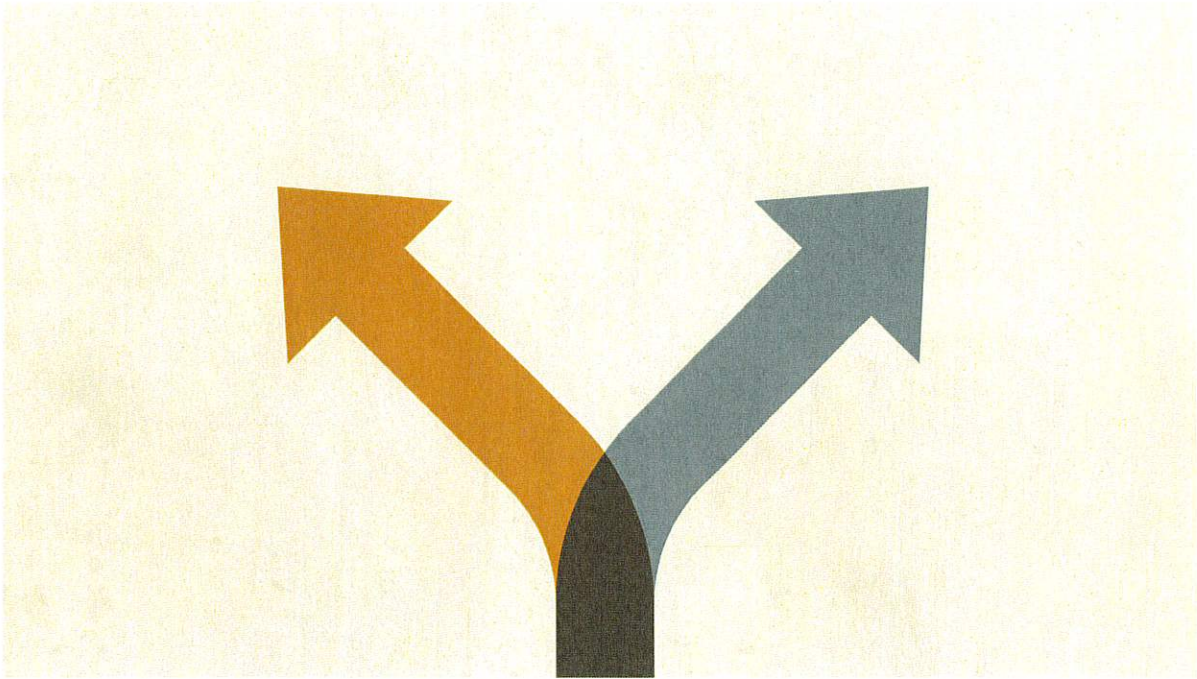


First Methodist Church of Hartselle

Discernment Packet for Affiliation / Association



Key Dates: Discernment and Vote

- **6/21/23, 6:30-8:30 pm**– Churchwide meeting in the Ministry Center with representatives from Global Methodist Church; Free Methodist Church; Forged Network
- **7/16/23** – Begin 40-Day Churchwide Discernment Period
- **8/25/23** – End 40-Day Churchwide Discernment Period
- **8/27/23, Sunday School hour** – Meeting in the Ministry Center for Congregation and Leadership Team to discuss options and answer questions. Opportunity to provide feedback.
- **9/12/23** – Administrative Council Meeting to determine ballot and date for Churchwide vote.
- **9/24/23** – Anticipated date for church wide vote. Could change based on Administrative Council approval.

Members Discernment Process

12 Steps Following the St. Ignatius Method



1. Our Decision in One Question: Should we affiliate with the Global Methodist Church, The Free Methodist Church, or be independent within the Forged Network?

2. Over the next 40+ days, commit to discern God's will with the help of the Holy Spirit. The leadership team is providing devotional thoughts for each day as you pray.

3. Each day or as frequently as possible, pray for openness to God's will and to be free of prejudice, hurts, and personality infirmities. These are disordered thoughts.

Sample prayer: Lord, I am not you; I am frail and lack perfect knowledge. Give me the inner freedom and balance I need to answer this question. Lead me, Holy Spirit. Show me which choice will lead this church to glorify You by strengthening our efforts to live the Great Commandment and Great Commission (completely loving You and wishing to proclaim Your gospel to the world). Give me the freedom to be true to my deepest convictions and authentic Christian thoughts. Set me free from sinful ways to hear you. Show us the best choice, Lord, that our vote may reflect it.

