

First UMC of Spring Hill dba SpringLife Church

Key Information regarding Disaffiliation

Why is First UMC (SpringLife) pursuing disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church (UMC)?

- There are irreconcilable theological differences in the UMC. We see the denomination becoming increasingly accepting of clergy, including bishops, who denigrate the authority of Scripture and deny the Divinity and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, along with other key tenets of the faith. These theological disagreements have led to decline and dysfunction in the UMC and are a distraction to our mission and vision.
- The ongoing conflict over foundational principles and theological divisions within the UMC have intensified over the last few years. The presenting issue has been about human sexuality (a shared understanding of Biblical definition of marriage and a pastoral code of ethics around ordination of self-avowed practicing LGBTQIA+ persons), but the real and much bigger issue involves our doctrine and theology as Wesleyan Methodists, and, particularly, the authority of Scripture.
- While the Book of Discipline (BOD) has not changed to date, there are bishops and clergy not abiding by its rules. Due to the structure of the UMC, neither local churches nor regional jurisdictions have the authority to act against infractions of the BOD that take place in another jurisdiction. There is ongoing and increasing infidelity to covenantal beliefs and doctrine. We no longer have a system with mutual accountability. The denomination has become ungovernable.
- This divisiveness has existed for over 50 years and the General Conference of the UMC has not been able to resolve this conflict. The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, which was supposed to be voted on in 2020, has now been postponed again until 2024. In addition, one-third of the bishops who originally supported this protocol have now withdrawn their support, making ratification unlikely.

Why Now?

- The opportunity for disaffiliating from the UMC will expire Dec. 31, 2023. It is unknown if the option will be available after that date or what the terms of such an option would be available.

What has SpringLife done so far?

- 2016, after General Conference, "A Way Forward" team was created to read, pray, and prepare for the Special Called General Conference of 2019.
- 2017, our District Superintendent attended a Church Chat to share about the work of the Global Way Forward Committee as it prepared the 2019 conference.
- 2020/21, held a series of Church Chats addressing the new "Protocol of Separation" to be addressed at the postponed General Conference of 2020. These included visits from the Bishops' Assistant, Rev. Alex Shanks, and representatives from the WCA (Wesleyan Covenant Association).
- Events and actions which occurred at the 2022 FL Annual Conference initiated 106 UMC churches in Florida to pursue litigation methods against the conference with the goal of reaching an agreement like the Protocol. SpringLife Church signed up to be part of the legal action.

- After an adjustment with the litigation process, SpringLife Church withdrew from the litigation and the Administrative Team unanimously voted on December 13, 2022 to request the District Superintendent to hold a church conference in order to vote on disaffiliation from the UMC under Paragraph 2553 of the UMC Book of Discipline.
- In the next 5 days (1/25), a letter notifying the congregation of the date of the vote will be mailed to each official member of the congregation.

What's Next?

- The vote on disaffiliation will be held on February 12, 2023, immediately following our 10:30 am worship service.
- The decision to disaffiliate must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of professing full members of the local church who are present at the church conference. No absentee ballots accepted. Each member receives one ballot.
- If the vote to disaffiliate passes, the request to disaffiliate must be approved at a Special Called Session of the Florida Annual Conference on either April 22, 2023 or August 2, 2023. Due to required procedures and timelines, the early date is hopeful and the second date is more likely.
- Once approved by the FL Annual Conference, payments and remaining documents must be completed in full within approximately 30 days.
- We would then begin the process to affiliate with the GMC (Global Methodist Church). More info about this new branch of old Methodism can be found online at globalmethodist.org.

How much will it cost?

- Payment of any unpaid apportionments for the current year plus PLUS full twelve months of future apportionments (we will pay all current year apportionments as scheduled).
- Payment of the local church's share of the total pension liability of the Annual Conference. This amount is based on market rates and will not be confirmed until prior to scheduled Annual Conference to affirm our withdrawal.
- We do NOT have to purchase our property. The deed will be transferred from the Conference to our congregation once all requirements are met. Per Conference policy, "a disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible, property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work, including any costs or fees incurred by the Annual Conference in connection with the disaffiliation, shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church."

Pension Liability (Valuation 11/1/22)	\$129,162.00 this number won't be confirmed until April 2023
Current Year Apportionments (minus ytd payments)	\$0.00
Additional year of apportionments	\$68,239.00
<u>Legal Fees, signage changes etc.</u>	<u>\$10,000.00</u>
Maximum est costs	\$207,401.00

How will we pay for this?

- We have had early positive conversation with the current lender of our existing mortgage. In December, our estimates were that it would cost around \$400,000 to disaffiliate. We recently received the updated figures shown above which would adjust some of the below calculations. Our current balance is \$644,054.20. Our current monthly payment is \$9,057 (~7yrs left).
- Option 1 - We could add the 2 together under our current terms, pay the same monthly payment, and extend to about 15 years.
- Option 2 - We could repackage the 2 together for ~\$1M loan for 20 years and decrease the payment to ~\$6K.
- Option 3 - We can check with another lender who is making funds available for this cause.

How will the ballot be worded? (*awaiting final*)

Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
Polk County, North Central District
February 2023

Shall First UMC of Spring Hill disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church for reasons of conscience over disagreements related to human sexuality, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues, and following disaffiliation, shall First UMC of Spring Hill be known as SpringLife Church and all real and personal property of First UMC of Spring Hill be titled to SpringLife Church?

_____ YES

_____ NO

Note: This ballot does include the issue of the theological division. The Conference established the wording for this ballot and while congregations have asked for the language to include the larger "theological divide," that language is not included.

Other Key information

- There is a requirement to find an insurance provider that offers 3 years of "tail" insurance. This is a retroactive insurance to cover any abuse-type claims that could arise from the 3 years prior to disaffiliation. There are limited providers and we are actively getting quotes. Initial indications are that it would not cost much more than we pay currently and perhaps even less.
- Once disaffiliated, all cross and flame symbols must be removed from the property, except for the hymnals.

How will the disaffiliation affect our ministries?

- The day-to-day operations of our church will remain the same. Withdrawal will not affect our ministry operations or current programming.

Will the disaffiliation affect the Pastor, Staff, and Leadership?

- Withdraw will not result in personnel changes. Our pastor, the entire staff, and the leadership team are all united and ready to move into this new endeavor. It should free up a lot of emotional toil the leadership has been navigating over the last few years and allow a greater focus of reaching our community with the Good News of Jesus Christ!

During this time, what can I, as a congregant, do?

- 1) Pray, first and foremost.
- 2) Remain active in serving, worshiping, discipleship, and giving.
- 3) Share in the experience of what God is doing and look forward to what He will do in the future.
- 4) If you have questions, please check the Church Chats page of the Central Hub on our website, *springlife.church* for videos, teachings, and more.
- 5) If you're a full member, show up to help us affirm this vote as we move forward together!