

Customer FAQs

What is happening at Cokesbury?

CokesburyNext is an initiative to expand the ways we serve customers and meet their needs. Many of our customers prefer making purchases at Cokesbury.com and through our 1-800-672-1789 Cokesbury Call Center, so we are increasing our focus and enhancing these sales channels to better serve them. In order to invest in these channels, we will close all Cokesbury brick and mortar stores where customer demand is decreasing as costs steadily grow.

Why are Cokesbury stores closing?

Increasingly, customers prefer the convenience and speed of purchasing on the web or over the phone. The cost of maintaining buildings, inventory and staff in dozens of brick and mortar stores has exponentially increased at the same time that customers show that they prefer other ways to preview and buy resources for their ministries. To assure that we are meeting customers in the ways they tell us they want most, we are enhancing the online shopping experience at Cokesbury.com, extending Cokesbury Call Center hours, adding new local Cokesbury Sales Representatives across the U.S. who will meet locally with church staff, lay volunteers and pastors at their own churches and increasing the frequency and scale of Cokesbury's presence at special events such as the annual Christian Education Showcase. Closing the local stores allows us to make even larger investments in other already popular Cokesbury sales channels.

How will I be able to purchase books and other resources and supplies for my church? Will I still have my Cokesbury charge account?

Cokesbury will continue to offer a full array of products, which you can view and select at Cokesbury.com, by calling 1-800-672-1789 or contacting the Cokesbury Sales Representative in your area. Cokesbury charge accounts will continue just as they do now and customers may use their charge privileges online, over the phone or in person at events. In the coming months, we will be announcing even more special events at churches and other locations across the U.S. where you can review materials and talk with Cokesbury staff about your needs.

Is Cokesbury closing both full line and seminary stores?

Yes, Cokesbury will be closing all 38 full line stores and 19 seminary stores.

Is Cokesbury going out of business?

Cokesbury is not going out of business. There are multiple ways our customers order and receive the resources they need. Our sales data and customer research show that most already prefer making purchases at Cokesbury.com and through our Cokesbury Call Center at 1-800-672-1789. We are increasing our focus on these sales channels, as well as expanding our Cokesbury Sales Representatives and enhancing Cokesbury Events to ensure that we better meet our customers' needs.

I have great memories of visiting Cokesbury stores. Why are you eliminating something with such a deep history?

We love that Cokesbury brick and mortar stores have played such endearing roles in the lives and ministries of so many for decades. Maintaining brick and mortar stores as one kind of outlet among our several retail channels worked best in a different era when costs were not as great and access to other channels like Cokesbury.com wasn't possible. As we've seen with bookstores and independent shops all over the U.S., economic realities make maintaining brick and mortar stores less and less viable. Customers are choosing other ways to get the information they need, make choices and handle purchases. We are committed to serving not only the church as it was but as it is becoming, and now is the time to make the change and concentrate on delivering resources to customers in the ways they prefer.

When will my local Cokesbury store close?

Cokesbury stores will close based on local circumstances, lease expirations, etc., with all current locations ending business no later than April 30, 2013. You can check plans for each store at CokesburyNext.com where ongoing updates will be provided including the anticipated dates for specific store site closings.

What will happen to Cokesbury store employees?

Cokesbury store employees have served thousands of individuals and churches in wonderful ways. We honor their ministry and will make concerted efforts to assist them in the transition to new work and to help ensure their well-being. Spiritual and other counseling will be available and we will provide outplacement services and severance packages for employees.

If you are an employee looking for more information, please visit the UMPHNet intranet site.

I don't like making purchases online, but I work during the day. How can I place my order?

As part of CokesburyNext, we will be extending the Cokesbury Call Center hours to better suit your schedule. With these changes, you will be able to speak to a knowledgeable member of our team and place your order as late as 10:00 p.m. Eastern Time through the end of this year. Early in 2013 we will expand our hours to serve customers 24 hours a day, 6 days a week.

Can I use Cokesbury gift cards online?

Yes, Cokesbury gift cards can be used online at Cokesbury.com and through the Cokesbury Call Center at 1-800-672-1789."

Will I have to pay shipping now that I can't make purchases in a store?

While some of your purchases through Cokesbury will require that you pay shipping, it is our plan to frequently extend special offers of free or reduced cost shipping. You will also find that sale pricing at Cokesbury.com, as well as special offers through our catalogs, will offset the cost of shipping in many cases. We invite you to sign up for our email and catalog lists so that you never miss an opportunity to make your purchases during special campaigns. Overall, customers will find that the convenience of shopping with Cokesbury from the comfort of home or office, as well as savings in time and fuel will offset any modest shipping charges.

