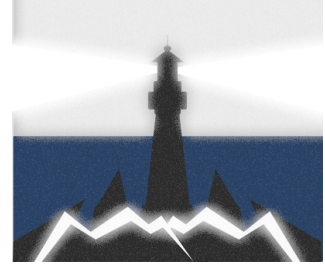


Lighthouse Congregations

(Part of the *UM Collective Movement* in the WNCC)



Lighthouse Congregations are local churches in the WNCC that are particularly equipped to welcome anyone whose church has closed or disaffiliated. If you find yourself in these circumstances, a Lighthouse Congregation may be just what you need to fulfill your desire to *Remain-UMC*. Consider these United Methodist faith communities a resting place, with people who will care for you while providing a haven of peace and grace.

Lighthouse Congregations will:

- 1) Provide a welcoming place to belong during this time of grief and transition, **which might be for just a season, or for a lifetime**. This includes a safe space with caring relationships, listening hearts, and unconditional love within a congregation that is confident it is remaining in the UMC.
 - 1) Provide all forms of pastoral and laity-driven care.
 - 2) This may also include providing physical space for “Remnant” groups to gather as they consider what it looks like to stay together.
- 2) Offer ministry opportunities in which to engage – or not. There will be no pressure.
 1. Worship: Providing worship opportunities whether online or in person. These services will be intentional about engaging and welcoming new people into their midst. They will also include the sacraments of communion and baptism.
 2. Discipleship: Creating space to learn and grow, through small group gatherings, Bible studies, and prayer opportunities.
 3. Mission: Inviting fellow United Methodists into opportunities to serve through hands-on ministries. These might include anything that involves making a difference and sharing the love of God with others.
- 3) Organize local Remaining UMC groups by proactively finding and connecting with individual persons and groups that feel displaced by disaffiliating churches.
- 4) Connect individuals or groups with Conference and District resources to help them discern their next steps as they consider a new church home.

Whether you are an individual or a group of people who have become displaced or churchless because of closing or disaffiliation, Lighthouse Congregations will be there for you during this difficult time. As you consider what is next, specific pathways from which you may choose will continue to emerge as the Conference, Districts, and local churches come together to be The Connection at its best.

Lighthouse Congregations are part of the UM Collective Movement which seeks to be a connecting space for those who find themselves displaced because of disaffiliation. Its mission is to provide care, a place to belong, and tangible pathways to explore the next steps for those on this difficult journey. The UM Collective is an online community that will connect you with real people for anyone who might be wondering about different ways to remain United Methodist. For more information, visit <https://www.wnccumc.org/remaining-umc>.

We love you. We care about you. We're here for you.

Becoming a Lighthouse Congregation

Process:

1. Review the “Lighthouse Congregation ” material.
2. Meet with your Church Council or Leadership Board to discuss whether this would be a good fit for your congregation. In doing so, churches who wish to become a Lighthouse Congregation should commit to the following:
 - 1) Provide a welcoming place to belong during this time of grief and transition, which might be for just a season, or forever. This includes a safe space with caring relationships, listening hearts, and unconditional love.
 - i. Equip leaders to go deeper in developing listening skills and learning about trauma-informed care.
 - ii. Cultivate and ensure a non-combative atmosphere that avoids the “rhetoric and divisiveness” of the present circumstances.
 - iii. Provide all forms of pastoral and laity-driven care.
 - iv. If needed, be willing to provide physical space for “Remnant” groups to gather as they consider what it looks like to stay together.
 - v. Consider establishing a “Remnant Group” designated fund in order to receive tithes and offerings
 - 2) Offer ministry opportunities in which to engage – or not.
 - i. Worship: Providing worship opportunities whether online or in person. These services will be intentional about engaging and welcoming new people into their midst. They will also include the sacraments of communion and baptism.
 - ii. Discipleship: Creating space to learn and grow, through small group gatherings, Bible studies, and prayer opportunities.
 - iii. Mission: Inviting fellow United Methodists into opportunities to serve through hands-on ministries. These might include anything that involves making a difference and sharing the love of God with others.
 - 3) Organize local Remaining UMC groups by proactively finding and connecting with individual persons and groups that feel displaced by disaffiliating churches.
 - i. Actively communicate Remaining UMC and BeUMC language, stories, and signage.
 - ii. Help individuals and groups organize in order to reach people from disaffiliating churches who want to Remain UMC.
 - iii. Cast the vision in committees, teams, groups, and worship to be open, caring, and sensitive to everyone who is going through a disaffiliation experience while offering their Lighthouse church as a place of refuge, safety, and hope.
 - 4) Connect individuals or groups with Conference and District resources to help them discern their next steps as they consider a new church home.
 - i. Lighthouse churches will keep up to date with information, resources, processes, and opportunities that Remnant UMC folks might need and will share them in balanced and non-threatening ways.
 - ii. Help individuals and groups organize in order to reach people from disaffiliating churches who want to Remain UMC.
 - iii. Look for and cultivate the possibilities for new types of faith communities that might emerge from the movement of people who are seeking to Remain UMC.