4. Ask a spiritually mature person to help you pray and think. You might discuss the obstacles blocking you, which might incline you to a choice.

Remember, Obstacles are hard to recognize. For instance, things like grievances with the past denomination might influence you. We are subject to disordered minds like being attached to inferiority complexes, superiority complexes, or glorified self-images; "should" that tyrannize you; perfectionism, fears, materialistic greed, and possessiveness; past hurts and self-pity; competitiveness that leads to control or envy; impatience with yourself or others; lust (sexual motives), ingratitude, and irreverence; desires for control, power, status, and prestige, all or any can sabotage you in hearing the Lord. So, each day, ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

5. Each Day, as preparation for your prayer, read over slowly, carefully, and attentively any one or all the following Scripture passages:

Luke 17:5-6	Luke 12:22-32	Matthew 13:44-46
Matthew 14:22-33	Luke 18:35-43	Mark 10:17-22

Notice the passages that strike you most strongly. Make these passages the source where you talk with God about the areas where you need freedom. Ask, above all, for a deep love: love for God, the people affected by the decision, and yourself. Pray that no self-centered attraction or aversion about a choice will sidetrack you from what the Holy Spirit points you to.

6. Take one morning a week to think about all the necessary information (See Comparison Chart and all Info meetings scheduled below).

Seek out all relevant specifics relating to the decision: Who? What? Where? When? How much? Why? Be satisfactorily informed. Look at your notes from information gatherings and in your ring binder.

7. Considering step 4, Repeat the third step daily: Pray for openness to God's will.

Pray again in light of the data you have gathered and the counsel of others. New feelings and desires will rise that need to be shared with God so that He might purify them. This process is a "freedom check." Ask yourself which alternative will give the most glory to God by helping us live the Great Commandment and Great Commission (loving Jesus and wishing to proclaim His gospel to the world.) Seek to be honest about your deepest convictions and authentic Christian thought.

8. At the end of the 40 days, gather all the reasons for and against each alternative in the question (See the Pro/Con table Attached.)

***Sample Prayer:** Holy Spirit, be with me as I make my list. Give me light to see what choice to make and what will best honor and serve You, my neighbor, and true Christian conscience. Help me know I am not alone and that your will can be found in all these choices before us. Amen.*

9. Conduct a formal evaluation of each choice's advantages and disadvantages.

This evaluation aims to see which advantages and disadvantages seem to come from the influence of the Holy Spirit and which do not. Attempt to get in contact with your motives and values. You may have to spend considerable time on this step to do this well. It may take some days.

Repeat step 3

Sample prayer: Lord, make me open and free. I confess that things about me could inhibit freedom and openness to you. Are there any (silence)? I call on You for help to detach from disordered thinking. Grant me deeper faith in you and love for you.

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages by asking four questions:

- Which reasons are the most important? Why?
- What values are preserved or realized by each option? (Many advantages and disadvantages may be pointing to the same value.)
- Which option leads to God's service and better serves the growth of your true life in the Holy Spirit?
- Which option seems more consistent with your faith journey and history with God?

10. Observe the direction of your will while reflecting on the advantages and disadvantages.

As you evaluate the choices, your desires will be influenced by the Holy Spirit; your will becomes more inclined toward one option and less toward the other. These inclinations may fluctuate between options. Pay attention to these inner movements. Pray for light from the Holy Spirit about them. Eventually, your will is likely to focus on one of the alternatives. If your will does not settle on one choice but continues to fluctuate between the two, either disordered thinking influences you or more choices are acceptable. This is a signal to do some more prayer and trust.

***Return to Step 3.** Ask God to free you from selfish inclinations and lead you to worthy motives. Pray that the Holy Spirit draws your will to God's will.*

11. Ask God to give you feelings of consolation about the preferred option.

Holy Spirit, console my heart. Grant me joy, enthusiasm, deeper faith, greater hope and trust, greater love, confidence, and courage. Let these things guide me to the truth. Amen.

These senses of consolation accompany your desires when they are pointed toward loving and serving God, others, and your Christian conscience. They are very different from the feelings accompanying your desires when they are influenced by disordered thinking aimed only at your selfish ways. If your feelings fluctuate between comfort and emptiness, you may be influenced by mixed motives and disordered thoughts. If so, return to Step 3: pray for freedom and openness to God.

12. Trust in God and make your decision. Vote

Confirm the decision with your intended vote.

