

[Judicial Council Notation: Pursuant to the requirement added to Discipline ¶ 2608.1 by the 2012 General Conference, the exact wording of the question raised is set forth herein below]

## 1021-10

### **Written request for a ruling of law from a member of the North Georgia Annual Conference**

Does a local church that identifies itself as Traditional in the current understanding of that word as it applies to whether or not a church supports the current language of the *Discipline* regarding the practice of homosexuality, the marriage of same sex persons, and the ordination and appointment of LGBTQIA+ people have recourse to ¶2553 which provides a mechanism for the local church to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church?

More specifically, does the portion of ¶2553 that says the following:

¶ 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 ...* [Emphasis added]

provide Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church authority to invoke ¶2553 as providing a process for its disaffiliation since the leadership of the North Georgia Annual Conference has stated in its document entitled “Love is Making Room” the following:

We believe that harmful language about LGBTQ people and restrictions on marriage and ordination should be removed from the Book of Discipline.

### **Ruling of Law**

Paragraph 2553 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (hereafter “BOD”) provides as follows:

At least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference of Local Church must vote to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church “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.”

I find that no ruling of law is required because the North Georgia Annual Conference Board of Trustees has indicated that it will not question “the reasons of conscience” behind a church’s decision to disaffiliate. If the church sets forth this paragraph in the call for the called church conference, and the church conference is held fairly and in conformance with the BOD, and the motion contains the language of this paragraph and is duly voted upon, the Board of Trustees will not pursue any inquiry into the “reasons of conscience” behind the vote.

# 1021-10

## North Georgia Interested Parties & Contacts

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