



Riverchase United Methodist Church (Riverchase) will be holding a church-wide vote on Monday, July 17, 2023, at 6:45 PM in the Sanctuary to determine if Riverchase will disaffiliate or remain with the United Methodist Church. All current full members will be eligible to participate but must be present to vote. No quorum is required. It takes a 2/3 majority to disaffiliate from the UMC.

We have heard from members who have questions and wish to learn more about what Riverchase may look like if the members choose to disaffiliate.

Here are answers to some Frequently Asked Questions.

1. What was the Discernment Team's recommendation?

The Discernment Team's recommendation was to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and join the Foundry Network. The full recommendation is located here. <https://www.riverchaseumc.org/wp-content/uploads/Discernment-Recommendation-.pdf>

2. Did the Board of Stewards accept the Discernment Team's recommendation?

Yes, the Board of Stewards accepted the Discernment Team's recommendation, carrying the vote 40-12.

3. Why is the vote occurring during the summer?

The last Special Session of the Annual Conference to process disaffiliation requests is September 12, 2023. Ahead of that date, a disaffiliating church must have all required paperwork and payments submitted to the Conference by August 1, 2023. The North Alabama Conference set these dates. This is the final session being offered to churches that wish to disaffiliate.

4. What will happen to our pastors?

We intend to invite our pastors to stay with Riverchase if we disaffiliate. Currently, each pastor is ordained or licensed through the United Methodist Church and has been appointed to us. Therefore, they will all have to make a personal decision. If they choose not to stay with Riverchase, they will remain with UMC and be appointed elsewhere.



5. How will our pastors be paid if we disaffiliate?

Our pastors will be paid the same way as they are now—through our tithes, gifts, and offerings.

6. What will happen to our pastor's retirement plans?

If a pastor elects to remain with Riverchase, their existing retirement plan benefit will be converted into a qualified individual retirement plan which they will keep. Going forward, Riverchase can elect to contribute to their individual retirement plan in an amount that we choose, but most likely similar to the contribution we have made in the past.

7. How will we provide health insurance/benefits to our pastors and staff?

Riverchase currently has a health insurance plan for our staff. If the congregation chooses to disaffiliate, our pastors have the option to roll onto that policy. The pastors are currently required to be on the United Methodist Church healthcare plan.

8. Will our current missions still be supported?

We will continue to support mission activities as much as financially possible. This includes local missions such as Joy Deliveries, Nauvoo, the Backpack Ministry, and Habitat for Humanity, as well as global missions that are currently supported, such as Hope Community Centre (Lucy) and Zoe Ministries.

9. How much will it cost to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church?

The total cost to disaffiliate is \$460,059. Please note that we expect the disaffiliation cost to decrease by \$50,000. We will pay \$25,000 in June and \$25,000 in July to the UMC for apportionments. If we disaffiliate, we will receive a refund of that \$50,000 after the formal disaffiliation session on September 12, 2023. This refund will be applied to the disaffiliation loan. Taking this refund information into account brings our disaffiliation total down to \$410,059.

It should also be noted that \$279,740 of this cost are apportionments that we would pay to the United Methodist Church regardless. Therefore, the true cost to disaffiliate is \$180,319.



**10. What is the financial plan to pay for our disaffiliation fee?
Why are we borrowing \$250,000?**

We currently have cash on hand equaling \$785,000 (\$485,000 is in operating cash and \$300,000 is in a Certificate of Deposit). Due to this fact, we have sufficient funds to pay the \$460,059 disaffiliation cost.

However, we feel it is prudent to use only a portion of our current cash toward the disaffiliation cost and take out a loan to pay the remaining balance. Therefore, we will use \$210,059 of our current cash on hand and borrow \$250,000. This will leave us an acceptable level of cash reserves at \$574,941. If the congregation chooses to disaffiliate, our plan would be to initiate a capital campaign to repay the loan within 12 months and replenish current cash on hand.

Please note that the Finance Committee will make a final recommendation after the formal vote has taken place.

11. If we disaffiliate, do we still have to pay apportionments to the United Methodist Church? What would those funds be used for in the future?

No, if the church chooses to disaffiliate, we will not have to pay apportionments totaling \$275,000 each year to the United Methodist Church. It would be up to the church to determine the use of these funds. For example, The Orchard, which is part of The Foundry Network, chose to use their previous apportionment dollars towards missions.

