



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING 11/10/2024

Come affirm Middle Church's Decision to Discontinue Our Dual Affiliation with the RCA and the UCC and to Solely Affiliate Solely with the UCC.

FAQ

1. Why did the Middle Church Board vote to disaffiliate with the RCA?

Driven by our vision statement and our commitment to radical welcome, Middle Church's board voted over two years ago that they could no longer abide the theological conflict they had with the RCA's ambivalence on fully welcoming LGBTQIA+ siblings of God into the life of the church. Even though the Collegiate Church had not decided about relating to the RCA, Middle Church's board unanimously voted to discontinue that affiliation, when it was appropriate to do so, given denominational dynamics. Now is the time to enact that decision.

2. How do we affirm the decision our board has made?

All of you are invited to come to the meeting on November 3, at 4:15p. Come in person, or come on the live stream. Listen and learn. If you are a member, you can vote. Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis will moderate the meeting in the sanctuary, and Rev. Natalie Renee Perkins will moderate in the digital spaces. We will be able to take question. Our board members and staff will be in the room and in the digital spaces to count your vote. We need 75% of the voting members present

3. What type of governance does Middle Church currently follow?

Middle Church is the oldest congregation in the Collegiate Church, which is the oldest continuous protestant church in North America, dating to 1628. In fact, the Collegiate Church is the first church in the Reformed Church in America; you can read our story here. [History of the RCA | Reformed Church in America](#).

The RCA follows a [Presbyterian polity](#), meaning that decisions are made by elected deacons and elders—our board—rather than by direct congregational vote. In Congregational polity, the Congregations make all the decisions around hiring, programming, budget etc.

4. What is the Middle Church Board, and how are the deacons and elders elected?

Deacons and elders at Middle Church are nominated by the board and may be elected to serve one or two three-year terms. These elected leaders serve on the governing body that makes key decisions for the church. Together, Deacons, Elders and the Senior Minister (the teaching elder) are equal decision makers on the board.

5. What is the Collegiate Church Consistory, and what role does it play in denominational decisions?

The Collegiate Church Consistory is the governing board that oversees all four congregations within the Collegiate Church. Over eight years ago, this board voted to dually affiliate with both the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC), giving each congregation flexibility in denominational affiliations.

6. What options are the Collegiate Church considering regarding the Reformed Church in America?

Each congregation within the Collegiate Church is deciding on one of the following options:

- Remain affiliated with both the RCA and the UCC
- Solely affiliate with the RCA <https://www.rca.org/>
- Solely affiliate with the UCC <https://www.ucc.org/>

7. Will Middle Church's historical relationship with the RCA end when we leave?

No, Middle Church and the Collegiate Church will maintain our historic relationship to the RCA. This decision is focused on formal affiliation and mission rather than erasing historical ties.

8. How does Middle Church's leadership feel about this decision?

The board of Middle Church made this decision because it is deeply concerned about the harm caused to LGBTQIA+ members by the RCA's stance on queer people in the church. The Board thinks transitioning away from the RCA is the right choice. This decision reflects a commitment to support and affirm all members of the congregation, especially those who have experienced hurt from church policies.

9. Will the congregation have an opportunity to discuss and affirm this decision?

Yes. At the Congregational Meeting **today at 4:15p EST**. The meeting will be live-streamed, and a **Zoom link** will be provided for digital conversations, The vote to affirm will be a hand-count vote in the Judson Meeting room and it will be a hand-count in the zoom room and in the livestream.

10. What does it mean for Middle Church to affiliate solely with the UCC?

Middle Church is already affiliated with the UCC, a denomination known for its progressive stance on social justice issues, including antiracism and strong support for LGBTQ+ rights. The UCC's values align closely with Middle Church's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and fierce love. Read about the [United Church of Christ](#) here.

11. Do our mission, vision, worship and or programs change when the congregation affirms this vote to only affiliate with the UCC.

No. Middle Church's mission, vision and values remain the same, rooted in just, revolutionary love of God, neighbor and self, which means social justice, and inclusivity. This decision reinforces those values by choosing to align with a denomination that more fully shares a commitment to inclusion and justice.

12. How does Middle Church's affiliation with the UCC impact its commitment to social justice?

Affiliating solely with the UCC strengthens Middle Church's commitment to social justice, as the UCC has a strong track record of supporting LGBTQIA+ rights, racial justice, and other issues central to Middle Church's mission. This alignment allows the church to continue and expand its advocacy work alongside a denomination with similar values. By affiliating with one denomination, we cut our denominational dues by 50%.

13. What will happen to Middle Church's connection with other RCA congregations?

Middle Church has strong connections across Christian denominations and in interfaith spaces. We will continue to build movements in partnerships that are Christian and interreligious.

14. Will the UCC require Middle Church to change any of its practices or beliefs?

No, the UCC respects the autonomy of each congregation. This means Middle Church can continue its own worship practices, theological perspectives, and community activities without interference. The UCC's structure allows for individual congregations to express their beliefs in ways that best serve their communities.

15. How does the RCA's stance on LGBTQIA+ inclusion differ from the UCC's?

The RCA's official stance has historically been conservative regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion, and this has led to policies that are seen as exclusionary and hurtful to queer members. In contrast, the UCC openly affirms LGBTQ+ rights and fully includes queer individuals in its leadership and membership, aligning more closely with Middle Church's values of radical inclusivity.

16. What happens if other Collegiate Churches make different affiliation choices?

The Collegiate Church (Old English for Collegial) is historically one church on four campuses. Each of the four Collegiate Churches is making its own decision about denominational affiliation.

[Link for more information on what the RCA stands for on issues](#)

[Read here for more information on what the UCC says about the LGBTQIA+ Community.](#)