Live with the decision for a while to see whether your thoughts, desires, and feelings continue to support it. If not, new data is needed, and the process must be redone. The church will vote on the scheduled date, TBA. Remember, this is how we bind on earth the things of God. Take comfort in the outcome of the vote if the commands of Scripture are not at stake.

Hartselle First Methodist Discernment Chart

	Global Methodist Church	Free Methodist Church	Forged Network
General Conference	YES	YES	Quarterly Gatherings for information and ministry
Election of Bishops	Bishops are elected at General Conference.	Bishops are elected at General Conference.	No Bishops
Accountability of Bishops and clergy	Yes, under clear judicial practices and procedures with GMC council oversight with hopes of just resolution. Term limits.	Yes, Term limits of 4 years, accountable to General conference and their annual conference Ministerial Education and Guidance Boards. Subject to charges as all clergy.	Clergy will be accountable to local church board and invited members of the Forged Network.
Boards and Agencies	Yes, streamlined. Focused on the local church. See website.	Yes, different structure. Very lean and focused on local church.	None.
Local Church Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Charge/Church Conference -Church Council -Nominations -Staff-Parish Relations -Finance -Trustees -Other committees as desired <p>(Flexible Structure available)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Society Meeting -Board of Administration -Board of Trustees -Pastor's Cabinet (like SPRC) -Other committees as desired. 	Determined by the Local Church.
Trust Clause/Property	Local church property to be owned by local congregation.	Not required on existing buildings. There would be a trust clause with any new buildings/property.	Local church property owned by local congregation.

Hartselle First Methodist Discernment Chart

	Global Methodist Church	Free Methodist Church	Forged Network
Nature of and scope of Outreach	Likely Global, (U.S., Western Europe, Parts of Philippines, and Africa), former conferences in Latin America and Asia have shown interest.	Global, World church. (Western Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and Middle East.) Very Missional.	The Forged Network is a regional network of independent, Wesleyan churches and leaders. Voluntary Shared Ministry opportunities consisting of: Global Missions, Regional/local missions, Planting churches, raising up next-generation leaders.
Openly Non-celibate homosexual or transgender clergy	No, no move within for such changes.	No, no move within for such changes.	No, according to the agreed upon covenant with the Forged Network.
Female Clergy	YES	YES	Determined by the Local Church
Clergy Deployment	Collaborative system with lay leaders having a bigger voice. No guaranteed assignments. Bishop must sign off on the selection. Minority candidates must be considered.	Collaborative appointment system with lay leaders, Superintendent, pastor and Bishop. No guaranteed appointments. Emphasis on long appointments. No minimum salary.	The local church calls the clergy using all connected available networks and search firms. Self-applied accountability by invitation to the Forged Network on HR matters.
Clergy Pension, Insurance	Provided by Wespath.	Yes, partial vested in 5 years, full vestment in 15. Oversight by FM Foundation but administered by Guidestone. No health ins program.	None provided by the Forged Network. Each congregation responsible to offer 401k and Insurance benefits.
Apportionments	Yes, 1.0% to general church. Conference apportionment ranges from 1%-5.5%. The final amount determined by each conference. Currently 1.5%.	Yes, approaching 10%, 3-year holiday during probation period.	None
Position on Abortion	Pro-life	Pro-life	The Forged Network currently provides no specific position, this will be held by

Hartselle First Methodist Discernment Chart

			the local church.
Theology	Creedal, Classical Wesleyan. See the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline.	Creedal, Classical Wesleyan, Strong Social Witness. See the Book of Discipline of the FMC (2019)	Creedal, Classical Wesleyan. The theological guidelines of the network are provisions for being in covenant. See the Forged Network Beliefs and Culture.
Conflict Management	All conflict unresolved at the local church level will have Presiding Elder guidance.	All conflict unresolved at the local level will have Superintendent guidance.	The network representatives may be invited into any conflict as desired by local church.
Liturgy and Ordination	All liturgy and ordinations will be provided for by the GMC Methodist book of services and practices.	All liturgy and ordinations will be provided for by the Free Methodist book of services and practices.	Liturgy and ordination are developed by the local church in keeping with Forged Network theological standards
Disaffiliation	Yes, after 90 days prayer and discernment and majority vote of church conference.	Yes, but not defined process; may be handled through the closing of a church.	Member church congregations may vote to leave the Forged Network without obligations.

Updated: May 25, 2023

Global Methodist Church

Advantages	Disadvantages

Free Methodist Church

Advantages	Disadvantages

Forged Network

Advantages	Disadvantages

Additional Notes

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