

## November 13, 2022 Pastors' Presentation Notecards from Q&A

### Set one of notecards (not addressed):

**If this is a period of discernment, how is it fair (or correct) for the clergy, who the congregation looks up to, to advocate for disaffiliation?**

To advocate for disaffiliation is as appropriate as a clergy person who advocates for staying UMC. Clergy people are spiritual leaders who lead in the way they feel God is leading them and in a way that honors the authority of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

---

**How did the UMC agree to ordain women? Did it have to change the discipline? How does the issue of ordaining and marrying gays differ? What other ways has the discipline been changed?**

In regards to gender and race, the Scriptures point to an ongoing redemptive movement. For example, the New Testament exhibits a historically counter-cultural elevation of the status of women and (then) slaves. All people are of sacred worth, but equating intrinsic human qualities like gender or race to the postmodern understanding of "fluid" sexual behavior is a false equivalence.

To read further, we recommend [this article](#)

---

**How many times have you spoken to other churches/church congregations at the invitation of clergy or laity and over what period of time? Was this while you were employed by the UMC and at Wesley Memorial UMC? When were you going to share this information with the entire congregation?**

Since attending General Conference 2019 as a delegate representing the Western NC Conference of the UMC, I've probably spoken about 25 times to pastors and congregations wanting more information about that General Conference and particularly the Book of Discipline paragraph 2553 that was adopted at that General Conference allowing congregations to disaffiliate.

While the information is widely available on the internet, pastors and congregations frequently wanted a person to present. United Methodists have been particularly interested in the work of the 2019 General Conference. Since the WNCC delegates to General Conference is a fairly small number, I felt responsible to the conference pastors who elected me. As United Methodists, we are ordained at the annual conference level instead of the level of the local congregation to emphasize that as Elders we are ordained to the whole Body of Christ. While our primary responsibility as pastors is to the congregation to which we are appointed, all Elders render service beyond the local church.

Preaching, teaching, serving on boards and agencies, membership in professional and community organizations, etc., calls us away from our local congregations. My personal commitment is probably stronger than the average UM Elder to my local congregation which is why I've resigned conference and community boards and agencies when they begin taking too much of my time away from my first passion. Because of the SPRC's support of clergy, they know about my activities. This is part of the annual evaluation process and the collegial relationship between pastor and SPRC. My first commitment is always the local church. - Jeff

---

**If the congregation votes not to disaffiliate, would the current pastoral staff remain as the pastors?**

**I assume they would not. The comment could be construed as to say they would. "I would remain committed to this congregation whatever you choose."**

Appointments are made at the discretion of the Bishop. It is difficult to determine the actions of others in regard to future appointments that are outside of our control. What we can control, and what Jeff alluded to, is that we will remain supportive of this congregation irrespective of the vote results.

---

**Please explain timetable for disaffiliation.**

- [View the entire checklist here](#)
- 

**Jeff – given your leadership in the group that started the Global Methodist Church, what do you and Clark plan to do if WMUMC votes not to disaffiliate? Are you planning to leave the United Methodist Church?**

After submitting required documentation (legal, financial, church records) to the district superintendent, one of the next steps of the disaffiliation process is for Pastors Jeff and Clark to submit in writing their future plans. Once that has been submitted they will make it available to the congregation.

---

**What happens if annual conference doesn't approve after fulfilling all other requirement?**

Albeit rare, this has already happened in one other annual conference. The Arkansas annual conference, for example, vetoed their three largest churches that planned to disaffiliate while allowing the remaining churches to leave. Wesley Memorial should watch churches that were denied disaffiliation to see what actions were taken after such a veto on the annual conference level.

---

**Do you think the discipline will expand to include other popular social issues? Example: abortion**

Petitions are sent to the General Conference regarding any number of issues, including social issues. According to the Book of Discipline, General Conference is the only and deciding voice of the United Methodist Church. General Conference 2024 will be held in Charlotte, NC April 23-May 3.

---

**I was told that if a church remains UMC they will have the option to decide if they want appointed clergy that will perform same-sex marriages or if they do not. That indicates that staying would not mean that this church would have same-sex marriages. If we can only leave based on same-sex marriages and the UMC currently does not allow them, why do we need to vote now? Can't this wait until after the next General Conference?**

To wait until 2024 would allow for the "sunset clause" of paragraph 2553 to expire on 12/31/23, thereby eliminating any legal pathway for churches to leave with their property and assets. Abstaining from a vote and waiting until GC 2024 or later would allow for the legal pathway of paragraph 2553 to expire. There is no indication that any such pathway will be available going forward after 12/31/23.

