

Theology - What are the Primary Theological Issues/variances?

Traditional Methodism

If God says it is sin in the Bible, then it is sin; belief in original sin .

Progressive Methodism

Some things in the Bible might have been a sin then, but are not now; humans are born good; the story about the Garden of Eden is a fairytale

- Original Sin –

- Articles of Religion: Article VII – Of Original Sin or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

- Confession of Faith of the EUB: Article VII — Sin and Free Will

We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

Theology – Available on Discernment Website

Traditional Methodism

Transformation of the world is a consequence of making disciples of Jesus Christ; the church is not built on politics, but on Jesus.
Matthew 28:19-20

Atonement & forgiveness is by faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection
Romans 3:38, 5:1; Ephesians 2:8-9

Sin needs conviction, repentance, justification, conversion, salvation

Progressive Methodism

Transformation of the world is through political action, often in line with liberal political causes. Promoting inclusion is the highest value of an unapologetic social justice agenda

Sin is corrected through acts of social justice and mercy; Jesus' death on the cross was not necessary or divine

No need for repentance; universal salvation is a "civil right"; forgiveness is not a gift of grace

Theology – Available on Discernment Website

Traditional Methodism

Believes the incarnation, virgin birth, physical death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus (Apostles and Nicene Creeds)

Practice of homosexuality is a sin
Romans 1: 26-27

Marriage is between one man and one woman; it is God's design for procreation
Genesis 1:27

We are made in the image of God and He created us male and female.
Mark 10:6

Source: Trinity on the Hill

Progressive Methodism

Progressive clergy have publicly professed their unbelief of these. Bishop Joseph Sprague denies the virgin birth. Bishop Oliveto preaches that Jesus was human and "like a hunk of clay, forming and reforming himself". The memory of Jesus' life and teachings inspired His disciples to think He was merely "spiritually alive"

The practice of homosexuality is not a sin;

Marriage is between two persons or any two gender identities; same sex marriage is a human-affirming rite and a sacramental act to be performed in church

Our identity does not come from God; God did not make us in his image. Our gender identity is given to us at birth by "those who care for us" and has nothing to do with biology. God created an infinite number of genders.

Theology

Human Sexuality

- The United Methodist Church has not agreed on issues of Human Sexuality since its formation in 1968.
- The 2019 General Conference created paragraph 2553 in the Book of Discipline to allow for a “gracious exit” of congregations regarding these divisive issues.
- Although difficult, the language of paragraph 2553 requires us to consider and discern our beliefs related to Human Sexuality.

Theology

Important questions we need to ask ourselves:

- What is our source of Truth?
 - Where do we turn to discern right from wrong?
- What do we believe about Scripture?
- What does Scripture tell us about God's Will?
- Are some portions of Scripture less important than other portions?

Theology

Matthew 4: 5-7

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down.

For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Theology

What is the Book of Discipline?

- The book of law for the United Methodist Church, founded on our interpretation of scripture and biblical truth.
- It contains the Constitution, Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements, General Rules, and Social Principles of the church.
- What does The Book of Discipline have to say regarding issues of human sexuality?

Theology

What Does the Book of Discipline Say?

- Paragraph 161c): We affirm the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman.
- Paragraph 161g): The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teachings.
- Paragraph 304.3: ...Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church is not United regarding these issues.

Human Sexuality

Does this mean the Self-Identified LGBTQIA+ are NOT Welcome in our church??

• **NOT TRUE!** FUMC Shreveport views all people as individuals of sacred worth. Therefore, self-identified LGBTQIA+ persons **have been welcome, are welcome and will be welcome and invited to participate in worship as lay congregants or in ministry programs as lay participants.**

• Just as we have always done, **we will continue to extend welcome, grace, and respect to all who call FUMC Shreveport their church home** and all people seeking a relationship with Christ.

Human Sexuality

What is our stance on self-identified LGBTQIA+ clergy and marriage?

- *The Book of Discipline* of *The United Methodist Church* has been the same on this matter since 1972, and yet it is disregarded by progressive clergy and congregations across the denomination with inconsistent accountability or enforcement.
- FUMC Shreveport follows *The Discipline*, in adherence to the authority of Scripture regarding marriage (Genesis 1 and 2, Matthew 15:17-20 and 19:4-6) and sexual practices outside of marriage (Romans 1:18-32, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:8-11).
- FUMC Shreveport acknowledges the increasing defiance and disobedience against the *Discipline* on this matter and is saddened.

