



Pension Forum—Nairobi, November 2023



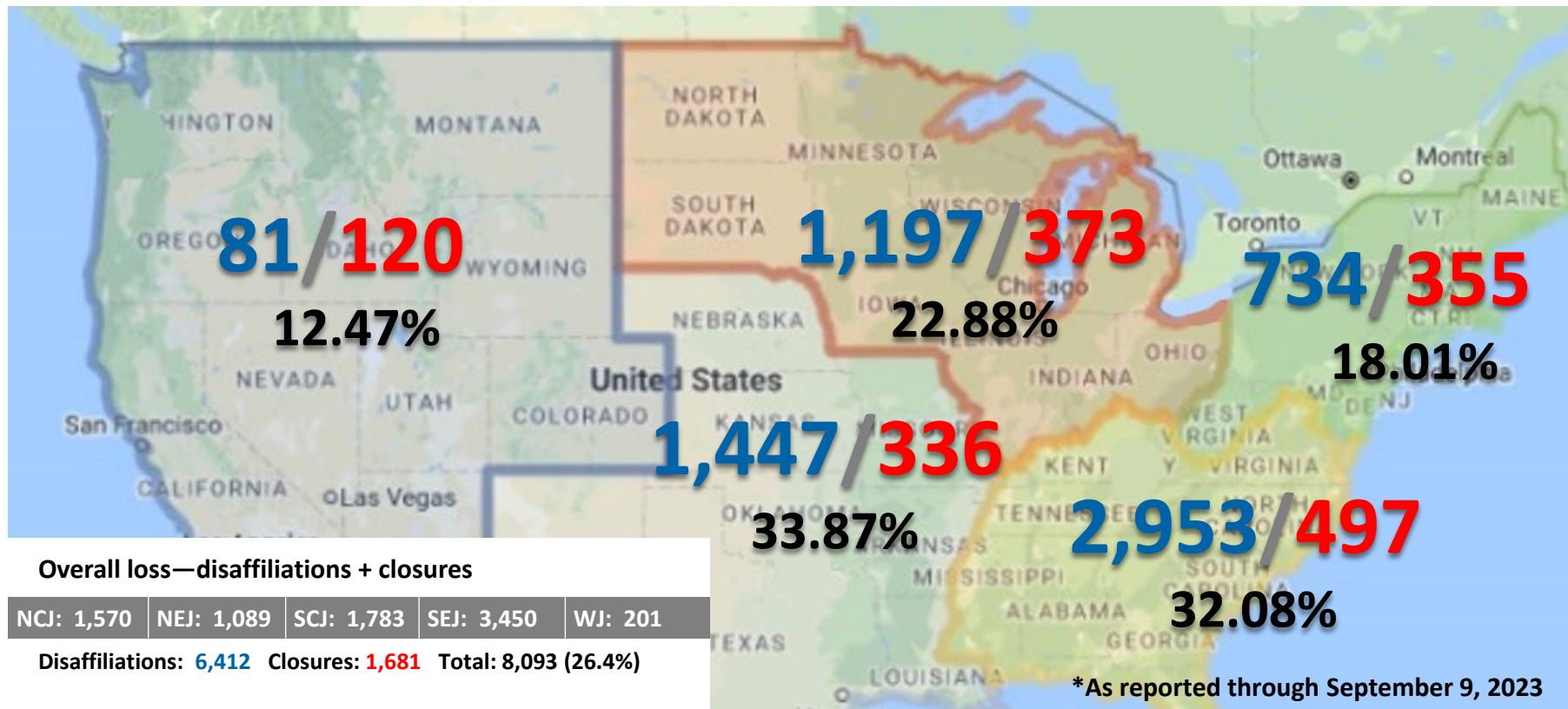
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# The UMC in the United States

## Disaffiliations and Other Observations

# Church Disaffiliations/**Closures** Since 2019\*



Overall loss—disaffiliations + closures

NCJ: 1,570 | NEJ: 1,089 | SCJ: 1,783 | SEJ: 3,450 | WJ: 201

Disaffiliations: 6,412 | Closures: 1,681 | Total: 8,093 (26.4%)

\*Total UMC Churches in 2019 = 30,541



# 1

## Observation

### Impact % of Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Expenditures	Churches
North Central	17.66%	22.88%
Northeastern	12.64%	18.01%
South Central	29.55%	33.87%
Western	2.24%	12.47%
Southeastern	24.38%	32.08%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.46%</b>	<b>26.50%</b>

