

# The Impact of Disaffiliations

National Association of Annual Conference Treasurers  
Denver, Colorado  
September 21, 2023

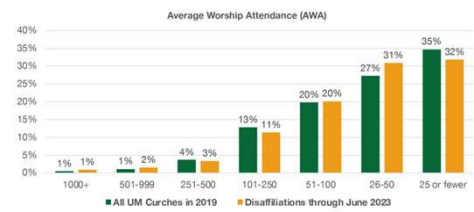
Lovett H. Weems, Jr.  
lovettw@wesleyseminary.edu  
Lewis Center for Church Leadership  
Wesley Theological Seminary



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## Most Common Shared Characteristic of Seceding and Staying Churches

### Church Size – Median Attendance of Both Groups is 38



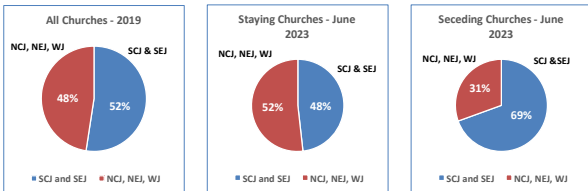
Church Size	All UM Churches in 2019 (%)	Disaffiliations through June 2023 (%)
1000+	1%	1%
501-999	1%	2%
251-500	4%	3%
101-250	13%	11%
51-100	20%	20%
25 or fewer	27%	31%
25 or fewer	35%	32%

Source: Updated Report on United Methodist Disaffiliating Churches by Lovett H. Weems Jr., August 8, 2023 (Lewis Center for Church Leadership).




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## Churches in 2019 – Staying Churches – Seceding Churches

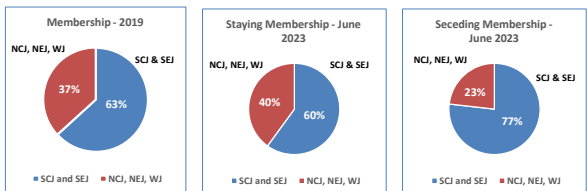


Source: Updated Report on United Methodist Disaffiliating Churches by Lovett H. Weems Jr., August 8, 2023 (Lewis Center for Church Leadership).




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## Members 2019 – Staying Members – Seceding Members

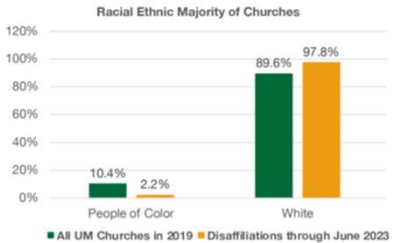


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## Racial Ethnic Majority of Churches



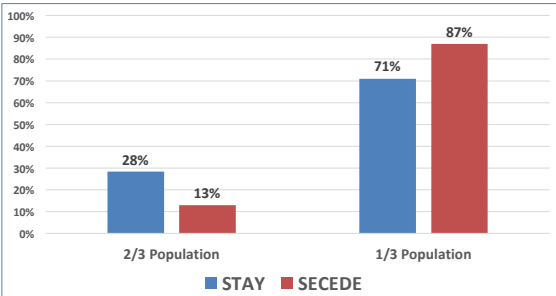
Racial Ethnic Group	All UM Churches in 2019 (%)	Disaffiliations through June 2023 (%)
People of Color	10.4%	2.2%
White	89.6%	97.8%

Source: Updated Report on United Methodist Disaffiliating Churches by Lovett H. Weems Jr., August 8, 2023 (Lewis Center for Church Leadership).




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## Location of Churches by Population Size

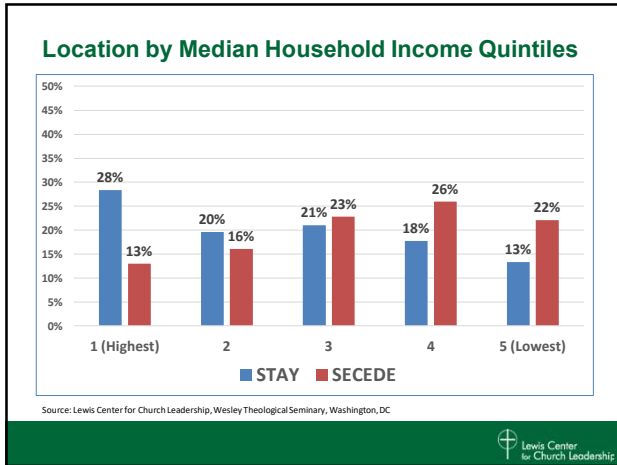


Population Size	STAY (%)	SECEDE (%)
2/3 Population	28%	13%
1/3 Population	71%	87%

