

Future of the UMC & Formation of the GMC

Informational Meeting | June 12, 2022

A Splintering Church

- We are currently in the midst of a **denominational split** within the United Methodist Church
 - The **Global Methodist Church** is forming as a new denomination breaking off from the UMC
 - Though **human sexuality** is often the named cause of the split, the differences & divisions run much deeper than that
 - The history of the church, and the Methodist movement, includes a plethora of splits & mergers...
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The United Methodist Church

- In 1968, the **United Methodist Church** was formed when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church united to form a new denomination
 - The United Methodist Church has, since its founding, considered itself to be a “**big tent**”
 - We have always been a **theologically & culturally diverse denomination**
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A Diverse Communion

“United Methodists all over the globe are liturgical, contemporary, charismatic, social activists, urban, suburban, small town, rural and much more. We are children, youth, young adults, senior adults, new Christians, and mature Christians. We are present on four continents, in more than 45 countries, and we comprise an unknown number of cultures and languages. We are a holy communion of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and perspectives united by the Holy Spirit, driven by the mission of Christ, and bearing the good news of an unmerited grace that changes lives and transforms communities.”

A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church

A Big Tent... *Ideally*



Progressive

Theology

**Upheld by
healthy tension**

Traditional

Progressive

Traditional

Humanity

**Created
Goodness**
(made in God's
image, "beloved")



Healthy Tension

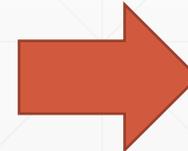


Sinful Nature
(fallen, broken,
in need of a Savior)

**Neglect need for
repentance & a
Savior**



Danger Zone



**Fail to see the
image of God in
others**

Progressive

Traditional

Person & Work of Jesus

Example in Life



Healthy Tension

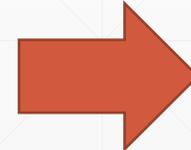


Atoning Death

**One among many
moral teachers**
(sanctification without
justification)



Danger Zone



**Neglect growth in
Christlikeness**
(justification without
sanctification)

Progressive

Traditional

Mission & Vision

Societal Transformation
(social justice)



Healthy Tension

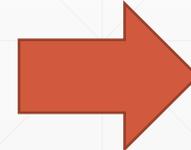


Personal Conversion
(evangelism)

Gospel without Jesus



Danger Zone



Gospel reduced to "me & Jesus"

Progressive

Traditional

The Bible

Read the Bible
through the lens of
history/experience



Healthy Tension



Read
history/experience
through lens of the
Bible

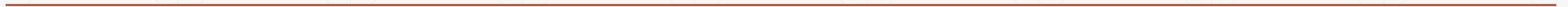
Erosion of biblical
authority



Danger Zone



Bibliolatry
(worshipping the Bible in
place of the One to
whom it points)



Progressive

Traditional

Judgment & Accountability

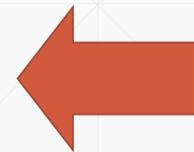
“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Matt 7:1-2)



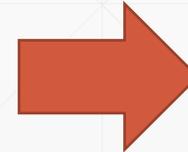
Healthy Tension



“I’m not responsible for what the outsiders do, but don’t we have some responsibility for those within our community of believers? God decides on the outsiders, but we need to decide when our brothers and sisters are out of line...” (1 Cor. 5:12-13, Msg)



Danger Zone



Anything goes
(fail to practice discipline)

Self-righteously judgmental
(fail to extend grace)



A Big Tent... *Realistically*



Progressive

Theology

Traditional

Feeling the tension...

- The topic of **human sexuality** has been the most prevalent & publicized point of contention, but is by no means the only one
 - Progressive Christians tend to view the church's response to the LGBTQ community as a matter of **justice** (i.e. standing against oppression). Traditional Christians tend to view it as a matter of **holiness** or **obedience**.
 - The church's response to the LGBTQ community has often been presented as a choice between either **fully accepting** or **fully excluding**.
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The Book of Discipline

“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self.

The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

(¶ 161G)

The Book of Discipline

“The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.” (¶304.3)

“Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.” (¶341.6)

How we got here...

- Since the 1972 General Conference, there have been **various calls to change this statement**. Specifically, to remove the language of “incompatibility with Christian teaching” and to remove the prohibitions related to ordination and the solemnizing of marriages.
 - At the 2016 General Conference, the delegate body agreed to the formation of a **Commission on a Way Forward** and to holding a **Special Session of General Conference** in 2019 to hear and debate the findings and proposals brought forth by that Commission.
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How we got here...

- At the 2019 Special Session, the One Church Plan was rejected and the **Traditional Plan was upheld**.
 - As a result, the wording in the *Book of Discipline* related to human sexuality remained unchanged. However, the **tension only grew stronger**. Traditionalists made the decision to leave.
 - In January 2020, following an extensive process guided by an outside mediator, a diverse group of United Methodists announced the creation of a proposed piece of legislation, the ***Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation***, which, if voted upon at General Conference, would allow for an amicable separation between traditional and progressive United Methodists.
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How we got here...