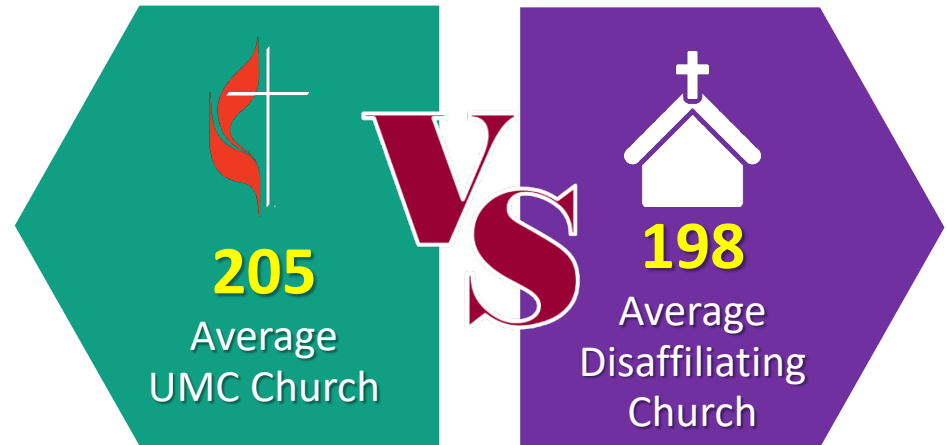
*Estimated data as of September 9, 2023*



## 2

# Observation

**Disaffiliated churches are similar in size (membership) to UMC churches**



*Estimated data as of June 30, 2023*



### 3 Observation

Higher proportion of very large churches (4,000+ members) are disaffiliating

29%

Large churches

VS

23% All churches

*Estimated data as of September 9, 2023. Compares to 2021 Stats File.*

# 4

## Observation



Among disaffiliating churches, 50% or fewer appear to be joining the Global Methodist Church

**Large disaffiliating churches are more likely to become independent Methodist congregations**

# UMC Withdrawal—U.S. Clergy Benefits Impacts

Type of Benefit	Active Clergy		Retired Clergy
	Elders, Deacons (¶360)	Provisional Members, Licensed Local Pastors	
<b>Retirement benefits</b>	Convert income for life to equivalent lump sum account balance	No conversion of life annuity; payments can begin at age 62	No impact; income for life continues
<b>Death benefit (life insurance)</b>	Benefit ends 30 days after withdrawal effective date	Benefit ends 30 days after withdrawal effective date	No impact; death benefit continues

Impacts on any conference-determined benefits vary by conference

# Jurisdictional Conferences—November 2022

- 13 bishops elected for 19 open episcopal areas
- Resolutions approved in all five jurisdictions
  - Regionalization support (Christmas Covenant or U.S. Regional Conference)
  - Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People
  - Leading with Integrity







# Annual Conferences— Observations, Themes

Varied impact of disaffiliations

Anxiety vs. Hope

Resources vs. Wants

Existing and newly elected delegates

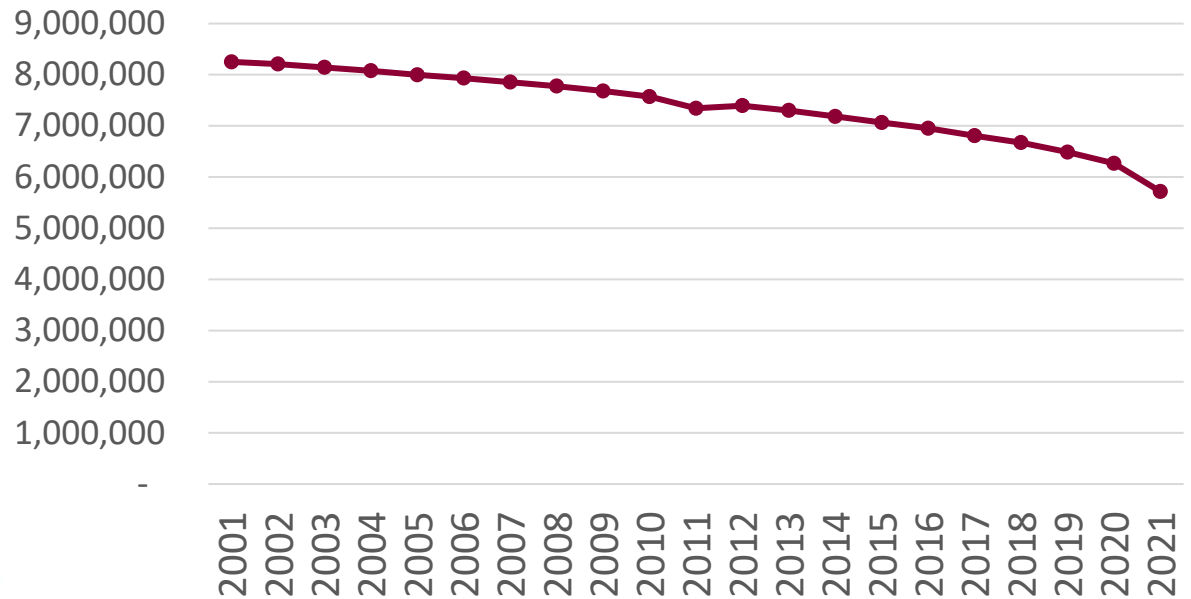
# Other Observations from the U.S. UMC

- Subject to the “post-Christian” trend of Americans leaving church generally
- Continuing impacts of the pandemic
  - In person attendance not fully restored; some attending online or not at all
  - High stress and fatigue among pastors, now compounded by disaffiliations
- Some anxiety about General Conference



