Local Pastors Who Are Not Provisional Members*—1. Discontinuance of Local Pastor—Whenever a local pastor retires or is no longer approved for appointment by the annual conference as required in ¶ 318, **whenever any local pastor severs relationship with The United Methodist Church**, (emphasis added) whenever the appointment of a local pastor is discontinued by the bishop, or whenever the district committee on ordained ministry does not recommend continuation of license, **license and credentials shall be relinquished to the district superintendent for deposit with the secretary of the conference**. (emphasis added) After consultation with the pastor, the former local pastor shall designate the local church in which membership shall be held. The Board of Ordained Ministry shall file with the resident bishop a permanent record of the circumstances relating to the discontinuance of local pastor status as required in ¶ 635.3d. You would be considered a lay person in The United Methodist understanding and you would be transferring as a lay person to the denomination that you have chosen.

### What happens if I want to join with another denomination?

When you become a local pastor, you become a member of the annual conference and you cease to have membership within a local church. If you are appointed, you continue to hold membership within the annual conference. If you are no longer appointed, then your membership reverts to a local church, and you cease to be a clergy person. At this point you are classified as a lay person.

Therefore, if you desire to join another denomination, two things happen. First, you must submit your license to preach to your district superintendent. Secondly, your membership in the annual conference terminates and you return to lay status. You join the other denomination with a lay status, not a clergy status. Your clergy status is tied to your license to preach, which you have relinquished.

## FAQ's: Seminarians

### What happens if I decide I do not want to become a United Methodist minister?

As a seminarian you are either fully committed to attending school and do not have a student appointment or you are attending school and have a student appointment.

For those attending without a student appointment, your connection to the annual conference is via your certified candidacy. You are still a lay person who has been examined and is still under the care of a District Committee on Ministry. If you choose to unite with another denomination, your certified candidacy would be severed and you will lose your membership in The United Methodist Church.

If you are serving a student appointment, you would be doing so as a Local Pastor and have been issued a license to preach. You would relinquish that license and return to lay status. You would transfer your membership as a lay person.

In either case, you would no longer be eligible for Ministerial Education Fund grants for your seminary education.

## FAQ's: Provisional Elders or Deacons

What portion of The Book of Discipline would govern a Provisional Member that seeks to unite with another denomination?

¶1327.6 states:

6. *Discontinuance from Provisional Membership*—Provisional members may request discontinuance of this relationship or may be discontinued by the clergy session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. ***When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their action shall be considered a request for discontinuance of their relationship and their credentials shall be surrendered to a district superintendent.*** (Emphasis added)

What is the process for moving to another denomination?

You would need to complete the **Intent to Withdraw Form**. As a provisional member you have: a provisional membership in the annual conference and you have a license to minister. If you united with another denomination, you would lose your provisional membership with the annual conference and you would relinquish your license to do ministry to your district superintendent.

## FAQ's: Retired Ministers

How can I signify my intent to withdraw?

Your intent to withdraw must be in writing. The annual conference has created the **Intent to Withdraw Form** (for elders and deacons) and the **Intent to Discontinue Form** (for retired local pastors and associate members) that must be completed by all persons seeking to withdraw.

Since I am retired, does that mean I can work wherever I want to...even in a church in another denomination?

Retired elders, deacons and associate members may not serve non-United Methodist churches unless the context is approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Bishop and appointive cabinet as an appointment to an extension ministry setting governed by ¶1343 & ¶1344 of the Book of Discipline.

Serving in a non-United Methodist church without approval is deemed as withdrawal from the United Methodist annual conference membership and requires that credentials (conference membership certificate and certificate of ordination) be relinquished to the annual conference secretary.

Retirement does not change these requirements. A retired UMC Elder or Deacon is still under the authority of the Office of Bishop, Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy session of the Conference. The Retired Elder or Deacon still has all the powers and responsibilities of their respective ordained offices. Retired Elders and Deacons can be appointed to serve a church. If not under appointment, retired Elders and Deacons must affiliate with a local United Methodist church charge conference and therein annually report all ministry activity.

### [Will retired clergy still be able to receive their pension if they leave The United Methodist Church?](#)

Yes, an already retired clergyperson who relinquishes credentials (voluntarily or involuntarily) after retirement or terminates their conference relationship does not lose earned pension benefits. Earned pension benefits are vested under the terms of the retirement plans and cannot be taken away. However, the clergyperson may forgo certain future pension benefit increases, such as past service rate (PSR) increases under the Pre-1982 Plan. Additionally, the retired clergyperson might have other benefits in retirement that could be affected by termination. Clergy considering withdrawal are encouraged to contact the Preachers' Aid and Benefit Society and Wespath prior to finalizing your decision.