- **March 3, 2022** – The United Methodist Church, citing ongoing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, **postponed** (again) **General Conference** to 2024 (originally scheduled for 2020).
 - On that same day, the **Global Methodist Church** (GMC) announced a launch date of **May 1, 2022**.
 - The Global Methodist Church is a **new denomination** formed as a traditional expression of the Methodist movement.
 - With the departure of the GMC, it is assumed that the **UMC** will continue to **move more progressive theologically**
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What is before us...

- A decision to remain in the **United Methodist Church** or to join the **Global Methodist Church** (could be broader than those two options).
 - Joining the Global Methodist Church would entail **disaffiliation** from the United Methodist Church.
 - It is still being determined whether that must take place via ¶2553 (currently available route, temporary, “human sexuality” stated reason for leaving) or if the provisions under ¶2548.2 can be used (which the GMC is advocating for). Under either paragraph, disaffiliation would entail the payment of apportionments and pension liabilities (cost for LUMC ≈ \$350,000-\$450,000).
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Our Discerning Process

Inclusive of our entire church family & guided by our Leadership Board

- **L**istening – *Listening to the voices of all those in our church family*
 - **E**valuating – *Evaluating what we have heard & creating a “snapshot” of who we are as a congregation*
 - **A**ssessing – *Assessing with thoroughness & openness the options before us*
 - **D**eciding – *Based upon our listening, evaluating, & assessing the Leadership Board will bring a recommendation to the members of the congregation for a vote*
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Overlapping Phases & Teams

- Listening, Evaluating, & Assessing will be **distinct yet overlapping phases** of our discerning process.
 - The Leadership Board has also been divided into **3 teams** for the sake of providing leadership for each of these phases.
 - In putting those teams together, much care was taken to ensure that each team was **as diverse as possible**—specifically with regard to theological perspective, gender, & service attended. We also took into consideration the preferences and giftedness of our Leadership Board members.
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Our next step...

- Our initial intention was to start our process with Listening.
 - However, we have come to realize that we **will not know what questions we ought to be asking** until we have learned more about the future vision of both the UMC and the GMC.
 - Therefore, the initial step in our process will involve doing some collective *Assessing* work prior to Listening.
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Assessing

- **A representative from the United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church will be coming to LUMC** to share about their denominational vision for mission and ministry going forward. (The differences between the two denominations will not be merely theological. There will be structural/institutional differences, as well as different visions for being the church in the world.)
 - **Rev. Dr. Tim Bias** will be coming as a representative of the UMC
 - **Rev. Dr. Jeff Greenway** will be coming as a representative of the GMC
 - These gatherings will be **open to the entire congregation**. They will take place in fairly close succession, but not on the same evening.
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Assessing

- Our Assessing Team will be our **in-house “experts”** (as much as possible) related to the future vision of the UMC & the GMC.
 - They will also be **making information & resources available** to the entire congregation.
 - If it is determined that **other options** (going independent or joining another Wesleyan denomination) ought to be more thoroughly investigated, our Assessing Team will lead the way with that.
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Listening

- Based on what we heard from the representatives of the UMC & the GMC, as well as the initial work of the Assessing Team, the Listening Team will be **developing questions** that will guide and give structure to our listening.
 - **Everyone** in the congregation will be **given the opportunity to share their responses** to those questions, either by means of an online survey or an “interview.” *This will not take place in large or small groups.*
 - Our preference will be to **sit down in person**—to actually *hear & see* your responses to the questions.
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A note about anonymity...

We are looking into online survey options that can be completed anonymously while also ensuring that only one survey per person is submitted. If you chose to share your responses in an in-person interview, your name will not be connected to your responses when that information is passed along to the Evaluating Team.

Evaluating

- The Evaluating Team will be **organizing the collected responses** and **developing a “snapshot”** of our congregation.
 - They will also determine the **best method for presenting that “snapshot”**—charts, graphs, written statements, etc.
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Deciding

- The Evaluating Team will **present their findings** initially to the Leadership Board.
 - Based on the “snapshot” developed by the Evaluating Team and the work of the Assessing Team, the **Leadership Board will prayerfully determine a recommendation to bring before the congregation.**
 - If a Church Conference is necessary, **only *members* will be able to vote.** Disaffiliation would require a **2/3 majority vote.**
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Q & A



Additional Resources...

- Website for UMC – umc.org (West Ohio Conference – westohioumc.org)
 - Website for GMC – globalmethodist.org
 - Current UMC Book of Discipline - cookesbury.com/book-of-discipline-book-of-resolutions-free-versions
 - GMC Transitional Book of Doctrines & Discipline - globalmethodist.org/what-we-believe/
 - West Ohio UMC e-newsletter - westohioumc.org/conference/news-media
 - GMC e-newsletter – globalmethodist.org/connect/
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Blessed Be the Tie That Binds

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of
kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes,
our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be
joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