12. Do we need to modify our existing loan?

Per the bank, our deed will be updated, and the trust clause removed. The bank will update our title insurance at a minimal cost. All terms and conditions of our current loan remain in place. The current loan has an interest rate of 4.99 % with a maturity date of October 30, 2028.

13. Will our tax ID number change?

No, our tax ID number will not change.



14. Do we maintain our non-profit status and remain exempt from property taxes?

Yes, we will maintain our non-profit status and will continue to be exempt from property taxes.

15. Do we need to get new hymnals?

No. According to the North Alabama Conference, we can continue to use our current hymnals.

16. What will our governing body look like?

We plan to adopt our current Book of Discipline in the interim and follow the guidelines on how to govern the church as we do now. All committees will remain intact and operate as they do presently. These include:

- Staff Parish Relations Committee
Bruce Larson, Chair

- Finance Committee
Craig Tolbert, Chair

- Board of Stewards
James Jockisch, Chair

- Board of Trustees
Stuart Garrett, Chair

- Jennifer Morrissey-Patton, Lay Leader

17. How will future Board of Stewards members be nominated?

We will continue to operate as we always have concerning Board of Stewards membership. Our current nominating committee will recommend the 2026 Board of Stewards class. These new members will be approved at a Board of Stewards meeting. The 2023 Board of Stewards class will complete their service and roll off from membership at the end of 2023.



18. Will there be any changes with the Riverchase Day School?

Riverchase Day School will continue to operate in the same manner with no changes.

19. Will our worship services change?

No, our worship services will not change. We currently have three traditional services and one modern service. These will continue to operate as they do presently.

20. Will our name and signs change?

Yes, our name will change. A Transition Committee will be formed in the event the congregation chooses to disaffiliate. The Transition Committee will address this issue. We will have 3 months to remove the United Methodist symbol of the cross and flame from our current signs. Per the North Alabama Conference, we can request additional time, if needed.

21. Who will serve on the Transition Team?

The pastoral staff and lay leadership will complete the selection process of the Transition Team.

22. What is the Foundry Network?

The Foundry Network is an association or community of large Methodist Churches like Riverchase. These churches operate and govern themselves but have a supportive and connectional community if help is needed. It is based on Wesleyan theology but is not a formal denomination. We will continue to follow our Wesleyan heritage and theology just as we have been since the inception of Riverchase. While not officially a part of the United Methodist Church, we will continue to function, operate, and worship as a Methodist Church.

The following is an excerpt from an informational packet about The Foundry Network.

The Foundry Network stands in this faithful Methodist tradition and seeks to forge a network of like-minded pastors and churches who are aligned theologically and work together to reawaken the movement of Christ in our communities. This network is



made up of accountable relationships that are simple and clear and that provide opportunities to learn, encourage, support and advance the Kingdom of God together.

The Foundry Network began its mission in Mississippi when several churches, who were previously associated with UMC, came together to form this network. Since that time, the Foundry Network has grown to include 13 churches with an additional 3 more potential new members. Asbury, located in Madison, Alabama, and The Cove, located in Huntsville, Alabama, joined The Foundry Network in 2022 after both churches disaffiliated from the UMC. Members of Riverchase pastoral staff and lay leadership contacted both Asbury and The Cove to learn about their experience with The Foundry Network thus far. Both discussions resulted in positive feedback regarding their new affiliation.

The Foundry Network's vision is to grow to become a community of 25 to 50 churches. There is no cost to partner with this network. Should it be determined down the road that God would have Riverchase go in a different direction, we can exit from the Foundry Network with no penalties.

[Click here for more information on The Foundry Network.](#)

We highly encourage all members to watch Bryan Collier's presentation to our church from June 7, 2023, in which Mr. Collier visited Riverchase to educate us on The Foundry Network. The link to the recorded video is here.

<https://youtu.be/JK8XRc7rjUs>

For additional information, we encourage congregants to watch the presentation by Reverend Tommy Gray, Senior Pastor at Asbury (formerly Asbury UMC). Asbury joined The Foundry Network in 2022.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G0imc8fxV0>

In summary, Riverchase can continue to operate and function exactly as we do today. We will continue to provide radical hospitality to make all people feel welcome when they enter our doors. We will continue to unite as a church to fulfill our mission of "Sharing the Joy of Christ"—to our guests, our community, and each other.