

Future of the Church

United Methodism in Change

What We'll Talk about Today

- The current state of the United Methodist Church
- How we've gotten to where we're at
- Where to go from here
- Today is *not* a day to decide on one course of action or debate the various sides of the issues we'll discuss.

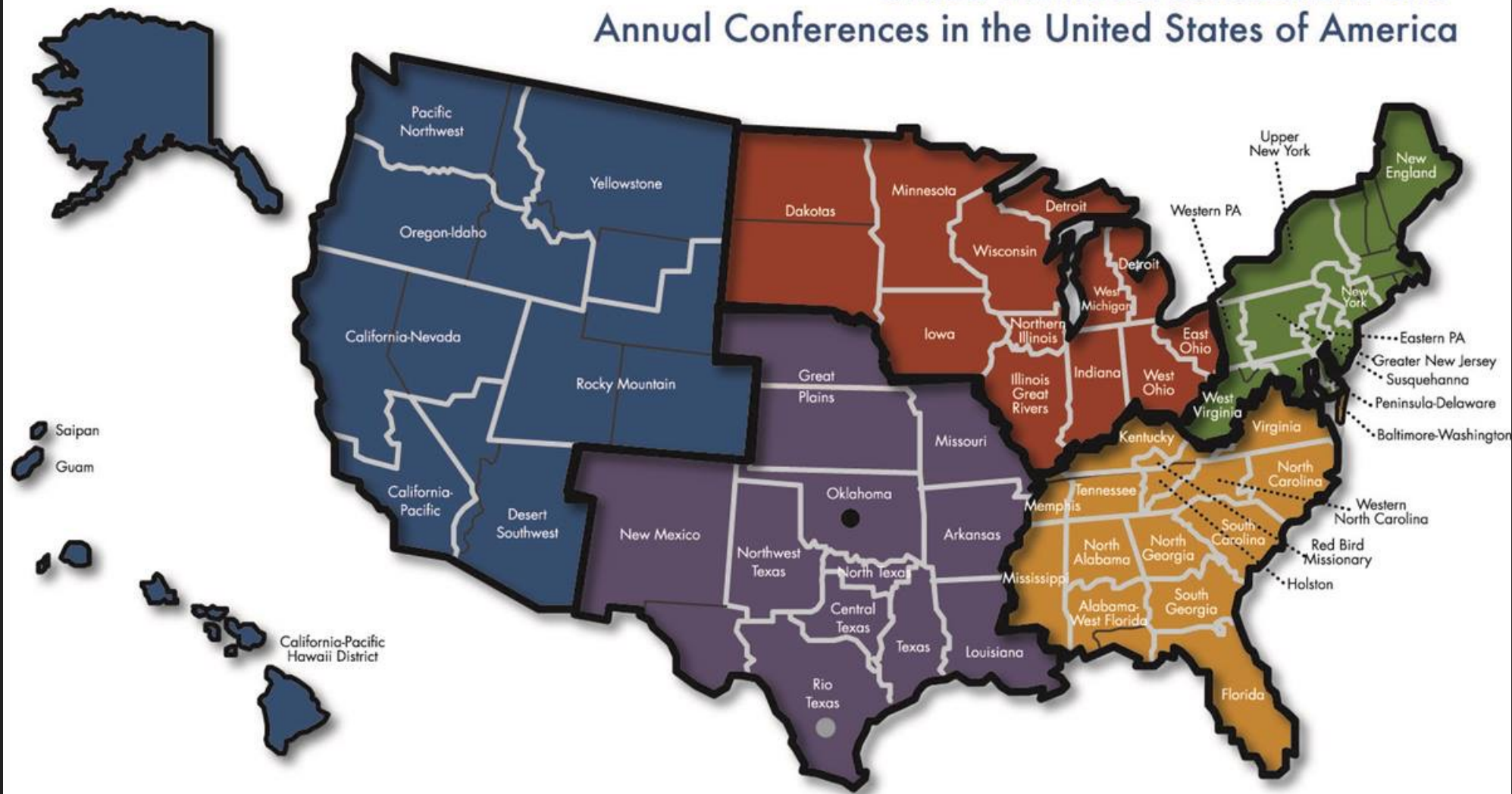
Background: Defining the Language

- UMC – United Methodist Church
- GMC – Global Methodist Church
- WCA – Wesley Covenant Association
- Progressive / Traditional
- Book of Discipline
- Trust Clause

Background: Organization and Structure

- Based on Representative Government
- Organized and Governed by the *Book of Discipline*
- Structured into Conferences that oversee the mission and ministries of the denomination
 - General Conference – Meets Every Four Years with delegates from around the world to set the Mission and direct the Major decisions of the denomination
 - Jurisdictional Conference – Regional Areas in the US that meet every four years to elect and appoint Bishops and decide Annual Conference Boundaries
 - Annual Conference – A Smaller Regional area that individual churches are members of that are overseen by a Bishop who appoints pastors and directs the mission and ministries of those churches
 - District – A smaller geographic area where churches and pastors are directly overseen by a District Superintendent

United Methodist Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences in the United States of America



- Jurisdiction Boundaries
- Conference Boundaries
- State Boundaries

- North Central Jurisdiction
- Northeastern Jurisdiction
- South Central Jurisdiction
- Southeastern Jurisdiction
- Western Jurisdiction

Some churches are outside the boundary of the Rio Texas Annual Conference.

Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference is comprised of Native American congregations of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.

Background: Local Church Structure

- Pastor, Appointed by the Bishop
- Church Council
- Trustees
- Finance
- Staff-Pastor Relations Committee
- Other Groups and Committees
 - UMW, Youth, Children's Ministry, Missions, Evangelism, etc...

How We Got Here: A Timeline

- 1968 – Uniting Conference
 - No determination one way or the other about LGBTQ persons/pastors
- 1972 – First General Conference after Uniting Conference
 - Our long held “persons of sacred worth / incompatible” language appears in the Book of Discipline for the first time
- Contested each General Conference, yet remains.
- Early ‘00s, pastors and more progressive churches begin to intentionally defy this section of the Book of Discipline

How We Got Here: A Timeline

- 2016 – A Watershed Year
 - General Conference was very much at a deadlock and standstill.
 - Shadows of 2012 – little accomplished because of hyper-focus on LGBTQ inclusion debate
 - Request from conference floor for the Bishops to lead the denomination on this issue
 - Formation of a Global Taskforce to provide options to be discussed at a special called session of General conference in 2019
 - Western Jurisdiction elected first openly homosexual bishop
 - Wesley Covenant Association founded

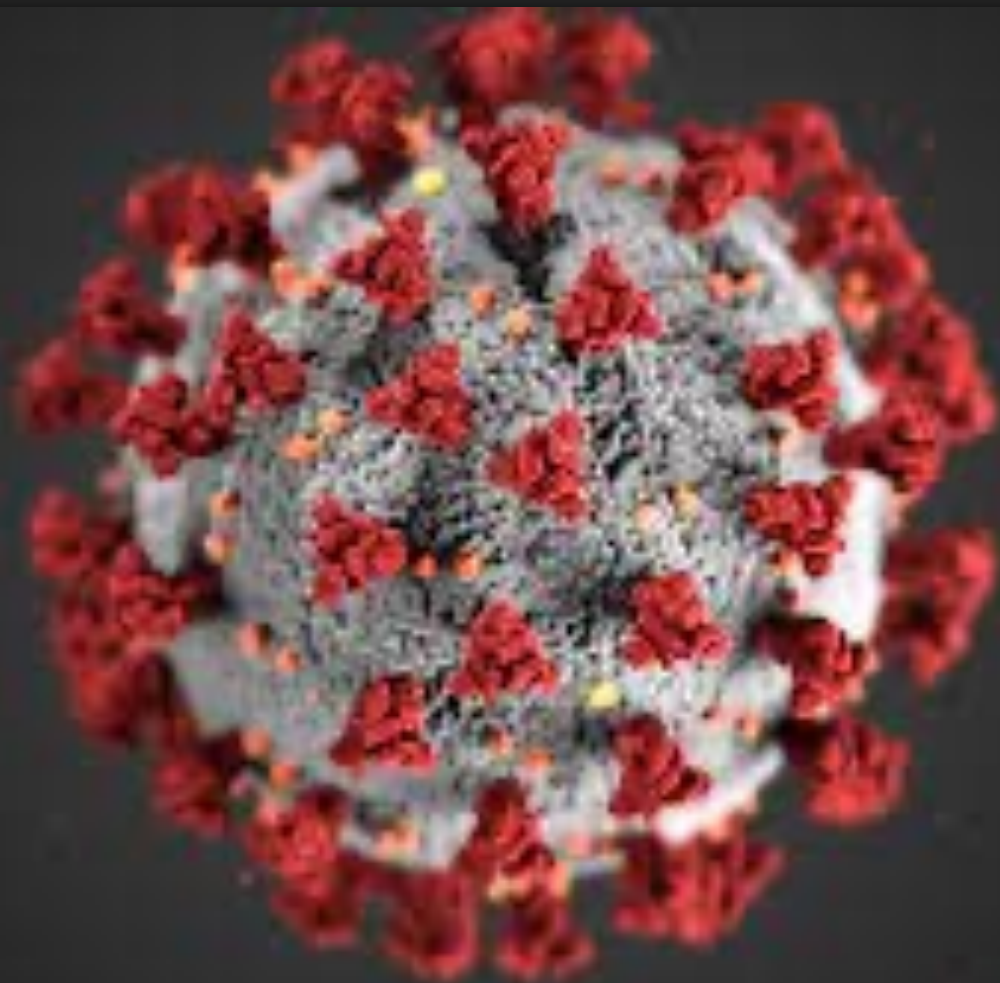
How We Got Here: A Timeline

- Global taskforce meets and develops three different plans to present to called session of General Conference
- The 2019 General Conference meets with high expectations
- The status-quo is not only upheld but strengthened by traditionalists
- Passed by an extremely thin margin
- Most delegates, even on the “winning” side feel defeated and begin to believe that the denomination would be better served to part ways rather than be forced to stay together.