To wait until GC 2024 and beyond (with the growth of a voting delegation that continues to trend toward redefining Christian marriage in the UMC) would only delay the inevitable. Petitions to change the definition of Christian marriage, if not proposed and passed in 2024, will most definitely be proposed and passed in 2028 as the voting delegations continue to skew in that direction as traditionalist churches and their delegates depart the UMC.

Over the past 30 years, other traditionalist pastors of Protestant denominations (Episcopal, Presbyterian) were given the same assurance of local autonomy regarding the redefinition of Christian marriage, and over time they discovered those assurances to be disingenuous. Furthermore, abstaining from a congregational vote and remaining UMC would ensure that Wesley Memorial would remain in and support a denomination that will continue to be increasingly contrary to the very Book of Discipline and Bible we vowed to uphold at our ordination(s).

Lastly, any decision for disaffiliation would not be solely over issues of redefining Christian marriage and/or the definitions of sexual sin. This is a popular narrative in the news media but is not entirely accurate. Other core reasons for disaffiliation would be different doctrinal definitions of Scriptural authority and Scriptural interpretation, a desire for financial autonomy and a broken covenantal system of polity, connectionalism and accountability.

---

**You have said little about the GMC, yet much of the discernment team's work dealt with the advantages of that denomination. Why is there now a shift away from that denomination?**

The disaffiliation process is two decisions; one to decide to disaffiliate and the second future decision for denominational re-affiliation (if at all). A current lack of emphasis on any potential denominational re-affiliation is out of respect for the stage of the process we are currently in.

---

**Can you please make it clear that disaffiliation does not mean we don't welcome all people to church with love, but that we don't affirm all people as pastors/priests/bishops/etc. We are not shutting our doors to anyone. Scripture tells us pastors are to be above reproach.**

If Wesley Memorial votes to disaffiliate, the DNA of a local church such as Wesley Memorial, which has always held traditional views of Christian marriage and sexuality, will not change. If Wesley Memorial votes to disaffiliate, Wesley Memorial will continue to welcome, love and serve all people, as it has always done. All people are welcome to participate in our ministries. This has always been the case and this will never change.

---

**125 years ago, the Book of Discipline prohibited divorce except in the case of adultery. No divorced clergy. No second marriages after divorce. No membership for divorced people. Look how far we have come. Why is this issue different? Isn't it possible that in 100 years we will see human sexuality differently?**

Yes, the UMC has given allowances over issues of divorce and appropriately shown grace over the grievous wound of divorce. Scripture does give allowance for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). There are no such scriptural allowances for same-sex unions. Divorce is the outward sign of an inward broken covenant and is contrary to the pattern of the biblical teaching of Christian marriage. No one celebrates divorce or views it as a societal good. We lament divorce, and there is much work to be done in regards to building strong marriages and families. We do not write liturgies that bless divorce, but seek to help persons find healing on the other side of divorce along with the potential for new beginnings.

---

**What does it mean to be a "practicing homosexual"? Married? Committed relationship or random relationships?**

*From the 2019 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." ([more](#))*

In terms of pursuing ordination, the definition of practicing homosexual is as follows,

*"Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984, 1020*

---

**Based on the recent election of new bishops, what do you see as the direction of the UMC in the future?**

Nearly all current UMC Bishops are in favor of changing the Book of Discipline statements regarding the redefinition of Christian marriage, and many of the current newly elected bishops have gone on record stating as such<sup>1</sup>. An underlying issue is an inherent bias of postmodern subjective morality, i.e. theology and ministry can be subjective to your geographic location and/or personal preference. This is essentially a rejection of meta-narrative of Scriptural authority and the continued embrace of micro-narrative relativistic morality. Based on the current theological trajectory of the UMC leadership, we anticipate that this will continue into the future.

---

**Doesn't the disaffiliation of the tradition congregations from the UMC practically guarantee that there will be changes to the Book of Discipline? Aren't we creating a self-fulfilling prophecy?**

If you examine the voting records of every General Conference since 1972, the voting margins have narrowed to now razor thin margins over issues pertaining to redefining Christian marriage. This is not a new "self fulfilling prophecy" in this regard. It has been building for more than fifty years and, unless we distance ourselves from it, will continue to persist on the local church level. Traditionalist leaders on the General Conference level have increasingly grown weary of the acrimony and division, and have repeatedly stated that separation is inevitable. Disaffiliation can provide future healing as we bless the other to go the way of their own conscience.

---

**Concerning a possible disaffiliation vote, if our congregation votes no by not reaching 2/3, will you affirm to still stay with Wesley Memorial as a United Methodist Church?**

Appointments in the UMC are made in consultation with SPRC/admin team and at the discretion of the Bishop and the cabinet.

