



**Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche** Gebiet von Mittel- und Südeuropa  
**Eglise Méthodiste Unie** Région de l'Europe du Centre et du Sud  
**United Methodist Church** Area of Central and Southern Europe

**Bischof Dr. Patrick Streiff**

Badenerstrasse 69  
Postfach 2111  
CH-8021 Zürich 1  
☎ +41-44-299 30 60  
✉ bischof@umc-cse.org

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## **Bulgaria and Romania have decided to leave The United Methodist Church**

**The Provisional Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) in Bulgaria and Romania was held from March 31<sup>st</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup> in Varna, Bulgaria, under my leadership as Bishop of the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe. The members of the Annual Conference of The UMC in Bulgaria and Romania – without legal basis in the *Book of Discipline*, and in a session under the leadership of Superintendent Daniel Topalski – voted unanimously in favor of separating from the UMC and joining the Global Methodist Church at its creation on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. The church in Bulgaria wants to implement this resolution immediately. The church in Romania wants to find a mutually respectful way of leaving The United Methodist Church as soon as it will be possible.**

### Background:

An Annual Conference of the UMC is the basic body of the church, but not an autonomous organism. It is part of a larger connectional church. A *Book of Discipline* serves as its ecclesial law and allows to an Annual Conference outside the USA to vote on leaving The United Methodist Church (Paragraph 572), but such action needs to go through a process of approval and validation by the respective central conference and all of its annual conferences, as well as General Conference on world-wide level.

All delegates of the Annual Conference had received a resolution for separating from the United Methodist Church and joining the Global Methodist Church. The resolution explicitly stated that the separation shall not be based on the before mentioned paragraph. As presiding bishop, I explained to the Annual Conference that there is no other legal basis in church law for a separation. Therefore, a vote would not be possible.

The members of the Annual Conference did not agree. As bishop, I explained them that the question before us then becomes a question of law that I will submit to the Judicial Council – the highest judicial body of the church - for ruling. Until such ruling is made, all action on it is pending. I told the members that any further step on this matter needs therefore to be postponed.

However, the members then continued the meeting without my presiding, elected Superintendent Daniel Topalski as their presider, discussed the resolution, and finally voted unanimously in open vote in favor of it.

On April 4, the new superintendent of Bulgaria confirmed to me that he wants to follow and implement the resolution taken on April 1<sup>st</sup>. On April 6, the superintendent of Romania confirmed to me that they have decided in their council to work with me on a respectful and peaceful agreement for leaving the church in the course of this year.

I deeply regret that the church in Bulgaria was not willing to follow the church order for leaving The United Methodist Church and decided to cut all ties towards the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe. With the UMC in Romania, I will continue to work for a mutually respectful way of leaving The United Methodist Church.

Bishop Dr. Patrick Streiff