Theology

John 8: 1-11

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹ "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Our Options

Option 1:
No
Change

Remain in UMC

Wait for GC '24

Option 2:
Disaffiliate

Invoke Paragraph
2553 and proceed
with Disaffiliation
process

Begin Discernment
on where we go
next

Our Options – Organizational & Financial Implications

	Remain in UMC	Disaffiliate
Apportionments* **	6.5% of budget, [approximately \$300,000 per year]	0% until future affiliation with a Methodist organization

* Estimate from FUMCS Finance Committee

** Estimate from FUMCS SPRC Committee

Our Options – Organizational & Financial Implications

	Remain in UMC	Disaffiliate
Cost to Disaffiliate	Status Quo	Approximately \$1.3M
Trust Clause/Ownership of Property	Annual Conference—we do not own, control property or endowment	Own all property and control of endowments

Our Options

Comparison of Benefits for Both Options

Benefits to Remain in UMC

- Remain part of LAC with same District Superintendent
- No legal or administrative action required
- Remain as part of UMC
- No need to deal with uncertainty of another denomination or independent status
- Current provisions of Book of Discipline remain in place until GC 2024
- Retain Cross and Flame Logo

Benefits to Disaffiliation

- Assurance of continuing the traditional definition of marriage
- Less bureaucracy
- No guaranteed appointments for pastors
- Clear title to real and personal property and NO Trust Clause
- Following disaffiliation, church can discern whether to pursue other denominational affiliation or remain independent.

Our Options

Comparison of Costs for Both Options

Costs to Remain in UMC

- Uncertainty of who will be new Bishop which could make disaffiliation harder at a later date.
- Concern over certain Bishops failing to enforce compliance with the Book of Discipline.
- Concerns over current trajectory of post-separation UMC – Big Tent leaning = One Church Plan.
- Impact of hundreds, if not thousands of churches worldwide leaving UMC, redefining the theological and leadership balance of the church.
- Continued existence of the trust clause against FUMCS real and personal property.

Costs to Disaffiliation

- 2 years of connectional giving - \$270K X 2 = \$540K
- Unfunded Pension Liability - \$660,650
- Legal & Administrative Costs - \$100K
- Approximately \$1.3 million dollars Total for FUMC Shreveport**
- Moving into a new organization
- Signage and logo changes
- Uncertainty and additional staff/clergy efforts to implement

Our Options

Option 1: Make No Change - Remain in the United Methodist Church

- Wait for the General Conference in 2024 to determine what the Denomination will decide regarding these issues and the language in the Book of Discipline.
- Facts to Consider:
 - Should FUMC Shreveport's beliefs differ from the Denomination at the time of the GC'24, the new 2024 COB would determine any rules, regulations and monetary penalties at that time. The current paragraph 2553 will have expired.
 - At this time, over a thousand Traditional Methodist Churches are leaving the UMC denomination. The Traditional Plan passed in 2019 by a narrow margin. With the shift in membership, there is no guarantee how the GC will lean.