How We Got Here: A Timeline

- 2019 – After Special General Conference Session
 - Kenneth R. Feinberg felt God speak to him while he was at his synagogue telling him to help the Methodists find a better way
 - Gathered with leaders from each side of the UMC and helped lead them to create a new way forward
 - Protocol of Grace through Separation
 - Universally accepted – would be presented at the 2020 G.C.

How We Got Here: A Timeline

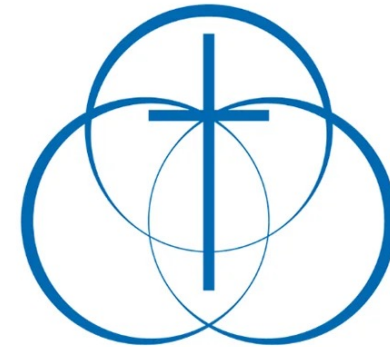


How We Got Here: A Timeline

- 2020 General Conference – Rescheduled for 2021
- 2021 General Conference – Rescheduled for 2022
- 2022 General Conference – Canceled
- 2024 General Conference to take place as planned

How We Got Here: A Timeline

- When General Conference 2022 was cancelled, the leadership of the traditionalists decided to not wait any longer for separation
- Global Methodist Church established May 1, 2022
- Much has been happening since this announcement took place



GLOBAL
METHODIST CHURCH

What's Currently Happening

- The Global Methodist Church has published their Transitional Doctrines and Discipline and is beginning to accept churches
- Our Annual Conference developed a process for disaffiliation and will hold a special session of the Annual Conference in September to formally allow the first group of churches to disaffiliate
- Currently, 92 churches have petitioned to explore disaffiliation in our Conference
- Support for the "Protocol" has started to be recended

Why is all this Happening

- The UMC has long been a denomination with a "big tent" theology.
- Over the years, we've been fracturing along these theological divides.
- LGBTQ inclusion has been the "presenting issue" of this divide

Why is all this Happening

- Other Factors in Play
 - Christology
 - Biblical Interpretation
 - Willingness to follow or not follow the Book of Discipline
 - Autonomy of the Local Church
 - Weight of Institutional Structure

About the Global Methodist Church

- Consistent in Orthodox (traditional) Theology with a heavy emphasis on scriptural authority
- Focus on Accountable Discipleship
- Church Planting and Multiplication
- Focus on Mission of the Church
- Lean Bureaucracy – Apportionments not to exceed 6.5% of budget
 - Troy UMC Currently pays 5.7% of budget in apportionments
- No Trust Clause

About the Global Methodist Church

- Redefine Role of Bishops with Term Limits
- Systematic Accountability
- More Congregational Input on Clergy Selection
- More Clergy input on Congregation Selection
- Easier Path to Ordination
- Uphold traditional understanding of marriage between one man and one woman, prohibit practicing LGBTQ people from ministry.

Choices Available to Local Congregations

- Remain in the United Methodist Church
- Wait for General Conference 2024 before making a decision
- Seek Disaffiliation
 - 2553 – Gracious Exit (Expires December 2023)
 - 2548.2 - Depart to an affiliate Denomination (1504.3)
 - 2549 – Go Independent
- Seek Legal Separation through US Court System

Disaffiliation: 2553 – Gracious Exit

- Added to the 2016 Book of Discipline at the Called 2019 G.C.
- Allows churches to Disaffiliate from the UMC over issues of conscience related to issues of human sexuality
- Requires 2/3 Majority Vote from Church Conference
- Terms of disaffiliation established between congregation and Conference board of Trustees
 - 2 Years Apportionments and Payment of Unfunded Pension Liabilities
- Simple Majority Vote from Annual Conference
- Expires December 31, 2023

2548.2 - Depart to an affiliate Denomination

- Not applicable to churches seeking to leave for the GMC
- Denomination leaving to must be in the Pan-Methodist Commission or other Evangelical Denomination by exchange of property, allocation, or comity agreement
- UMC currently has no Comity Agreement with GMC
- *Potentially* less burdensome financially

2549 – Go Independent

- All Property and Bank Accounts Surrendered to Annual Conference
- Buy back property using outside funds

Troy UMC – Where We're At

- Church Council Met April 20 and discussed where we fell on this issue
- At that time: the conference hadn't even established what disaffiliation costs would be, but had a deadline to apply for disaffiliation. The GMC hadn't been
- Too soon of deadline (June 1) with insufficient information to make an informed decision

Troy UMC – What's (Most Likely) Next

- There will be a vote regarding the future of our church, to disaffiliate (and if so, to what denomination) or to remain United Methodist
- Before then, we will present the options to the congregation so you can make an informed decision
- Only *Members* of the church will be eligible vote
- The question about the vote is, “When?”
- Before Gracious Exit provision expires 12/31/23 or After General Conference 2024

Questions?

If I don't have an answer, I'll work to get you one!