



The Oklahoma Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Inc
1501 NW 24th Street, Oklahoma City OK 73106-3635

Statement on Church of the Servant lawsuit — Aug. 21, 2023 Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church

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As was the case with previous rulings regarding the United Methodist Church's documented processes and polity, the ruling today blatantly interferes with an internal matter of church self-governance and should be protected under the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

The Oklahoma Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to adhering to church law, following the disaffiliation process and representing the conference. We have consistently honored the documented and approved disaffiliation process for every church that has expressed interest in disaffiliating, and Church of the Servant is no exception.

The courts have no role to play in the management of church affairs including local church disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church. The interpretation of the Book of Discipline and the documented disaffiliation agreement should be left to the UMC processes.

Unfortunately, this ruling takes away the rights of the Church of the Servant members who have twice voted to remain a part of the United Methodist Church. The ruling also unfairly directs the Oklahoma Annual Conference to modify the disaffiliation process it has been using for all other churches seeking disaffiliation.

As we do with other unfounded and unnecessary litigation, the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church will represent the conference and defend church polity. Distractions like these are unfortunate, though, because we would much prefer to spend every bit of our energy making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The conference will continue to defend its rights as a religious organization and the rights of its members and local churches to the free exercise of their religion without interference from secular courts.

We will appeal this ruling without delay.

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