

## Endorsement of Aтура Eason-Williams as an Episcopal Candidate

**WHEREAS**, the United Methodist Church affirms that from apostolic times, certain ordained persons have been called by God and “set apart for a ministry of servant leadership, general oversight, and supervision” (Book of Discipline ¶403.1); the Church places this responsibility in the office of bishop to equip the Church in its disciple-making ministry, order the life of the Church, enable the Church to worship and evangelize faithfully, and facilitate structures and strategies to equip Christian people for service in the Church and in the world in the name of Jesus Christ;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS**, Rev. Aтура Eason-Williams has faithfully served in ministry to the Church since responding to her call twenty-four years ago in many capacities, including as an ordained Elder, pastoral leader of local congregations, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries, Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, elected clergy delegate to General Conference (2020 delegation head, 2016 reserve) and Jurisdictional Conference (2020, 2016), secretary of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Council on Finance and Administration, and other roles of servant leadership; and

**WHEREAS**, Rev. Aтура Eason-Williams has engaged the community and the Church’s neighbors through active service, such as chairing the New Southeast Elementary School Advisory Board, serving on the Achievement School District Neighborhood Advisory Council for Shelby County Schools, partnering with Communities of Shalom, and personally engaging in other numerous activities with students, families, and community members while encouraging neighborhood engagement among the congregations she has pastored; and

**WHEREAS**, Rev. Aтура Eason-Williams has prayerfully discerned the call of God to offer herself humbly as a candidate for episcopal leadership and the task of superintending with a vision of a Church for all people where each experience right relationship with God and neighbor through our Wesleyan connection as we practice right belief (orthodoxy) and right action (orthopraxis) with right hearts (orthokardia) propelled by the love of God; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2020 Memphis Conference Delegation to General Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference affirms the calling God has placed upon the heart of Rev. Aтура Eason-Williams and celebrates her deep commitment to God, her passion for Christ, her love for the United Methodist Church, and her Spirit-borne fruit of an abiding love for Christ and for those whom Christ loves;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church endorses Rev. Aтура Eason-Williams for the office of Bishop in the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

Submitted by the 2020 Memphis Conference Delegation

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<sup>1</sup> The United Methodist Book of Discipline, ¶401.

Resolution submitted by Earl T. Dickerson

Whereas, the progressive congregations and pastors of the Memphis Conference believe the full acceptance of the LGBTQ population to be a legitimate and ongoing, deeply Christian concern, and has and will continue to act on such belief, even in violation of the current Book of Discipline;

Whereas, the traditional congregations and pastors of the Memphis Conference equally firmly believe such full acceptance is against strongly held Biblical beliefs and will never willingly receive such full acceptance of what they consider to be a violation of Scripture and Discipline, and are equally troubled at the lack of covenant keeping in the thought of violations of the Book of Discipline,

Therefore, be it resolved that for the purposes of allowing churches in the Memphis Conference to follow the procedures of the "Gracious Exit" provisions stated in the current Book of Discipline, paragraph 2553, the Memphis Conference declare itself to be non compliant.

Submitted by Earl Dickerson  
Elder  
TN River District  
Memphis Annual Conference  
The United Methodist Church

Local Church Disaffiliation Requirements as Mandated by the Book of Discipline and the Judicial Council

¶ 2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality—

1. Basis-- Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

2. Time Limits--The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

3. Decision Making Process--The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶ 248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference.

In addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to disaffiliate from The United

Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

4. Process Following Decision to Disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church--If the church conference

votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall

be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet,

the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. That agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

a) Standard Terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom. Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.

b) Apportionments. The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.

c) Property. A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church.

d) Pension Liabilities. The local church shall contribute withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church's share.

e) Other Liabilities. The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.

f) Payment Terms. Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure.

g) Disaffiliating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans. The United Methodist Church believes that a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.

h) Once the disaffiliating local church has reimbursed the applicable annual conference for all funds due under the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or claims against The United Methodist Church as a result of the disaffiliation, in consideration of the provisions of this paragraph, the applicable annual conference shall release any claims that

it may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church commonly referred to as the trust clause, or under the agreement. Further Requirements of the Judicial Council per Ruling #1379

In light of the foregoing conclusions, the parts of our ruling in JCD 1377 that address the question of local

church disaffiliation are hereby modified. Any legislation of the General Conference permitting the “gracious exit” of a local church must have the following minimum requirements:

1. Approval of the disaffiliation resolution by a two-thirds majority of the professing members of the local church present and voting at the church conference.
2. Establishment of the terms and conditions, including effective date, of the disaffiliation agreement between the annual conference and the exiting local church by the conference board of trustees in accordance with applicable Church law and civil laws.
3. Ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by a simple majority of the members of the annual conference present and voting.

RESOLUTION DECLARING THE MEMPHIS  
CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH AFFIRMS AND UPHOLDS  
TRADITIONAL METHODISM.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES:

- A. Whereas, the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church has been traditional in Methodist belief since its establishment in 1840 regardless of changes in denominational names over these 180 years...
- B. Whereas, there is disunity in belief and non-commitment to the vows of membership, consecration, and ordination which has caused harm through disaffiliation of entire congregations and loss of individuals as members throughout the denomination but particularly in America...
- C. Whereas, this breaking of covenant vows and disregard of our Discipline has led to mistrust of clergy leadership concerning commitment to the vows made to traditional Methodism when clergy are consecrated or ordained...
- D. Whereas, traditional Methodism is rightly based upon biblical principles of understanding scripture through the plain reading of the text, and interpreting scripture with scripture...

E. Whereas, traditional Methodism is further authenticated by the tradition of nearly 2000 years of Christian life and teaching, and the tradition of Methodism since its beginning as an authentic model of the New Testament church...

F. Whereas, traditional Methodism is reasonable in its conclusion of what is appropriate for the life and belief for the people called Methodist...

G. Whereas, traditional Methodism enables the experience of heartfelt peace as our practice of Methodism matches our belief...

Now therefore, the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church declares by vote of the delegates present that it is, or is not a traditional Methodist Conference

The signatories of the petition:

*James B. Wolfgang*

*[Signature]*

*Rev. Judd A. Mowrey*

*[Signature]*