Bishop Fairley, Trustees Chair issue joint statement on Judicial Council Decision

Bishop Leonard Fairley, resident bishop of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Shannon Bullion, chairperson of the Trustees of the Annual Conference, released this joint statement regarding Judicial Council Decision 1512:

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

We know that many of you have been in prayer concerning the UMC Judicial Council's decision about the use of Paragraph 2549 of The UMC Book of Discipline as the basis of a process allowing local churches to leave the denomination.

The Judicial Council has announced its decision, saying Paragraph 2549 "cannot be construed or used as legislation permitting the gracious exit of local churches because it applies to church closure and the sale of property, not disaffiliation. Any application of ¶2549 to that end would be a misapplication of Church law." (Decision No. 1512)

As a connectional church, the South Carolina Conference is bound by the decisions of the Judicial Council.

The impact of this decision is that, effective immediately, the Local Church Closure and Separation Process approved by the Trustees of the Annual Conference is no longer available as a means of separation from the denomination.

Trustees anticipated this possibility when they introduced their "Checklist for Closure and Separation in 2025," advising that the Judicial Council was reviewing Paragraph 2549 and that, "this process may be affected by their actions and decisions."

If you have any questions about the Judicial Council's decision, please call 803-735-8771 or email inquiries@umcsc.org.

We invite all South Carolina United Methodists to join us in focusing our prayers, our time, and our energy on our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Join us in seeing the possibilities and living the promise – in sharing the grace, the love, and the peace of Jesus Christ among God's people.