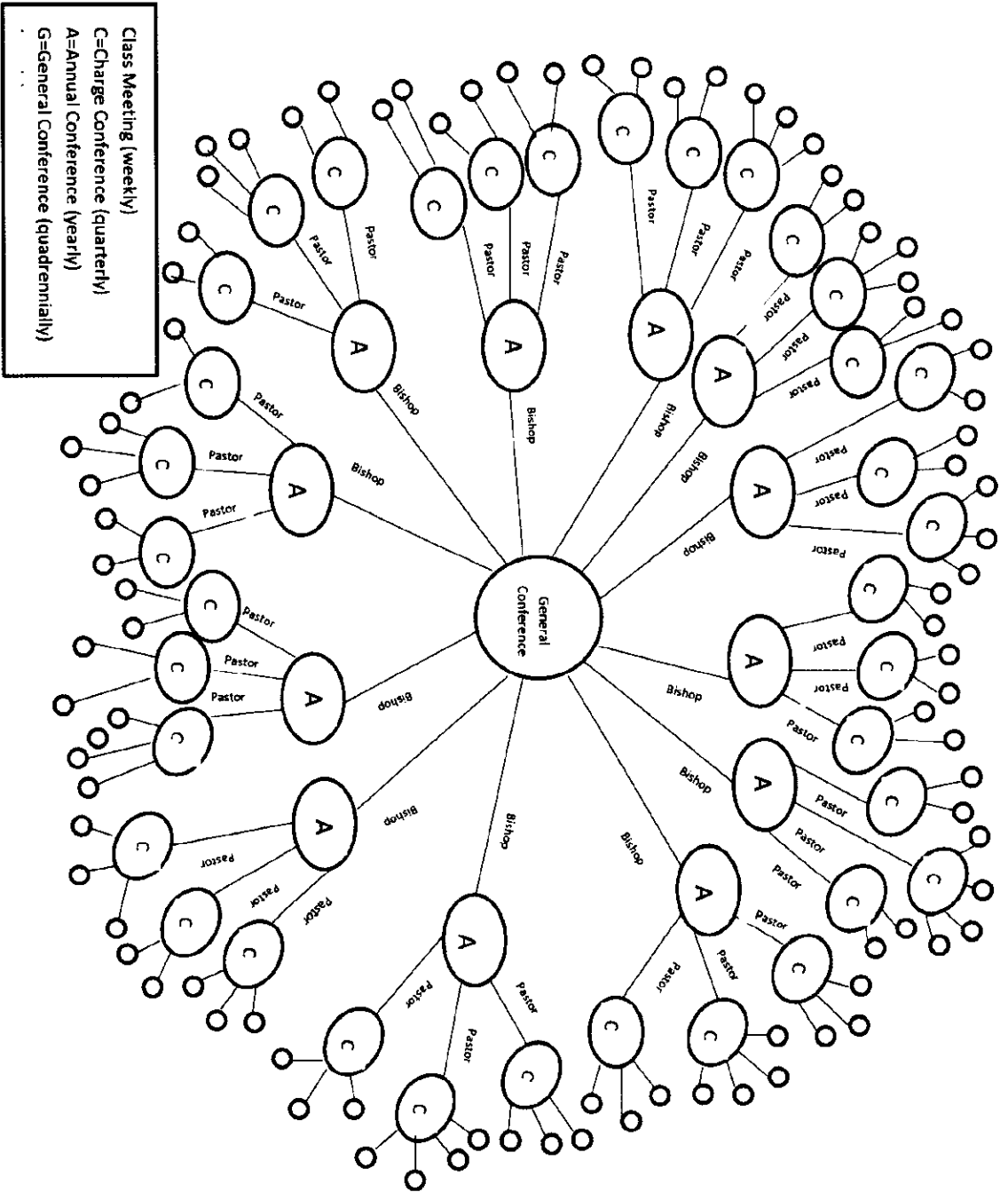
Our Options

Option 2: Disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church

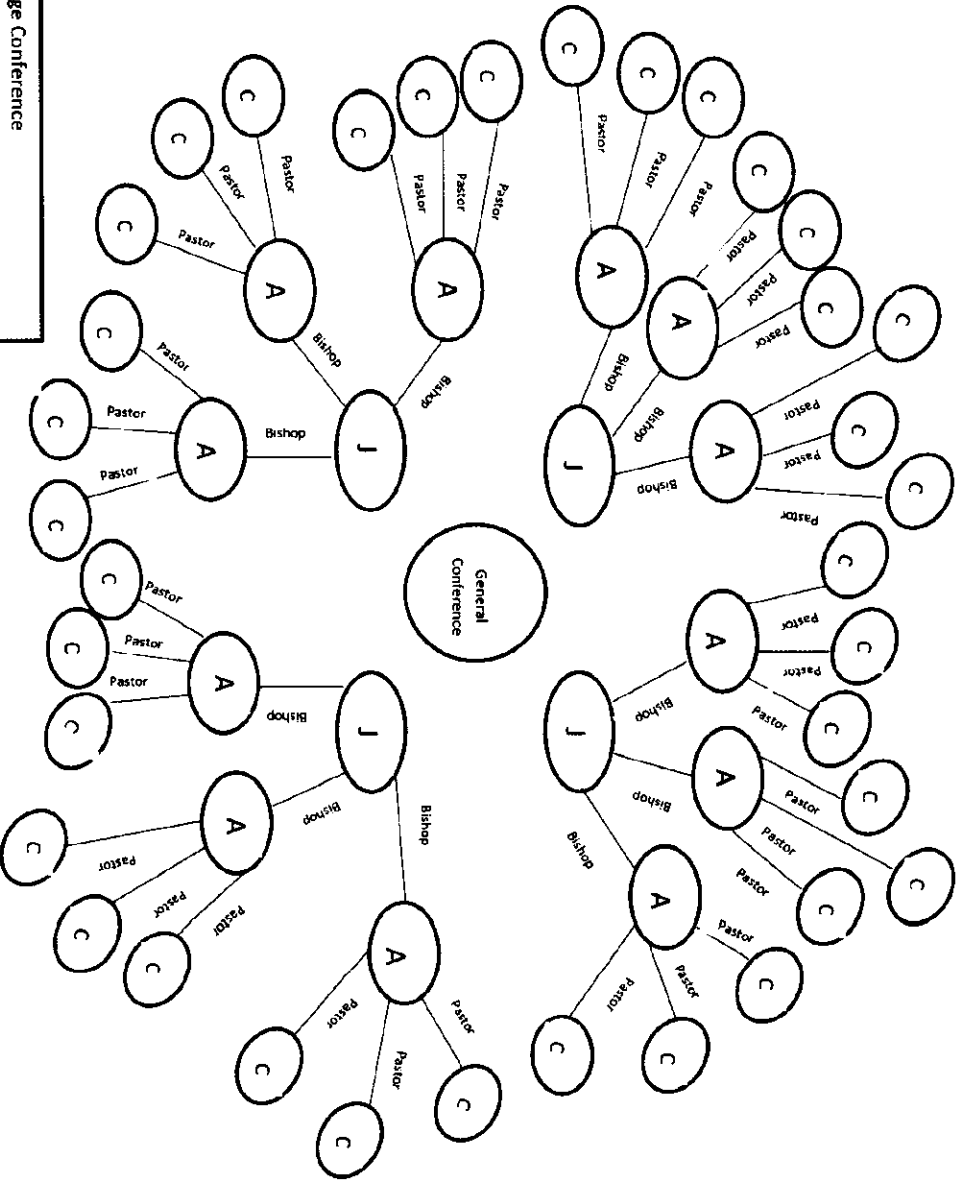
- Invoke Paragraph 2553 and begin the Disaffiliation process.
 - Facts to Consider:
 - This is the only time we can amenablely exit the UMC Denomination with our assets and buildings.
 - If the Congregation elects to Disaffiliate, the Annual Conference must vote to approve our change of denomination and there are costs associated for FUMC Shreveport to Maintain our assets and buildings.
The costs associated with Disaffiliation:
 - 2 years of connectional giving - \$270K X 2 = \$540K
 - Unfunded Pension Liability - \$660k.
 - Legal Costs - \$100K (Estimated)
- Approximately \$1.3 million dollars Total for FUMC Shreveport**

Next Steps

- Please join our FUMC Shreveport Church Family in our guided 40 Days of Prayer.
- The Taskforce invites the entire congregation to attend as many Educational and/or Worship & Exploration Meetings as they are led to attend. There will also be Conversation Circles available.
 - Please go to the Discernment Website (firstshreveport.com/events) to sign up to attend any of these meetings and to Pre-Submit any questions you would like to have answered.
- We also invite everyone to do their own due diligence to review the plethora of resources provided on our website.
<https://firstshreveport.com/discerning-our-future>



ORIGINAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL STRUCTURE (1784-1939)



C=Charge Conference
 A=Annual Conference (yearly)
 J=Jurisdictional Conference (quadrennially)
 General Conference (quadrennially)

1939 MERGER REORGANIZED STRUCTURE (1939-Present)

Brief Timeline*

*While there have been many splinters and separations in the history of Methodism, this timeline will focus only on the key developments pertaining to our current UMC structure.

