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## SOUTH CAROLINA

# Methodist churches in SC could split from United Methodist denomination: What to know



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The United Methodist Church is facing a theological split over sexuality. The prospect of permitting same-sex marriages and the ordination of openly gay clergy has not been received well by some conservatives.

The church's General Conference, the overall decision-making body for the worldwide church, is expected to take up LGBTQ inclusion at its next meeting, which is scheduled for 2024 due to continued COVID-19 delays.

Though no churches in South Carolina have started the formal disaffiliation process, discussions are beginning in Greenville while 70 congregations in northeast Georgia have voted to leave the denomination.

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Here's what to know about the prospect of churches' disaffiliation in South Carolina:

Not all Methodist churches are part of the United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church had 6,448,992 members across 130 countries as of 2018, making it one of the world's largest Christian denominations. The Southern Baptist Convention had 14,089,947 members in 47,592 churches in 2020.

The United Methodist Church's General Conference amended the Book of Discipline — its governing document — in 2019 to allow churches to disaffiliate based on views of homosexuality. Paragraph 2553 outlines the process to exit the denomination based on

the church's interpretation of the "practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals."

The General Conference, the UMC's legislative body, meets every four years. Its 2019 conference was a special event and members expected a 2020 regular conference.

The worldwide General Conference is expected to have additional conversations about the interpretations of the Book of Discipline, LGBTQ participation in clergy and the disaffiliation process at its 2024 conference.

Due to the number of spoken languages and time zones, the church says a virtual conference isn't an option. The next scheduled General Conference is now scheduled in 2024.

Churches must decide to disaffiliate by Dec. 31, 2023, according to Paragraph 2553. Disaffiliation requires a two-thirds vote by the congregation and must be approved by the Annual Conference, which is the state level of the United Methodist Church.

The Annual Conference sets the terms of the disaffiliation agreement, which includes "unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments."

The United Methodist Church owns all the properties associated with the denomination, including buildings of worship and several camps and retreat centers.

A disaffiliating church has the right to retain its personal, tangible and intangible property as part of the disaffiliation agreement.

The Global Methodist Church, with conservative views on homosexuality, launched on May 1, 2022.

Buncombe Street United Methodist Church leadership voted in April to begin discussions on disaffiliation.

"The Friends to Preserve Buncombe Street United Methodist" outlines one group's purpose for pursuing disaffiliation at the local level.

Buncombe Street UMC has created a "Way Forward Task Force" to address the congregations' concerns ahead of its conference on October 30 where a vote on disaffiliation could be taken.

Buncombe Street UMC is the second-largest contributor to the state UMC's budget.

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