



ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA TRUSTEE ELIGIBILITY Q&A

A local church is allowed to exercise the limited right established in ¶2553 of *The Book of Discipline* to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church only for reasons of conscience under the conditions stated in ¶2553.1 which reads: “Basis – Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination 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.”

The following is a partial list of questions and answers to help clarify eligibility, especially around the actions or inactions of The Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference related to these issues. Declaring eligibility in ways that violate *The Book of Discipline* is out of order.

Q. Has the eligibility requirement changed in the updated Alabama West Florida Trustee policy?

A. No, the eligibility requirement has not changed. It is defined by ¶2553 of *The Book of Discipline*. The updated policy provides more accountability to ensure that the Annual Conference and our local churches are following *The Book of Discipline*.

Q. Can churches disaffiliate over the actions or inactions of General Conference not listed in ¶2553?

A. No, local churches are not eligible for disaffiliation according to ¶2553 based on the action or inaction of the General Conference other than the 2019 amendments (¶304.3, ¶304.5, ¶415.6, and ¶2702.1(b)).

Q. Can churches disaffiliate over the actions or inactions of a Jurisdictional Conference?

A. No, local churches are not eligible for disaffiliation according to ¶2553 based on the action or inaction of a Jurisdictional Conference. The resolutions passed by the Jurisdiction are not binding and do not impact The AWF Conference or any conference in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. The AWF Conference has never had an abeyance or moratorium on administrative or judicial processes related to self-avowed practicing homosexuals or same-sex weddings.

Q. Can churches disaffiliate over the actions or inactions of bishops?

A. No, churches are not eligible for disaffiliation according to ¶2553 based on the action or inaction of bishops. Because of the separation of powers between bishops and conferences, bishops are not members of the conference and do not speak for the conference. They are General Superintendents of The United Methodist Church.

Q. Can churches disaffiliate over the action or inaction of other Annual Conferences?

A. No, local churches are not eligible for disaffiliation according to ¶2553 based on the action or inaction of other Annual Conferences to which they do not belong, even though we are connected in many ways like insurance, staff, or common mission. No Annual Conference has supervision over another Annual Conference or its clergy.

Q. Can churches disaffiliate because of apportionments?

A. No, local churches are not eligible for disaffiliation according to ¶2553 based on paying apportionments to General Church Funds. Apportionments are paid by the decision of the local church. *The Book of Discipline* states that the paying of apportionments is the “first benevolence responsibility of the church” (¶247.14 and ¶812).

Q. Can actions or inactions of the Annual Conference prior to 2019 “related to these matters” be used for eligibility?

A. No, eligibility is based on changes made in 2019 to *The Book of Discipline* or the actions or inactions of The AWF Annual Conference after the legislation was passed in 2019.

Q: Can potential changes to *The Book of Discipline* at a future General Conference be used for eligibility?

A. No, eligibility is based on changes made in 2019 to *The Book of Discipline*. We do not know what actions will be taken by a future General Conference.

Q. Do disagreements with changes in doctrine around things like the divinity of Christ or primacy scripture in the denomination provide eligibility for a local church?

A. No, The United Methodist Church has not changed its doctrinal standards or statement of faith. The denomination holds in The Articles of Religion that scripture is primary in our understanding of the Triune God and “contains all things necessary for salvation.”