- 1784 Methodist Episcopal Church formed in America
- 1830 Concerns over lack of laity representation in the General Conference result in the forming of the The Methodist Protestant Church.
- 1844 Concerns of slavery, particularly a Bishop becoming a slave owner, led to the separation of the north and south church - respectively the continuing Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South.
- 1939 After decades of work, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Protestant Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church South reunite, forming the Methodist Church. The emphasis on lay representation from the Protestant Methodist Church is incorporated, and the conference structure is greatly altered to include new jurisdictional conferences, a segregated Central Conference of African Americans, and the Judicial Council is introduced.
- 1968 The Methodist Church merges with the Evangelical United Brethren to form the United Methodist Church. The segregated Central Conference is dissolved, and African American Churches move to their respective geographical jurisdictional conference. Otherwise the 1939 structure remains intact. International Conferences continue to use the name "Central Conference" but is based on geography.

Trust Clause

The Original Trust Clause with John Wesley, it is explicitly required that "those so appointed should preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes upon the New Testament and four volumes of sermons" (Works of John Wesley, vol. 9).

Current Trust Clause in the BOD: All properties of United Methodist local churches and other United Methodist agencies and institutions are held, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination, and ownership and usage of church property is subject to the Discipline.... It reflects the connectional structure of the Church by ensuring that the property will be used solely for purposes consonant with the mission* of the entire denomination as set forth in the Discipline.

*Mission of the UMC: To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World

Forecasting GC 2024 Plans

*It is important to note that the Church's Constitution (the first part of the Discipline) consists of the church's Doctrine and Governing Structure, and amendments requires 2/3 of GC delegates and 2/3 of all AC delegates to change. Other sections of the Discipline, such as the Social Principles, require a simple majority of only GC delegates to change. These sections would include all references and rules related to human sexuality.

One outcome is no change to current discipline, current trends and conflict continue

Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation

The 2020 Protocol would allow for formal division at all levels of the UMC, including a new traditionalist denomination (now named the Global Methodist Church). While this legislation still exists for consideration at GC 2024, some signatories of the Protocol have withdrawn their support or gone silent, casting significant doubt as to its viability. This notable since the signatories originally pledged to "to use their best efforts to persuade any groups or organizations with which they are affiliated to support the legislation necessary to implement the Protocol, and to not participate in or support legislation or other efforts that are inconsistent with the principles and terms of the Protocol and its implementing legislation." [Protocol FAQ]

Continuance of a gracious exit?

Paragraph 2553 expires December 2023. The reason for an expiration date is that nothing of this sort has ever been allowed in the UMC, given the Trust Clause and connectional nature of the church. Many believe that a similar provision will updated and available for continued use, but this is truly an unknown at this point in time.

One Church Plan/Big Tent/Local Option

Alters marriage language to "two people" and removes incompatibility references and standards throughout the Book of Discipline. This would allow churches and pastors to decide their own rules as to marriage, and an annual conference would decide ordination standards. The Big Tent concept then supports a wide range of Progressive, Centrist, and Traditionalist view points and standards within the UMC, and brings into compliance areas of the UMC currently in non-compliance regarding marriage and ordination standards.

The Christmas Covenant

This is a plan to regionalize the UMC with greater contextualization and specific books of Discipline for each region. While there would be some governing principles decided by GC, each region would have greater control to as to its interpretive standards and social principles. The plan changes the name "Central" to "Regional" for all international conferences, and uniquely adds that the US would also now be declared a Regional Conference. In some ways, the system is similar philosophically to Jurisdictions:

"The Christmas Covenant legislation ensures that no regional conference can be forced to do anything against its will. No regional conference can impose on any other regional conference. Recognizing the sacred value of all persons as created in the image of God, the Christmas Covenant encourages regional conferences to consider ministry approaches that reflect the theological convictions of the missional contexts they serve." [Christmas Covenant FAQ]

For example, the US Regional Conference could not impose its social principles on Africa, nor could Africa impose its social principles on the US, reducing the role of General Conference in such matters. As this plan requires eventual constitutional amendments, it is unknown if it will pass.

Other legislation There will likely be additional possibilities explored at GC 2024.



DISCERNING OUR FUTURE

09.21.22

Relativism within the Culture and Church

Rev. Erik Rasmussen

Truth - that which is in accordance with fact or reality.