## FAQ's: Miscellaneous

### [Will clergy credentials be transferable to another denomination? What is the process?](#)

The United Methodist Church does not transfer United Methodist credentials to other denominations. United Methodist clergy who chooses to leave the denomination do so by notifying their District Superintendent and working with the Board of Ordained Ministry to follow the steps outlined in Book of Discipline ¶1360.1 and ¶1360.2. Another denomination may recognize the ordination that occurred in The United Methodist Church and records of that action would be provided by the UMC if requested. The receiving denomination could have additional ordination or licensing requirements

### [Can a church or pastor be members of both The United Methodist Church and another denomination, such as the new Global Methodist Church?](#)

No. There is no provision in the Book of Discipline or citation from the Judicial Council for a United Methodist clergy to also be in another denomination. A clergy cannot hold credentials in The United Methodist Church and another denomination. Judicial Council Decision 696 asserts: "There is no disciplinary provision authorizing an ordained United Methodist minister to hold membership simultaneously in another denomination. Upon joining another denomination, membership in The United Methodist Church is terminated."

A noteworthy consideration... Active clergypersons whose conference relationship is terminated for any reason are no longer eligible to continue participating in the Conference plan sponsored benefits through Wespath. Active clergy should become well informed with their potential benefit change with Wespath if considering surrendering credential through the Wespath disaffiliation webpage.

Retired clergy with a vested pension through Wespath will not experience a change regardless of Conference membership status. Retired clergy vested in the Medicare Supplement Plan sponsored through the Conference will not experience a change at this time regardless of Conference membership status.

### Can a pastor join the new Global Methodist Church and serve in The United Methodist Church (particularly while waiting for their current congregation to join the Global Methodist Church)?

Alignment with another denomination terminates membership and clergy credentials in The United Methodist Church. See Judicial Council Decision 696.

### Can a clergy person join another denomination and later return to The United Methodist Church?

Yes, the Book of Discipline currently contains processes for reinstatement of orders or licenses for ministry. These processes are not quick nor automatic, but they do exist and have been used previously.

### How will it affect my relationship to the annual conference if my church votes to disaffiliate, but I do not want to disaffiliate?

Bishop Beard and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference Appointive Cabinet will work with pastors who choose to remain United Methodist to secure a new appointment within the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. In addition, as part of the church disaffiliation agreement, the church agrees to put enough money into escrow to cover their appointed pastor's compensation package through the end of the current appointment year if the pastor chooses to remain within The United Methodist Church.

### What if I choose to not join another denomination but to become an independent pastor?

You would still be subject to the provisions of *The Book of Discipline-2016* as outlined in this document in the section that represents your current status.

### Does ¶360.1 (2016 BOD) address the recognition of the denomination the clergy is uniting with?

No, this disciplinary provision does not speak to The United Methodist Church recognizing the denomination to which the clergy is withdrawing to unite with.

### Does ¶360.1 (2016 BOD) apply to clergy withdrawing to unite with ANY denomination?

Yes, this provision applies to any denomination.

### If I join with another denomination or leave the ministry, can I get a copy of my clergy files?

No. Clergy files are the property of the annual conference. You have the right to review them, but you do not have the right for a copy of them to be created for you. When a clergy person leaves the ministry in good standing, a letter of good standing will be provided upon request.

## At A Glance

### Items That Are Relinquished If You Withdraw to Another Denomination

	<b>Ordination Certificate</b>	<b>Conference Membership Certificate</b>	<b>License to Perform Ministry</b>	<b>Local Church Membership</b>
<b>Full Connection Elder</b>	Yes-for Inscription or substitute form	Yes	N/A	N/A
<b>Full Connection Deacon</b>	Yes-for Inscription or substitute form	Yes	N/A	N/A
<b>Provisional Elder</b>	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A
<b>Provisional Deacon</b>	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A
<b>Associate Member</b>	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A
<b>Local Pastor</b>	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A
<b>Seminarian</b>	N/A	N/A	Maybe-If student pastor	Yes-unless a student pastor
<b>Full Connection Retired</b>	Yes-for Inscription or substitute form.	Yes	N/A	N/A
<b>Associate Member Retired</b>	N/A	Yes	Yes	n/a
<b>Retired-Local Pastor</b>	N/A	N/A	Yes, if still serving	Yes. Would no longer be UM and could not hold membership in a local church.