



**IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

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**Clarification of the United Methodist Book of Discipline regarding a
Retired Pastor's Relationship to the Local Church,
the Annual Conference, and The United Methodist Church
from the Iowa Annual Conference Resident Bishop and Cabinet
March 16, 2023**

Charge Conference: Retired clergy members (elders, deacons, associate members, and local pastors) are required to connect to a charge conference. (§ 357.5) Retired clergy members have a seat in the charge conference and are voting members unless otherwise restricted by the Book of Discipline on a given matter. The retired clergy member continues to be active in the connection of the local United Methodist Church.

Annual Conference: Retired clergy members are voting members of the Annual Conference. They continue to participate, shaping the ministry and direction of the Annual Conference in the discussions, deliberations, and determinations of this basic body of the connection. The session of the Annual Conference is where retired members benefit from reunion, revival, and renewal of a strong connection. Thus, retired clergy members continue to be active in the connection at the annual conference level.

Accountability and Support: Retired clergy persons are accountable to the resident bishop of the Annual Conference. As such, they are eligible to receive an appointment when requested by the bishop and cabinet. However, all expressions of pastoral ministry of a United Methodist clergy member are under the authority of the resident bishop. § 357.6 and § 345 do allow for a United Methodist pastor to serve in a ministerial capacity in another denomination, recognized as such by The United Methodist Church, with the expressed and written permission of the resident bishop and under the direction of the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The Current Situation: Retired clergy members of the Iowa Annual Conference who intend to serve in a ministerial capacity outside of The United Methodist Church without the expressed and written permission of the resident bishop must withdraw from ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church under § 360. If the clergy member does not initiate a withdrawal and serves in a pastoral capacity outside of the United Methodist Church, without the expressed and written permission of the resident bishop, per Judicial Council Decision 696, they will have been deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn their clergy membership in the annual conference as a matter of church law.

Next steps for all retired clergy:

- ❖ Visit with the pastor of the United Methodist Church to which you wish to connect or continue to connect and communicate your charge conference connection to the District Superintendent. A reminder: membership vows affirm support of the local church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Connecting with a charge conference assumes this five-fold commitment.
- ❖ Submit an annual report to your charge conference according to § 357.5
- ❖ If you are serving in a ministerial capacity outside of The United Methodist Church without the expressed and written permission of the resident bishop,
 - Discontinue this relationship immediately, or
 - Visit with your district superintendent to move toward a request for expressed and written permission from the resident bishop, or
 - Initiate a withdrawal from the UMC under § 360 by contacting your District Superintendent

REFERENCES

¶ 360. **Withdrawal**—1. Withdrawal to Unite With Another—When ordained members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination, their certification of conference membership, and their written request to withdraw shall be deposited with the conference secretary.

¶ 357.5. **Charge Conference Membership**—a) All retired clergy members who are not appointed as pastors of a charge, after consultation with the pastor and the district superintendent, shall have a seat in the charge conference and all the privileges of membership in the church where they elect to hold such membership except as set forth in the Discipline. They shall report to the charge conference and to the pastor all marriages performed, baptisms administered, and other pastoral functions. If they reside outside the bounds of the annual conference where membership is held, they shall forward annually to the charge conference where membership is held a report of their Christian and ministerial conduct, signed by the district superintendent or the pastor of the affiliate charge conference where they reside.

¶ 357.6. **Appointment of Retired Ordained Ministers**—A retired ordained minister shall be eligible to receive an appointment (in the UMC) when requested by the bishop and cabinet.

¶ 344.1.d (in part) d) Elders, associate members, and those licensed for pastoral ministry may receive appointments beyond the ministry usually extended through the local United Methodist church and other institutions listed above in a) and b)40. when considered by the bishop and the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry to be a true extension of the Christian ministry of the Church. They may be appointed to pastoral ministry in other Christian denominations at the request of appropriate judicatory officers of that denomination. These ministries shall be initiated in missional response to the needs of persons in special circumstances and unique situations and shall reflect the commitment of the clergy to intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service.

¶ 345. United Methodist clergy members in full connection may be appointed annually to churches of other Christian denominations or to ecumenical shared ministries. Persons in these appointments remain in the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. Their effectiveness shall be evaluated in the context of the specific setting in which their ministry is performed. (See ¶ 344.1d.)

¶ 320.5. **Retirement of Local Pastor**—A local pastor who has made satisfactory progress in the Course of Study as specified in ¶ 318.1 or .2 may be recognized as a retired local pastor. Retirement provisions for local pastors shall be the same as those for clergy members in ¶ 358.1, .2, .4, with pensions payable in accordance with ¶ 1506.5a. Retired local pastors may attend annual conference sessions with voice but not vote. A retired local pastor may be appointed by the bishop to a charge and licensed upon recommendation by the district committee on ordained ministry without creating additional claim upon the conference minimum compensation nor further pension credit.

Judicial Council Decision 696 can be found at:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/judicial-council/judicialcouncil- decision-home/judicial-decisions/the-legality-of-holdingmembership- in-two-denominations-simultaneously>