

2024 PNWAC

SPECIAL CALLED SESSION E-1

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**November 15, 2023, 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time, Via Zoom
Broadcast from the Conference Center, Des Moines, WA**

The call to meet was issued on August 15, 2023, by Bishop Cedrick D. Bridgeforth: In accordance with ¶603.5 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline. The sole purpose of the Special Session is to affirm or not affirm the church conference actions of local churches that are choosing to ask to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under the provisions of ¶ 2553 of The Book of Discipline, 2019 Addendum. The Board of Trustees will present negotiated settlements that cannot be amended. The members of the Annual Conference will affirm or not affirm the agreements by a simple majority vote.

The meeting, via Zoom webinar, opened at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time, on November 15, 2023.

David Valera welcomed everyone and invited everyone to a time of reflection and a land acknowledgment. Following a prayer of gratitude for those who came before us, he invited everyone to write and read in Zoom chat the names of the first people to call home the land where each was seated.

Teri Toby gave instructions about the Zoom platform and access to Korean and Spanish interpretation.

Bishop Bridgeforth invited us to a time of worship with a devotion delivered by John Tucker, District Superintendent of the Cascadia District in the Oregon-Idaho Conference and a litany written by Justin White, led by several voices. The litany included the hymn Bless Be the Ties that Bind. Worship was pre-recorded.

Bishop Bridgeforth called the meeting to order and promised a closing litany to help bring closure. Following an instructional video about using Vpoll for recognition and voting purposes, a practice vote was taken.

Bishop Bridgeforth noted the Judicial Council decision #1420, reminding us that there are only two choices for our petitions: yes or no.

Conference Secretary, Shirley DeLarme made the following opening motions: that the Program and Schedule provided in the resources posted on the Pacific Northwest Conference website for this special session shall be the official program and schedule of the conference; and that as specified by the Bishop the sole agenda is to affirm or not affirm the church conference actions of local churches that are choosing to ask to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under the provisions of The Book of Discipline 2016, Paragraph 2553; that the Registration Procedure for the Special Session be designated as the official roll call for the Special Session of the 150th Annual Session of the PNW Conference; that the bar be established as those who, according to their status within and relationship with the PNW Conference, have voting rights and are thus given passcode

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access to voting procedures provided by Conference staff through Vpoll and conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing; and the adoption of the Rules for this Special Session, as posted on the Special Session Resource page on the conference website. Seconded by Celia Comer, with one action, the motions were passed.

Conference Treasurer Brant Henshaw reviewed the history of the process, which began following the 2016 General Conference, in which ¶2553 was adopted to allow churches to leave the denomination provided they meet some baseline standards. ¶2553 sunsets December 31, 2023. All churches voted on at the May 7 Special Session met their requirements and are no longer United Methodist.

The PNW Conference worked a process that included: district superintendent and congregation conversations; All Church Conferences to open the question; a discernment process that included a set of questions and a checklist for internal discernment and materials provided to the Conference; an estimate of the costs provided to local churches; documents provided to the conference regarding baptisms, marriages, etc.; a second All Church Conference regarding disaffiliation; disaffiliation agreements, drafted, signed, and delivered to the Conference office. The Conference Board of Trustees intends to sign those agreements after the Special Called Session vote to move toward settlement and disaffiliation.

Conference Board of Trustees president Patricia Simpson reported that agreements have been made between the Conference Board of Trustees and three local churches and that the resolution for each of the three churches is the same except for the name of the church. The full resolution was read only once (having been provided online in advance), with the motion for ratification and approval for each of the 13 congregations being read and acted upon singly.

Be it resolved by the Pacific Northwest (PNW) Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

1. That the proposed disaffiliation Agreement between the PNW Annual Conference and a specific church (Church) regarding Church's disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church be hereby ratified and approved.
2. That following the complete execution of that Disaffiliation Agreement, the corporate officers of the PNW Annual Conference are hereby authorized to release the Trust Clause of The United Methodist Church, which currently applies to all real property and assets held by Church, and that said property and assets shall be retained by the congregation; PROVIDED that prior to the date of disaffiliation, Church shall fully pay all monies due under the terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement, including any unpaid Connectional Mission Giving (apportionments) for the current calendar year prior to the date of disaffiliation; all unpaid Connectional Mission Giving for the calendar year of the date of disaffiliation; the church's pro-rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations as determined pursuant to the PNW Annual Conference Board of Trustees resolution for the November 15, 2023 special session; and any other debts, loans, and

liabilities owed to the PNW Annual Conference, and PROVIDED further that the church shall also comply with all other remaining terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement.

- 3. That from and after the date of disaffiliation, the Church, having voluntarily disaffiliated under ¶2553, shall have no connection or affiliation with The United Methodist Church and the PNW Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church or any predecessor denomination or conference.
- 4. Copies of the Church’s official records and papers should be deposited for permanent safekeeping with the PNW Conference Archives. This should include a membership roster indicating which members are withdrawing from the UMC and which remain.
- 5. We thank this congregation and ask for God’s blessing upon its continued ministry.

Petitions were addressed singly, in alphabetical order. Bishop Bridgforth prayed before each vote.

SeaTac District

Petition #1: resolution #1 Federal Way: Sunrise UMC: 146 yes (73%), 55 no (27%)

Petition #2: resolution #2 Fircrest UMC: 160 yes (80%), 40 no (20%)

Petition #3: resolution #3 Tacoma: Bethany UMC: 156 yes (78%), 44 no (22%)

With no further motions, District Superintendent Kathleen Weber invited everyone to a time of silence, followed by the Lord’s Prayer and a Litany of Ending & Beginning Anew.

Litany of Ending & Beginning Anew

Adaptation of “An Order for Disbanding a Congregation” (Book of Worship 650) to include a blessing for those taking leave of the UMC and those who remain.

These congregations, [READ THE LIST] United Methodist Churches, were organized as part of Christ’s holy Church and of the United Methodist Church.

Our connection was God’s gift for a season.

We are thankful for the many ways these congregations have served the mission given to them by Jesus Christ. At this moment, we can say that each has accomplished its purpose.

We declare that these afore-named are no longer United Methodist congregations.

Though petitioning and voting solidify a declaration in this realm, we are assured that God will have the final voice and vote on every matter under heaven.

We determined to act today, and we did so with heavy hearts to honor the desires of those who petitioned to live out their faith and callings apart from the connection we once shared.

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May we forgive the sins of others and repent of our sins.

May we gift one another with honor owed to every child of God.

May we praise God for the grace and mercy that allows us to ask for such.

We know Christ's holy Church is of God,

And will be preserved to the end of time,

For the conduct of worship

And the due administration of God's Word and Sacraments,

the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline,

the edification of believers,

and the conversion of the world.

We remain part of Christ's ongoing Church,

and as we scatter into other congregations and denominations.

We shall still be one with Christ, one with each other,

and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

May the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit remain with each of us as we

seek to be most humble in our declarations and more perfect in our witness as we go where God has called us to new endings and new beginnings. Amen

The Conference Secretary moved to adjourn; after a second by Wes Stanton, the motion was approved by 98%.