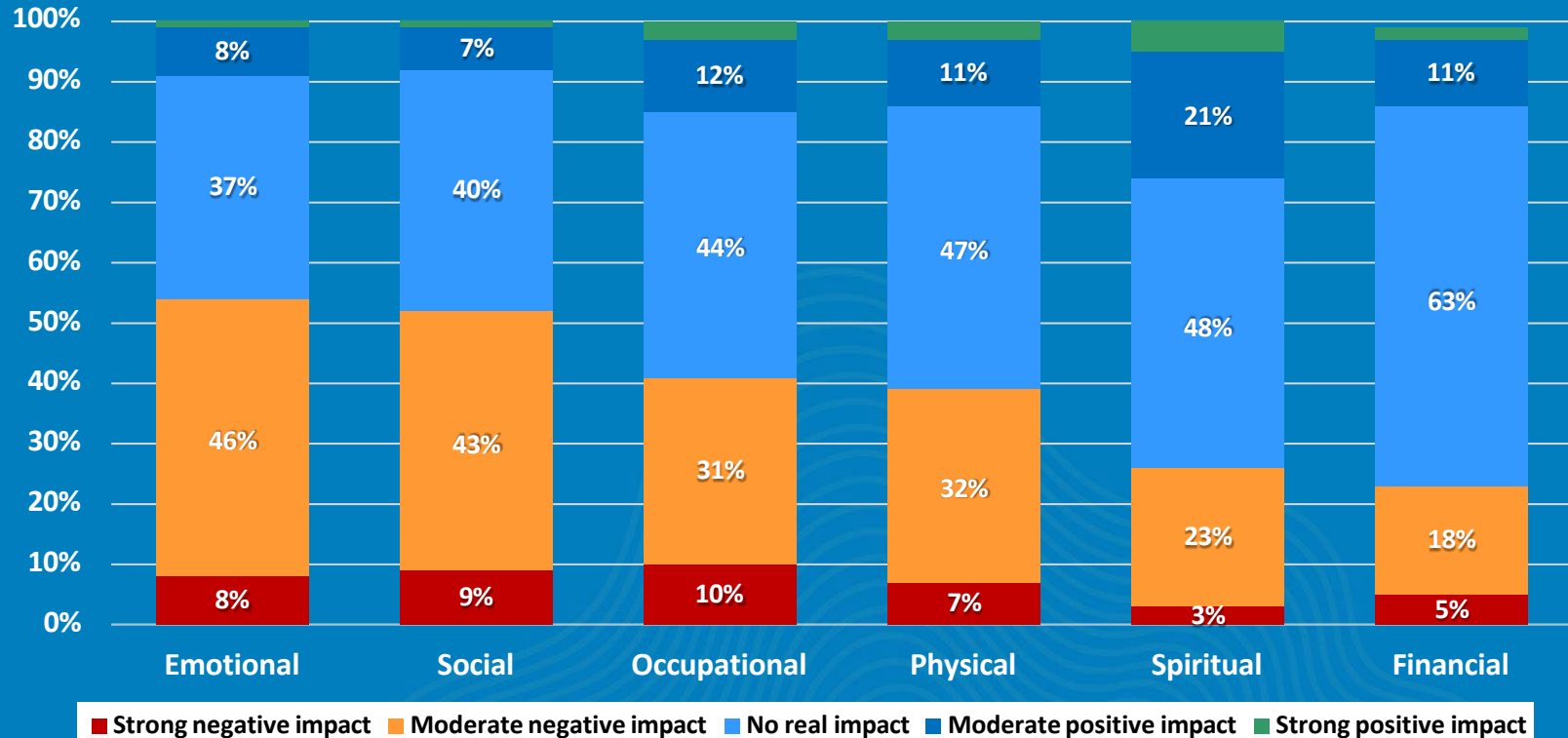
# 20-Year Trend in U.S. Church Membership

United Methodist Membership in the U.S.



# Impact of the Pandemic on Well-Being

More than half of clergy reported the pandemic negatively affected their social and emotional well-being



# Impact of Disaffiliation



- 37% of clergy reported dealing with conflict or difficulty with disaffiliation in their ministry
- Disaffiliation conflict within The United Methodist Church impacts all dimensions of well-being
- Clergy who reported **some or a lot** of disaffiliation conflict or difficulty had higher risk of arthritis\*, functional difficulty from depressive symptoms, social connection, occupational stressors and financial stress than clergy who reported **little or no** conflict

*\* Arthritis is associated with inflammation, which can increase as stress levels increase*

# Positive Indications for the UMC in U.S.

- Readiness to move from conflict to mission and ministry
- New faith communities prompted by disaffiliations
- Heightened unity and sense of purpose

“The best of all is,  
God is with us.”



– John Wesley  
(final words)

# Questions? Comments?





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