



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

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Role of the Pastor During the Disaffiliation Exploration Process

It is not the desire of the Bishop or the Cabinet of the Iowa Annual Conference that any congregation disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, but we acknowledge that some congregations, as a faithful way forward regarding the matter of homosexuality (per. ¶12553 of The United Methodist Book of Discipline), are discerning their options with disaffiliation.

To honor good pastoral boundaries, pastoral ethics and the covenant and fellowship of appointed clergy, the Bishop and Appointive Cabinet offer these guidelines on the role of pastor during this season:

1. It is not the responsibility for an appointed pastor to lead a congregation to disaffiliate.
2. The pastor shall ensure that the congregation has the resources that they need and a balance of perspectives and information. Information about the continuing UMC can be found at:

[Bishop's Narrative for the Continuing UMC](#)

[#BeUMC](#)

[Clarifying Our Beliefs](#) – (This is a good resource from Great Plains Conference.)

Resources about the process of disaffiliation can be found at:

<https://www.iaumc.org/disaffiliation-resources>

<https://www.iaumc.org/disaffiliations-effective-November-30-2023>

3. The pastor shall ensure that discernment is the congregation's choice, not the pastor's preference.
4. The pastor shall ensure that the district superintendent is invited into conversation as part of the discernment process.
5. Understanding that this season of discernment is emotionally and spiritually fraught, the pastor shall continue to maintain the standards of pastoral duties as outlined in *The 2016 Book of Discipline* ¶1340; the "Standards of Credentialed Ministry" as outlined in the *2019 SPRC Resource Guide* and approved by the 2007 Clergy Session of the Iowa Annual Conference; and will uphold "Our Covenant Relationship" as outlined in the *2019 SPRC Resource Guide*, approved at the 2011 Annual Conference. In line with these standards, the pastor shall shepherd the whole church and not just groups within the church with whom the pastor is in agreement about disaffiliation.
6. The church's decision about disaffiliation is separate from the pastor's decision about his/her own future.
 - a. A pastor of a church that has voted to disaffiliate (whether the pastor intends to stay or not) is required to complete the clergy appointment advisory consultation form.
 - b. Paragraphs 344.1.d and 345 allow pastors to serve other denominations, recognized by The United Methodist Church, but only with the written permission of the resident bishop. This includes pastors who are retired and pastors who are on leave of absence or other status. Without such permission, the pastor who intends to serve another denomination or a disaffiliated church must withdraw from The United Methodist Church under ¶1360 of the Book of Discipline. A pastor intending to withdraw should see the district superintendent and fill out the clergy appointment advisory form to begin the process.

In this tender time in the life our church, it is our prayer that this guidance alleviate anxiety and provide direction for moving forward with integrity and grace.