---

**When the bishop came to visit the leadership this year (editor's note: Monday April 18th, 2022), he stated that if a church wants to leave the UMC they are not going to force any church to stay. Why did he not speak to the entire congregation? Why when the DS came to speak did it fall on a holiday weekend?**

The date and the format of those meetings were in compliance with requests made by the Bishop and the District Superintendent.

---

**If a church does not hold a vote does that mean the church remains UMC?**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://juicyecumenism.com/2022/11/04/umc-bishop-elections/>

Yes

## Set two of notecards (addressed at meeting):

Can you address the instances where Um clergy have presented children's sermons dressed in drag. Ms Penny Cost (Example: Bloomington IL)

---

Clark – you said nothing will change for me and my gay partner – you will still accept me, love me and welcome me to worship. However, what will change is a clear perceived statement that gays are not accepted. So why change and disaffiliate?

---

Please make sure people understand the 2/3 is based on 2/3 of the people voting – not our total membership.

---

Why hasn't DS not spoken to congregation? Has she been asked? If so, what was her response?

---

How many times have you spoken with members/groups within this church about the WCA and/or GMC?

---

The articles of religion in the BOD is very specific about the authority of scripture. Why does it appear many of our church leaders seem to ignore it when its convenient to them?

---

There hasn't been much information about disaffiliation and choosing to remain independent/unaffiliated. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this option? Seems like there would be less politics.

We could do what's best for Wesley Memorial.

---

Jeff, when did you become involved with the Wesleyan Covenant Association? How many years ago?

When were you planning to share this with the entire congregation?

1. What is our amount of unfunded pension liability for our former pastors?
2. Why would the annual conference of UMC approve of churches leaving?
3. What would we do if 2/3 voted to leave – but the Annual Conference didn't vote to approve of us leaving?

4. Will Jeff and Clerk stay with Wesley memorial regardless of the result of the vote?

---

If the church remains with UMC is it true that UMC will require the pastors to take 16 hours of “critical race theory” training. We know what CRT teaching is doing to our children in public school. I do not want CRT taught in our Sunday School!

---

What is the financial plan for breaking away?

Who gets church building?

Who gets endowment?

---

Thank you for inviting Jeff and Clark to speak.

---

What is happening with the congregational sizes of those churches that remain United and those that disaffiliate? Growing/shrinking?

---

Does Paragraph 2553 require a vote of 2/3 of the record membership of the local church or is it 2/3 of the members who vote? If the latter, what is the quorum required (of recorded members of the local congregation)?

---

Regarding the 2/3 congregational vote, is this limited to adult congregates members only? Other?

---

All churches will have to address same sex marriages. Do you think our bishops are using this hot topic to over up their own agenda? (ie term limits, defying the will of the General Conference?)

---

**Can you address the Wild Goose Festival; specifically, the class Christianity and Non-Monogamy: Exploring Outside of Monogamy While Keeping the Faith and WNC sponsorship of this event?**

The class was taught by Jennifer Martin, a member of the United Church of Christ:  
<https://wildgoosefestival.org/cocreate2022/experiences/203607>

There are a number of sponsors associated with the Wild Goose Festival, and they're listed here: <https://wildgoosefestival.org/get-involved/sponsor/>

---

Since Jesus never spoke about homosexuality, and spoke only about love, inclusion of all, etc., why do we use other scriptures to defend the GMC stand?

---

Who votes:

1. All the congregation
  2. Special Committees
  3. Clergy
  4. All of the above
- 

Do you think the lack of agreed to theology and doctrine are partly responsible for the decline in the UMC over the past 20 years?

---

If we disaffiliate from the UMC, we will, as a church still have to decide our teaching and policies on homosexuality – a long with any other present and future issue. How, then, do you perceive disaffiliation as being “free from the conflict”?

---

What do we tell our children and grandchildren, etc.?

Who in Western Conference our area (triad) voted?

---

Jeff, tell us about your experience as president of the Western NC WCA.

---

If the church votes to become an independent Methodist church who will be our ministers and how will they be appointed, and what disciplines will be used for its operations?

---

Within the GMC will clergy need to go through any rigor to be ordained?

The process for those who feel called to ministry in the GMC is described in the GMC's transitional book of doctrine and discipline (Part Four: The Ministry of the Called). This information is found on the GMC website:

<https://globalmethodist.org/what-we-believe/>



---

Jeff, it was not clear whether you declared yourself as GMC. It sounded like you will go whichever way the vote goes. Don't you have to declare clearly where you stand?

---

Jeff, when did you become the President of Western NC WCA?

When were you planning to share that information with the entire congregation?

---

What is the moral compass is not tradition, scriptures, theology?

---

Hopefully – when the final meeting is held, it will not interfere with Christmas holidays and family time. Do not ask us to choose between family and church priorities. 😊