Source: Lewis Center for Church Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC



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### Key Factors Determining Disaffiliation Impact on Annual Conferences

1. Median worship attendance of churches leaving
2. Proportion of churches leaving

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### Charting a Path Forward

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Lovett H. Weems, Jr.  
lovettw@wesleyseminary.edu  
Senior Consultant  
Lewis Center for Church Leadership  
Wesley Theological Seminary

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### Rebuilding after a Disaster and a Tragedy

- Disaster – Pandemic
- Tragedy – Disaffiliation
- They accelerated trends well underway.
- Most conferences would have had fewer people and churches anyway.
- Resuming “normal” means continuing to withdraw the UM presence in the U.S.

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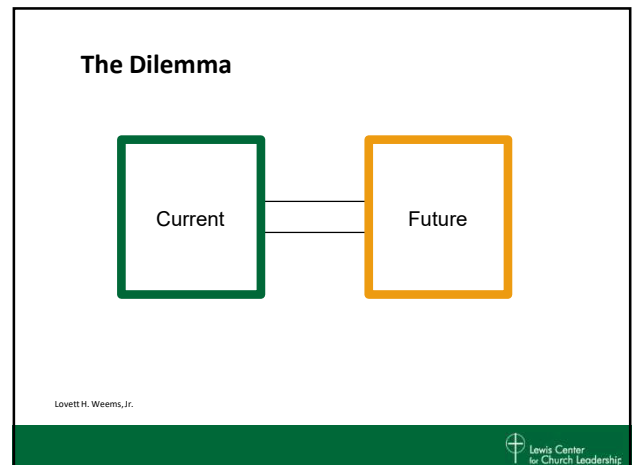
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### So What Can We Do?

- Begin with people and resources you have.
- Focus on the future, not the past.
- See all people within the boundaries of your conference as the people God has given you.
- Remember why a conference exists:  
*to strengthen and extend the United Methodist witness within the bounds of the conference.*

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## Begin with What We Know How to Do – Sustaining Change

- Sustaining is not just keeping things going.
- Technical term that refers to the types of change most common in **long-standing organizations serving established constituencies**.




Sustaining While Disrupting by F. Douglas Powe, Jr., and Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Fortress Press, 2022.




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## Sustaining Change

- Long-standing organizations
- Serving established constituents
- Improve what they know how to do and generally do well
- Local church examples
- Conference examples




Sustaining While Disrupting by F. Douglas Powe, Jr., and Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Fortress Press, 2022.




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## Why Our Sustaining Change Plan Works



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## Conference

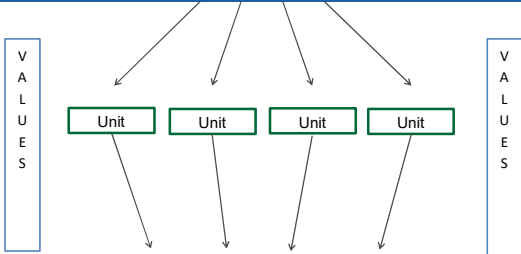
Conference Purpose and Values	Unit	Unit	Unit	Unit	Unit
	Goals and Plans	Goals and Plans	Goals and Plans	Goals and Plans	Goals and Plans

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## Goal: to strengthen & extend the United Methodist witness within the bounds of the conference



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## What about Things We Are Not Doing or Not Doing Well – Disrupting Change

- Disrupting doesn't mean creating chaos.
- Technical term that refers to the types of change most common in newer organizations serving people previously unserved or underserved.



Sustaining While Disrupting by F. Douglas Powe, Jr., and Lovett H. Weems, Jr., Fortress Press, 2022.




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### Sustaining Change    Disrupting Change

- Long-standing organizations
- Serving established constituents
- Improve what they know how to do and generally do well
- Local church examples
- Conference examples


- Upstart organizations
- Serving previously unserved and underserved people
- Reach new people in a way that seems less quality by long-standing organizational criteria.
- Examples

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### Why the Formula Doesn't Work for New Initiatives



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### Plan to Achieve New Things

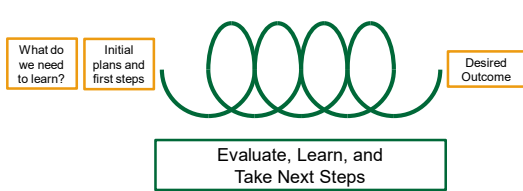


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### Plan to Achieve New Things



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### CONFERENCE NEW INITIATIVE XYZ

