

PROS & CONS OF EACH OPTION

Below is a summary of the Denominational Discernment Team's assessment of each option that we considered.

The list is not exhaustive, but it contains the most important factors in order of importance.

Option 01

United Methodist Church

Pros

No changes would be necessary (disaffiliation fees, changing of legal documents, rebranding, organizing church-wide vote, etc.)

Honor our heritage and be a guide to those who are straying within the UMC

Connectionality with a large faith community around the globe

Existing scales of economics (the large size of the UMC allows it to accomplish things that a smaller denomination or independent church couldn't)

Cons

Core beliefs are being compromised by UMC leadership (including the divinity of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and more)

UMC membership has declined every year since the denomination was formed in 1968, and continues to accelerate in decline

Lack of accountability for Bishops and Clergy is resulting in divisiveness, and leadership that is ungovernable

Our yearly apportionment of approx. \$250,000 does not feel like good stewardship because of the direction the UMC is headed

Appointments for new clergy at AH may become a concern if the denomination strays farther from its roots

Disaffiliation costs and procedures will likely get more difficult in the future

Trust clause means that we don't own our property

Option 02

Free Methodist Church

Pros

Theology, history, and structure is familiar to us and consistent with our beliefs

Holiness in beliefs and lifestyle is a core focus for the FMC

No trust clause on *existing* buildings and assets

Apportionment costs are lower than what we are currently paying

Church planting and international growth is a core focus for the FMC

Cons

Small presence in the US, with most churches being small and in rural / coastal towns, unlike AH

Pastoral appointment is still determined by Bishops, and few FMC clergy have served in midsize or large churches

The Millennials and Gen-Z may be less drawn to a denomination, as opposed to an independent church

Closeness to UMC roots may result in similar issues down the road (decline, divisiveness over doctrine)

A trust clause applies to *new properties*

Option 03

Global Methodist Church

Pros

Wesleyan based, rooted in scripture and faithfulness to core Christian doctrine

Global connection with churches and missionaries, as well as local connection with other UMC churches moving to GMC

Familiarity, built upon the discipline and roots we are accustomed to, with people we are already associated with

No trust clause gives us ownership over our property

Lower apportionment costs than what we currently commit to with the UMC

Different governmental structure than the UMC, with "presiding elders" that are closely affiliated with local churches, which allows for better accountability

Cons

Uncertainty of church governance and structure until 2024 conference, as the new denomination evolves

Potential large increase of responsibility / job scope for our pastors as one of the largest churches in our conference, our pastors may become Presiding Elders (similar to UMC District Superintendents), taking valuable time away from Anderson Hills

Pastoral appointment is still determined by Bishops

The younger generation may be less drawn to a denomination, as opposed to an independent church

Apportionments may increase over time as bureaucratic needs arise

Closeness to UMC roots may result in similar issues down the road (decline, divisiveness over doctrine)

Option 04

Independent in a Network with other Methodist Churches

Pros

Freedom from denominational constraints: big bureaucracy, trust clause, apportionments, clergy re-appointments. We get to keep our pastors, staff, buildings, and ministries.

Wesleyan based, rooted in scripture and faithfulness to core Christian doctrine

Collaborate with highly effective churches on best practices, new ministry ideas, sermons, resources, and more

Close-knit connectionality for our leadership with a small group of pastors, allows for deeper accountability and comradery

Attractive to post-denominational generations, allows us to "grow young" and potentially widen our outreach

Connection with other large churches allows us to align in vision, mission, and church culture

Cons

Increased responsibility: without a denomination, we must work harder to find clergy, establish ordination requirements, designate funds that would have gone to apportionments, secure pension/insurance, create a global connection, etc.

Uncertainty for future as this is a new organization

An authoritative hierarchy (such as a Bishop or DS) is unestablished. Our pastors' accountability would come from our Church Council and other pastors within the network.

No local connection, currently all the churches involved are out of state

Small scope of participating churches provides potential to exclude smaller churches by being "large church focused"