

Local Church Discernment Process

1-The church council votes to pursue separation, then sends a written request to the district superintendent to schedule a church conference. Members of the church council view the Agreement to Separate.

2-The local church prayerfully enters a 30-day process of discernment led by the pastor(s) and/or district superintendent, or their designee.

3-Representatives of the congregation will be assigned the responsibility of ensuring that certain financial obligations are satisfied before the congregation can vote on whether to separate :

-----10% of the appraised value of all church property (appraised by a local commercial appraiser, not the insurance appraisal) and 10% of liquid assets.

-----Unpaid apportionment giving for the prior year and up to the date of annual conference of the year of closure, plus an additional 12 months of apportionment giving.

-----Unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy appointed to the church.

-----A proportional share of any unfunded pension obligations.

4-Other financial considerations and legal liabilities of the local church must be satisfied or transferred to a new entity.

5-During the time of discernment, the congregation should be given the information necessary to prepare for the church conference.

6-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 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.

7-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.