LEADERS	PLANNING GROUP	BUDGET	
ACTIVITIES	MEETINGS	PROGRAMS	REPORTS
TRAINING	VALUES	TASKS	

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### CONFERENCE NEW INITIATIVE XYZ


**PURPOSE:** strengthen and extend the UM witness within bounds of the conference

**RESULT SOUGHT:**

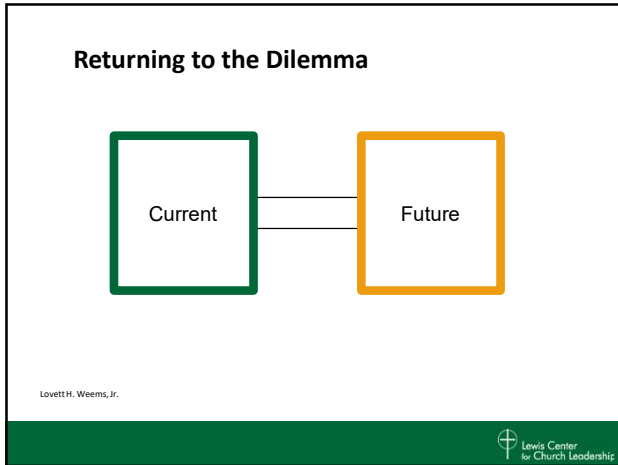
V A L U E S	TASKS	ACTIVITIES	EFFORTS	V A L U E S
	EVENTS	MEETINGS	TASKS	
	TASKS	TASKS	TASKS	

**REPORTS ON RESULT SOUGHT:**

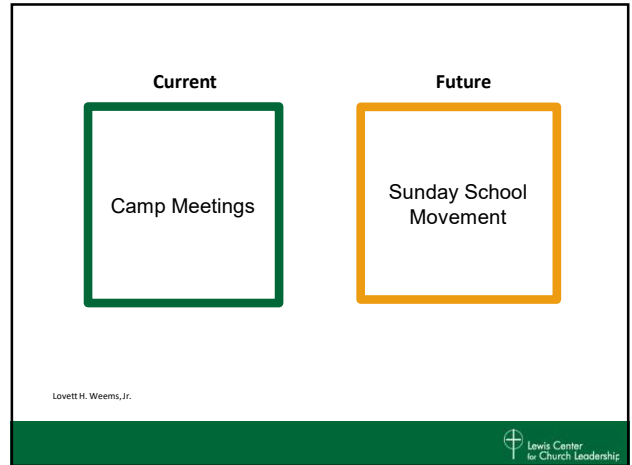
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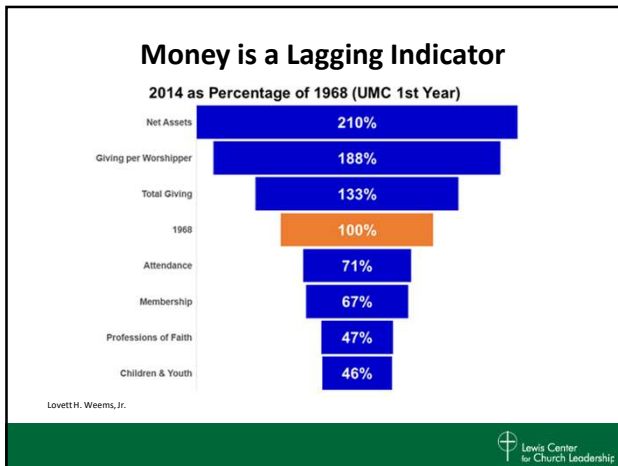
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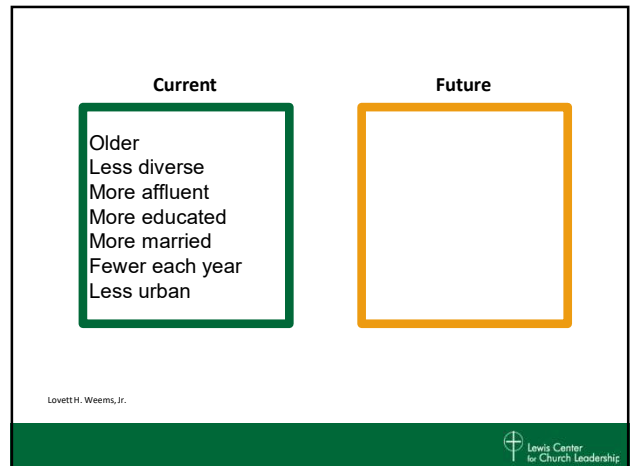
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