



Pastoral Letter and Resources for Navigating UMC Disaffiliation

Dear Friends,

This document is my best effort as your pastor to help you navigate through the process of understanding why it is that our denomination, The United Methodist Church is experiencing challenges and why the leadership team of Durand First UMC has decided that the trajectory of disaffiliation is the best course of action. The following documents will hopefully guide your prayers and discernment as we seek to make much of Jesus and reach the world with the good news. Your participation in completing the denominational survey has helped to shape this document.

Please know that as your pastor, I understand the delicate nature of our conversation and I encourage you to remember that our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Our relationships with one another and those outside our church matter, and as we move forward I pray that we will keep all of this front and center. I am dedicated to walking with you through this process of discernment, and if approved by vote on **Saturday September 17th at 10am**, walk with you through transition to a new expression of Methodism. It is my prayer that you will join us for this important vote (*remember that voting is restricted to professing members of Durand First UMC*).

Finally, my door is always open. Over a cup of coffee or over zoom, I am open to meeting with anyone who would like to engage in conversation. I am praying for you, and I ask that you pray for me, our church, and the United Methodist Church.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Aaron



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Decision Points | Affiliation with the United Methodist Church

If Durand First UMC Decides to Stay Within the United Methodist Church:

- No immediate action will be required
- It is likely that the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church will allow each local church to identify as **Traditional-Centrist-Progressive** when it comes to matters of human sexuality
- This will allow you, as a church, to set guidelines on how you want to move forward in terms of same-sex unions and pastoral appointments of self-avowed gay/lesbian clergy.

If Durand First UMC Decides to Disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church:

- A request for special called church conference will be made by the Leadership Team and Pastor. The District Superintendent will preside over this meeting.
- A vote for disaffiliation will require a 2/3 vote of the body present at the church conference. This is an in-person vote. No absentee ballots and only professing members have voice and vote.
- A vote in favor of disaffiliation will result in fees to be paid to the Michigan Conference of the UMC in the amount of approximately \$150,000.
 - The fee breakdown is currently understood as follows:

Unfunded Pension Obligation	\$100,300.00
Equity Component* (2x Ministry Shares)	\$24,844.00
2022 Conference Ministry Shares	\$6,411.00
2023/2024 Conference Ministry Shares*	\$18,633.00
2022 District Ministry Shares	tbd
2023/2024 District Ministry Shares*	tbd
Unpaid Benefit Billings & Health Insurance	\$0.00
2022 / 2023 Benefit Billings & Health Insurance*	tbd
Total Cost of Disaffiliation	\$150,188.00

- The fees for disaffiliation must be paid *prior* to the actual date of disaffiliation.

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Pastoral Thoughts and Reflection:

- If DFUMC remains in the United Methodist Church (Post-Separation UMC, no vote for disaffiliation), it seems likely that a possibility exists for a clergy appointment to the church that may or may not reflect the congregation's values with regard to human sexuality and theological standards.
- While leaders and official voices within the United Methodist Church claim that the *Book of Discipline* will not change with regard to theological commitments, it is apparent that many clergy, episcopal leaders (district superintendents and bishops), and other congregational leaders will share theological positions and doctrines that differ from the official stated doctrines of the *Discipline*, and will continue to do so *without accountability*. Statements that suggest a move in this direction have been made in Annual Conference sessions over the last several years by conference leaders, again without accountability.

For Further Understanding

Most churches that are looking to leave the denomination fall into one of three categories:

1. They are "traditional" churches that want to join the new Global Methodist Church.
 - **Based on our congregational survey, Durand First UMC would be most appropriately labeled as "traditional" and over 80% of the surveyed respondents indicated that they would align with the Global Methodist Church. Durand would therefore more than likely fit this category.**
2. They are "traditional" churches that just want to leave the denomination and become independent, non-denominational churches.
3. They are "progressive" congregations that want to leave the denomination and become independent, non-denominational churches.