Relativism - the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

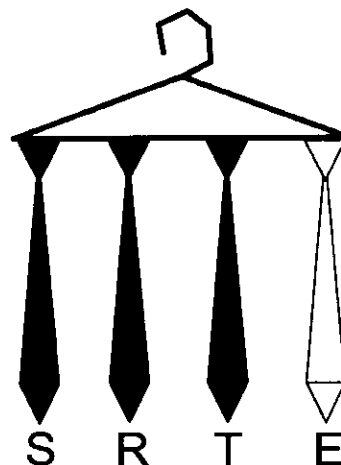
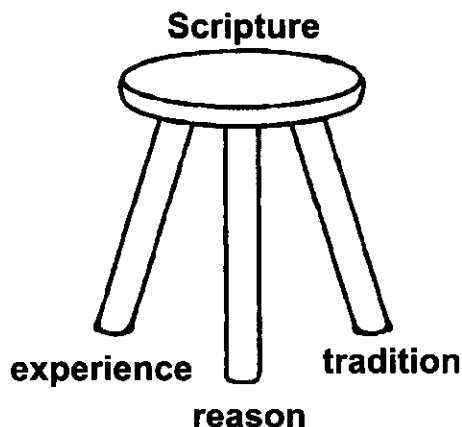
How do we define **Love**? (When Helping Hurts)

Romans 12:1-2 NIV

UMC's belief's about the **Bible** - Our standards affirm the Bible as the source of all that is "necessary" and "sufficient" unto salvation (Articles of Religion) and "is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice" (Confession of Faith).

What is our source for Truth?

Quadrilateral - Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience



Adam Hamilton's change of Heart

What are the two competing beliefs about homosexuality?

Denomination - a subgroup of a religion with a common name, theology and practice

What is the UMC approach? Big Tent Approach (possible that this changes)

1. What do you believe God is guiding you to understand in the realm of Human Sexuality?
2. What affect does this belief have on our future affiliation?

1. Background a) Preamble—**After careful reflection, discussion, and prayer, The United Methodist Church and its members acknowledge fundamental differences regarding our understanding and interpretation of Scripture, our theology, and our practice.** The February 2019 Special Session of the General Conference **did not resolve our differences** related to the full participation of LGBTQ persons in the life of the Church. **The United Methodist Church is at an impasse, individual members as well as the Church at large have been injured, and the Church’s witness and mission are being impeded.** The United Methodist Church has a deep desire to fulfill our long-stated mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The United Methodist Church is committed to recognizing, respecting, and protecting the rights and personal dignity of every person, including people of all races, sexual orientations, genders, national origins, ages, and social classes. A group of leaders, comprising various constituencies of the Church, came together in an effort to reach a gracious and dignified resolution of the impasse, and agreed to a Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. They proposed restructuring and separation as the best means to resolve our differences, making provisions for The United Methodist Church to move forward as two or more separate entities, each of which remains true to its theological understanding while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person. **This proposal was crafted in recognition of the regional contexts and divergent points of view within the global United Methodist Church** and as a faithful step that maintains the possibility of continued cooperation around matters of shared mission and interest, enabling each of us to live out our faith authentically. The General Conference agrees with these principles and enacts this new paragraph to implement the recommendations made in the Protocol. **The alternatives to implementing the Protocol in its final negotiated form are likely to result in further conflict, loss of churches and members, and litigation, all of which have occurred in other denominations dealing with similar conflicts.** We envision a new future for the people of The United Methodist Church to avoid further harm to one another, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer United Methodists and their families and friends, as well as further harm to the church universal and to those with whom we strive to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **We seek to move away from the caustic atmosphere that has often marked conversation in The United Methodist Church and to move into a new season where we set one another free as we send each other into our respective mission fields to multiply our witness for Christ. We envision an amicable separation in The United Methodist Church that would provide a pathway to new denominations of the Methodist movement and a restructuring of The United Methodist Church. These new denominations, though separate, will continue the rich heritage of the Methodist movement, while being free to share their respective witnesses for Christ unhindered by those with whom they have been in conflict.** We envision the post-separation United Methodist Church will strive to create a structure of regional conferences to facilitate ministry adaptable to regional contexts, and **we further envision that the post-separation United Methodist Church will repeal the Traditional Plan and remove all other restrictive language related to LGBTQ persons.** Not all traditional United Methodists may choose to separate from The United Methodist Church and join a New Methodist Denomination. We envision the Post-Separation United Methodist Church will strive to be a place where traditional United Methodists can continue to serve. **As any separation occurs, we will release one another through the terms of this Protocol to joyful obedience to Christ’s call on our lives.**