What will I be able to buy through Cokesbury.com, the Cokesbury Call Center, local events and directly through my Cokesbury Sales Representative?

Many of the products currently available at Cokesbury stores, as well as additional items including church furnishings, altarware and apparel for clergy and choirs can be purchased through Cokesbury.com, by contacting Cokesbury at 1-800-672-1789 or through local Cokesbury Sales Representatives.

Will the new Cokesbury Sales Representative positions be filled by current Cokesbury employees?

There will be approximately 40 Sales Representative positions, and we expect that many will be filled by current employees.

How do I contact one of the new sales representatives?

As representatives are hired their contact information will be available on both websites.

You had great events at your store. Will you be holding those elsewhere?

Yes. We will partner with local churches and others in the future to ensure that events like Christmas Open House and VBS Showcase and other events are offered across the U.S.

Will you be liquidating the books and other products in the stores?

Most of the products in our stores will be held at our Nashville warehouse and available for customers as they place their orders. Some items will be sold by the stores before closing, and other products may be donated to local ministries.

Author FAQs

What does CokesburyNext mean for my book or resources?

Abingdon Press and Cokesbury authors have long benefited from our strong direct relationships with churches and church leaders, and this will continue to be the case. All Abingdon Press and Cokesbury publications will continue to be available through Cokesbury.com, highlighted in catalogs and sold from the Cokesbury Call Center at 1-800-672-1789. With the growing number of Cokesbury Sales Representatives and special events where products can be seen first-hand, the materials we publish will continue to be highly visible and readily available both through Cokesbury sales channels as well as through other booksellers.

Will the promotion of my works change?

Promotional activities will change but not decrease. We will follow our customers' habits in promotion just as we are in our retail presence. As we expand our online capabilities, we will meet people where they are with online promotions, enhanced e-mail, smart ads and more. The Cokesbury catalogs and direct mail will continue but with new ways to connect the customer with the call center and the website. Our growing number of Cokesbury Sales Representatives will meet customers face-to-face through sales calls and events leveraging opportunities to share samples and videos and to lead them through books and resources. Sales and promotional activity to our wholesale accounts are not part of this change.

How will I know that Cokesbury Sales Representatives are promoting my work?

There are several ways to see the sales work in action. The Cokesbury Sales Representatives will be using Cokesbury catalogs and mail promotions as a basis for their presentations. You'll be able to see how your products are presented in these important print promotions. The Cokesbury.com site will also be a mobile tool for representatives to use to present books and programs to congregations with access to excerpts, videos, and special price offers. These visible selling tools will assure you that your work has presence.

Will you be reducing your inventory and will this reduce sales?

Our inventory levels will not affect your sales in a negative way. We will in fact have greater control over and access to your book stock in our centralized warehouse than we had across the chain of store locations.

How will you host author signing events now?

We will have many of the same opportunities in place. In-store book signings have dwindled in success while signings after speaking events and conferences continue to be good ways to meet your readers. Our Cokesbury Sales Representatives will be in locations around the country to help with special events and arrangements.

Will you change the types of things that you sell?

Cokesbury continues to serve congregations, their leaders, Christian readers, and seekers. We expect the majority of our product selection to remain the same.

Who can I contact with more questions?

Your editor and your associate publisher will be available to talk with you in greater detail about your book, publicity, and promotion plans and sales channels.

Vendor FAQs

Will Cokesbury still feature my products?

Cokesbury will continue to expand our product features and promotional campaigns direct to our customers through catalogs, direct mail, email, website features, outbound telemarketing, social media, and event displays. We are also expanding our local sales capabilities through the personal selling efforts of Cokesbury Sales Representatives in more than 40 markets nationally.

Will my volume with Cokesbury be reduced by this change?

We anticipate that the strength of our direct to church and consumer businesses will grow exponentially with the enhancement of Cokesbury.com, our Cokesbury Call Center, an expanded event schedule and the increase in sales representatives. Our ongoing catalog programs and various channel initiatives will help in the continued support of your products.

How will Cokesbury effectively sell custom items to churches sight unseen?

67% of the 200,000 customers who shopped with Cokesbury last year did not have a Cokesbury store within 50 miles. We effectively sell custom items to many of our customers through specialists in the Cokesbury Call Center, through product display features on Cokesbury.com, and during special events. With Cokesbury Sales Representatives in more than 40 markets, church committees will also have the opportunity to meet with a Cokesbury representative at their convenience, review product catalogs and samples and receive support during their selection and ordering process.

