

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

MEMORANDUM NO. 1524

IN RE: Appeal of Jason Smith after remand to the Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals.

In Memorandum 1522, the Judicial Council remanded the appeal of Jason Smith to the Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals (SEJCOA) to provide a more complete ruling on the procedural fair process issues raised in the appeal in accordance with Decision 1373. On its own motion and in consideration of whether the Judicial Council has appellate jurisdiction under ¶¶ 2719.4(c) and 2719.4(d), the council also requested the SEJCOA to determine whether the right of appeal has been forfeited.

In June 2026, the SEJCOA issued its “Decision on Remand,” addressing the issues of whether Smith had forfeited the right to appeal the recommendation of the conference relations committee by withdrawal and by failing to perfect the appeal in a timely manner. Smith timely appealed the June decision and has submitted a brief addressing the decision.

Based on the record, the Judicial Council concludes that Smith lodged a timely appeal from the action of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference’s Administrative Review Committee. Judicial Council Decision (JCD) 1361. Therefore, that portion of the June decision is reversed.

In its June decision, the SEJCOA also stated as follows regarding Smith’s alleged withdrawal from membership in the annual conference and its effect on his appeal:

“It appears to this Committee, on the basis of the record before it, that the Appellant forfeited the right to appeal by withdrawal from the Church on June 19, 2025, upon the vote of the clergy session of the Western North Carolina Conference. Prior to withdrawing, the Appellant was a provisional member. Paragraph 327.6 provides: “When provisional members in good standing withdraw to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in The United Methodist Church, their action shall be considered a request for discontinuance of their relationship and their credentials shall be surrendered to a district superintendent.”

By operation of ¶327.6, the Appellant's withdrawal constituted a request for discontinuance of provisional membership. That withdrawal was subsequently formalized through action of the clergy session discontinuing the Appellant's provisional membership on June 19, 2025. The Committee therefore concludes that the Appellant withdrew from The United Methodist Church within the meaning of ¶2719.4(c) and thereby forfeited the right to appeal."

It is apparent from the record and the briefs submitted both before and after the June decision that the issue of whether Smith withdrew is intertwined with the procedural fair process issues that he raises. Therefore, the Judicial Council does not decide that issue and will do so when it considers the fair process issues.

Fair process is never presumed and must be demonstrated at each stage of proceedings, especially proceedings that contemplate an involuntary consequence. JCD 995. *See also* Decisions 1031, 1189, and 1230. With these decisions in mind, it is important that Smith's fair process arguments receive due consideration. Therefore, this matter is again remanded to the SEJCOA to comply with the mandate of Memorandum 1522 by issuing a new decision on the procedural fair process issues as required by JCD 1373. The new decision shall be submitted within three months of the date of this memorandum.

October 23, 2026