



DISCERNING *OUR FUTURE*

History & Overview

History & Overview

- The United Methodist Church was created in 1968 and has never been truly united. The UMC's theological impasse is rooted in our differing beliefs regarding:
 - The Sovereignty of God
 - The authority of the Bible
 - The interpretation of the Bible and its impact on how we live out our faith
 - The Lordship of Jesus
 - Sexual Ethics
 - The Definition of Marriage

History & Overview

- Every 4 years the General Conference (GC) meets and considers the language of the Book of Discipline. Recurrent issues involve matters on Human Sexuality and the definition of marriage.
 - 2016 - The Council of Bishops (COB) was asked to lead and develop a way forward through this conflict. Three plans were created:
 - Traditional Plan aims to strengthen the denomination's prohibitions against clergy officiating at same-sex unions or being "self-avowed practicing homosexuals.". The plan also allows a "gracious exit" for churches to disaffiliate based on reasons of conscience regarding sexuality. This exit is referred to in Paragraph 2553.
 - One Church Plan – offered a working solution for all constituency groups. It allowed more conservative bishops, conferences, churches, and pastors to continue their current practices. It allowed more progressive bishops, conferences, churches, and pastors to fully include LGBTQ persons in the life of the church.
 - Connectional Conference Plan - "The Connectional Conference Plan started with the assumption that The United Methodist Church's longstanding difference of opinion concerning human sexuality is not a problem to be solved or even an issue to be managed," Bishop Gary E. Mueller said. "Rather, it is the presenting issue for the radically differing theological perspectives that will not go away, cannot be ignored and very well may increase."

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Special GC in 2019:

Traditional Plan narrowly passed. Simultaneously, legislation passed that allows Progressive churches unable to live with this decision the ability to disaffiliate. (Paragraph 2553: expires Dec. 2023)

Progressive Churches publicly state they will NOT utilize 2553 and will not leave UMC without substantial legal battle. Additionally, 2 of the 5 jurisdictions stated they would simply disobey the Book of Discipline.

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The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation – an option for easy exit and amicable separation was to be voted on at GC'20. That conference along with GC '21, 22 and was finally postponed to GC 2024.

In May 2022, Several Traditional Methodists launched the Global Methodist Church – A Traditionally Conservative denomination.

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Now, numerous UMC Congregations are weighing the option of remaining in the UMC or invoking 2553 to join another denomination or even to move forward as independent churches.

In July 2022, FUMC Shreveport's Church Council reviewed the information from the Strategic Planning Team and voted "to organize and deploy a Discernment Task Force...to educate our congregation ...regarding the Future of FUMC-S."

History & Overview



Now, First United Methodist
Shreveport begins our 40
day period of Discernment
to determine where we go
from here.

History & Overview

- What exactly does Paragraph 2553 say?

¶ 2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality—

Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

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- Due to the continued disagreement in the Denomination, UMC Membership in the United States has declined year after year since the merger in 1968.
 - US UMC Membership fell from over 10.9MM in 1968 to 6.2MM in 2020.
- Due to the ongoing division taking place in the greater denomination of the UMC, many congregations across the world are discerning their own pathways for future affiliation based on their core values and theological beliefs.
- The history is long and complicated, but ultimately, upholding the traditional, apostolic witness of Holy Scripture as authoritative in all matters of faith and practice is the central reason why we are having this period of discernment.
 - “The issue for traditionalists is not whether the denomination changes its official doctrinal standards. It’s whether those doctrinal standards are worth the paper they are written on. Can doctrinal standards be standards if they are not enforced?”
– Thomas Lambrecht <https://goodnewsmag.org/misinformation-abounds/>

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- There is widespread *agreement* that separation is the best and final way to resolve the deep divisions. By parting ways, each wing of the denomination — progressive and traditional — is free to continue in ministry without the lingering burden of these matters.

- *“In these times of transition, our prayer is that we might bless and send each other into new forms of Methodism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”*

- Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey
April 21, 2022

Theology

What are the Primary Theological Issues/variances?

- The Sovereignty of God
- The validity and relevance of the Holy Bible – in its entirety.
- That Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, Our Savior and THE ONLY PATH to Salvation.
- Original Sin

Theology

What are the Distinctive Theological Differences between Traditional Methodists & Progressive Methodists?

We acknowledge that some people identify as "Centrist" or "Compatibilist" and recognize parts, not all, of both Traditional and Progressive theology. However, for the purposes of our Discernment, the taskforce is detailing the primary two theologies in order to clearly compare/contrast the theologies with which we are having to align.

Theology

What are the Primary Theological Issues/variances?

- The validity and relevance of the Holy Bible – in its entirety.

Traditional Methodism

Historic and Biblical; choose to reaffirm the traditional Biblical teachings

The Bible is The Word of God and divinely inspired by God. Canon is closed.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

There is Absolute Truth in the Bible.
Matthew 5:18

Progressive Methodism

Culturally Driven; Favor a secular worldview that is fluid and shaped by political pressure from social justice groups

The Bible contains words of God, but the writings are products of "the writers time in history" and is a fallible record of human experiences; Canon is open to accept "new revelations"

Parts of the Bible are true. My truth is not your truth; people define their own truth

Theology

What are the Primary Theological Issues/variances?

- That Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, Our Savior and THE ONLY PATH to Salvation.

Traditional Methodism

Jesus is "THE" way

John 14:6

Progressive Methodism

Jesus is "A" way