Who should I talk to when I have new products or need additional support for existing products?

Please feel free to contact the appropriate Retail Merchandise person:

Michael Hupp – Executive Director, Merchandise – Mhupp@cokebury.com

Kevin Brisbon – Books and Bibles – kbrisbon@cokebury.com

Lisa Lehr – Christian Ed, Childrens, Music/Video – Llehr@cokebury.com

Aneal Joseph – Church Supplies – ajoseph@cokebury.com

Heather Ashton – Gifts and Stationery – Hashton@cokebury.com

Will Cokesbury be able to pay any outstanding balance due to me?

You will see no change in your financial relationship with Cokesbury. We are -- and will continue to be -- a highly trustworthy and financially stable partner.

When will you stop issuing PO's direct to the stores?

We plan to continue to support customer needs beyond store closings through our direct sales and Cokesbury.com avenues. Our store purchases will continue to support the Lent/Easter season as well as customer special orders until each store is closed. A schedule of store closings will be determined by December 1 and posted on CokesburyNext.com under the vendor tab. Following store closure, we will be making purchases for Cokesbury.com, direct sales and our distribution center.

Should I expect a lot of my products to be returned?

It is our intention to maximize our selling opportunities in the stores and assess our stock needs for our other channels on a case by case basis during the coming weeks.

Do you still see us as a viable partner in light of these changes?

Our categories and product mix will continue to change as the demands of our customers change. It is our goal to expand our offering of products through Cokesbury.com, the Cokesbury Call Center and through a larger number of church and ministry events. We are excited about the opportunity to represent both traditional and new products to our customers through personal meetings with members of our Cokesbury Sales Representatives team.

Will the Cokesbury Sales Representative program be able to grow any of my orders?

We are confident in the power of consultative selling and excited about the convenience, value, access and personal service that the Cokesbury sales channels can offer our customers. This combination of sales channels makes Cokesbury a very viable -- and uniquely positioned -- partner.

Who can I contact with additional questions?

Tammy Gaines – Vice President Business Operations – Tgaines@umpublishing.org

Michael Hupp - Executive Director, Merchandise – Mhupp@cokesbury.com

Or you can contact your buyer/merchandiser for more information.

Church Leader FAQs

I have never used Cokesbury.com or its call center. How will Cokesbury be able to support my congregation's ministry without a store?

Many former store locations will be supported by a Cokesbury Sales Representative who will make personal visits to clergy, staff and volunteers in their offices and/or churches. CSRs will assist with information about teaching and learning curriculum, special orders, program resources, church supplies and a host of other products and services. Every church's purchase history will also be available to the Cokesbury Sales Representative and to your support team at the Cokesbury Call Center so that they can answer questions about each church previously purchased. The Cokesbury Call Center staff is a highly trained and knowledgeable team that can answer all of your questions and will make receiving samples and ordering easy for you. This team can also walk you through how to make a purchase at Cokesbury.com, where you can charge the order to your church's Cokesbury account.

What will happen to all of the events previously hosted at Cokesbury stores?

We will partner with the annual conference, districts and local churches in the future to ensure that events like Christmas Open House and VBS Showcase and other events are offered across the U.S.

Who do we contact for Cokesbury events?

You can contact your Cokesbury Sales Representative or the Cokesbury Events Team for personal assistance with your events. Contact information will be communicated to all customers and will also be listed on both the Cokesbury.com and CokesburyNext websites for future reference.

Will Cokesbury attend the Annual Conference sessions and other district conference events?

Yes, Cokesbury will continue to be present at many of these types of events.

What will happen to Cokesbury store employees?

Cokesbury store employees have served thousands of individuals and churches in wonderful ways. We honor their ministry and will make concerted efforts to assist them in the transition to new work and to help ensure their well-being. Spiritual and other counseling will be available and we will provide outplacement services and severance packages for employees.

If you are an employee looking for more information, please visit the UMPHNet intranet site.

Will you continue to produce/publish resources?

Yes, Abingdon Press will continue to publish a wide array of resources. This change does not impact the publishing program of Abingdon Press at all.

Can I use Cokesbury gift certificates online?

Yes, Cokesbury gift cards can be used online at Cokesbury.com and through the Cokesbury Call Center at 1-800-672-1789.”

Will I have to pay shipping now that I can't make purchases in a store?

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Who can I contact with additional questions?

Please visit cokesburynext.com and review the FAQ section of the site. If your questions are not answered there, additional questions can be submitted at the www.cokesburynext.com web site or by emailing cokesburynext@cokesbury.com. We will respond to all questions as quickly as possible.