

1. Petition for Disaffiliation for Reasons of Conscience

Discipline Paragraph: New ¶2548

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Bill Arnold

Add new paragraph ¶ 2548. *Surrender of Charter of Local Church and Disaffiliation For Reasons Of Conscience* -- A local church may surrender its charter from The United Methodist Church and disaffiliate based on the local church's declaration that it is in irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience with the provisions of The United Methodist Church *Book of Discipline* on the practice of homosexuality and the blessing of homosexual unions. Such disaffiliation shall require:

- a) A minimum of 90 days of study and discernment by the congregation
- b) The affirmative vote of two-thirds (66.7%) of the church's professing members present and voting at a duly called church conference
- c) Other provisions of the *Book of Discipline* shall not be a bar to such disaffiliation

Upon such surrender and disaffiliation, the local church shall be released from the provisions of ¶ 2501 and shall retain full rights to its property and funds, provided that any debts upon such property and any other debts payable by that local church are assumed by that local church. In the event of such proposed action, the bishop, the cabinet, annual conference board of trustees, and other appropriate individuals of The United Methodist Church shall facilitate the orderly and timely administration of this process.

Renumber following paragraphs from existing ¶¶ 2548-2551.

Rationale:

Despite efforts to preserve unity in the Church, irreconcilable differences persist regarding the practice of homosexuality. The Church needs to value the consciences of our people and provide an honorable way for those whose consciences are violated to disaffiliate without the loss of property and in a ministry-affirming way. For forty years the General Conference has consistently maintained that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. In spite of this, there are local churches and ordained ministers for whom the position taken violates their conscience. Irreconcilable differences persist diverting time and energy from our central mission.

2. Petition of Clergy Pension Preserved

Discipline Paragraph: ¶361

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Bill Arnold

Add new subparagraph to ¶ 361:

¶361.5. *Pension Status* – When an ordained member withdraws from the ordained office or from the denomination for any reason, the withdrawing clergy person shall be entitled to the full pension credit they have earned up to the time of withdrawal, including all years of service and all funds deposited in their name, whether personal contributions or funds contributed by a salary-paying unit, and including all past and future earnings and appreciation.

Rationale:

This provision would reassure those who contemplate withdrawal that their pension benefit would not suffer due to withdrawal. This language codifies what is already part of the current pension plan document. The language would guard against future changes in the plan document that might deprive persons of their pension benefit.