1.

2. To make the motion official, you can vote on the following statement:

Our congregation, insert church name, moves that we become a Lighthouse Congregation of The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church in partnership with The United Methodist Collective Movement of our District and Conference. In doing so, not only do we commit to remaining a part of The United Methodist Church, but we also commit to serving those who have lost their church homes through disaffiliation or closure. We will partner in this work in the following ways:

- 1) Provide a welcoming place to belong during this time of grief and transition, **which might be for just a season, or forever**. This includes a safe space with caring relationships, listening hearts, and unconditional love within a congregation that is confident it is remaining in the UMC.
- 2) Offer “No pressure” ministry opportunities (for just a season, or forever). These will include worship, discipleship, and mission.
- 3) Organize local Remaining UMC groups by proactively finding and connecting with individual persons and groups that feel displaced by disaffiliating churches.
- 4) Connect individuals or groups with Conference and District resources to help them discern their next steps as they consider a new church home.

All that is required to pass the vote is a simple majority. This is not a Charge Conference action.

3. Declare your intent with The Collective by filling out the form on the WNC Conference website. (THIS FORM IS NOT YET LIVE ... PLEASE EMAIL Rev Rob Hutchinson <rhutchinson@wnccumc.org>, (And your DS...) until the form is ready for input with the same information below.)

Please be sure to include the following information:

- Name of Church
- District
- Name of Pastor
- Names of the members of your Church Council that were present when the decision to pursue being a Lighthouse Church was discussed and passed.

4. Once you have received confirmation, schedule the required equipping session.

Still working on the “form” of the Equipping Session.

- **Simple (probably online, unless Districts want to hold separate ones in person)**
 - o **Overview of the above material, affirm congregation is Remaining UMC, and discuss any logistical questions.**
- **Intended for the pastor and a few key leaders**
- **NO cost to churches.**

5. After the equipping session, share the statement with your congregation, via an announcement in Sunday worship and through other forms of communication, such as newsletters, emails or text chains. To do so the following statement may be made:

At our Church Council (Leadership Board, Administrative Council) met on _____date_____and approved the following:

Our congregation, _____insert church name_____, has decided to become a Lighthouse Congregation of The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church in partnership with The United Methodist Collective. In doing so, not only do we commit to remaining a part of The United Methodist Church, but we also commit to serving those who have lost their church homes through disaffiliation or closure. We will partner in this work in the following ways:

- 1) Provide a welcoming place to belong during this time of grief and transition, **which might be for just a season, or forever**. This includes a safe space with caring relationships, listening hearts, and unconditional love within a congregation that is confident it is remaining in the UMC.
- 2) Offer “No pressure” ministry opportunities (for just a season, or forever). These will include worship, discipleship, and mission.
- 3) Organize local Remaining UMC groups by proactively finding and connecting with individual persons and groups that feel displaced by disaffiliating churches.
- 4) Connect individuals or groups with Conference and District resources to help them discern their next steps as they consider a new church home.

5. Include a statement in your bulletin and on your church websites, so that your church may easily be identified as a Lighthouse Congregation of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

_____Church name_____ is a Lighthouse Congregation of The Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, in partnership with The United Methodist Collective and the Office of New Faith Communities.