

# Wesley Memorial (High Point) Questions

Sunday, July 10, 2022

(All references are from the 2016 *Book of Discipline*.)

**1. What does *Book of Discipline* now say about homosexuality? What has been our stand on homosexual activity outside of marriage?**

Our current stand on homosexuality is found in The Social Principles: ¶161G: “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.”

Church Law related to homosexuality:

¶304.3: While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. 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.

¶341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

¶613.19: [The Conference Council on Finance and Administration shall have authority and responsibility] To ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall not limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic, nor shall it preclude funding for dialogs or educational events where the Church’s official position is fairly and equally represented.

¶806.9: [The General Council on Finance and Administration] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.<sup>13</sup> It shall not limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.

**2. What paragraph in the Book of Discipline prevents clergy from officiating same sex marriage? ¶341.6**

**3. What paragraph prevents practicing homosexuals from being ordained? ¶304.3**

**4. Will 2553 be extended beyond 2023, since 2020 General Conference delayed & unknown if the protocol applies?**

The dating of ¶2553 assumed a 2020 General Conference. While I cannot say whether the dates will be changed in that particular paragraph, I would be very surprised if the 2024 General Conference did not affirm some sort of disaffiliation process moving forward.

**5. Why was the 2020 General Conference postponed instead of cancelled? Will 2024 General Conference held in 2024?**

The 2020 General Conference was postponed because no one knew how long the Covid-19 pandemic would last. The expectation was that in 2021, we would be able to hold a General Conference. We are waiting for a ruling from the Judicial Council as to whether we will have a postponed 2020 General Conference in 2024 or whether we will elect new delegates for a 2024 General Conference.

**6. International conferences are occurring, how can the General Conference be moved up to early or mid-2023?**

The decision of when and where to hold General Conference is determined by The Commission on the General Conference. Their decision to postpone the General Conference until 2024 was based on our general rule to “do no harm.” Vaccination rates vary widely across our world and thus bringing delegates to the US could endanger their lives. Additionally, there was concern that Central Conference (those outside the U.S.) delegates might not be able to obtain visas in order to travel. (Such was the case with the World Track and Field Championships in Eugene, Oregon.) The postponement date was chosen in the hope of having as many delegates as possible be able to attend the conference.

**7. The millions of dollars given away exactly 25million 39million to? Explain please.**

In the mediated Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, it has been agreed that \$25M will be given by The United Methodist Church to any new traditional denomination(s) that is/are formed, \$2M will be given by The United Methodist Church

to any other denomination(s) that is/are formed, and \$39M will be given to United Methodist ministries to Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander Communities and Africa University over the next 2 quadrennia (or 8 years). The amounts are a part of the legislation that will be considered by the 2024 General Conference.

**8. How can Bishops violate the *Discipline* and not be held accountable?**

There are bishops who are held accountable for violating the *Discipline*. Complaints against bishops are processed through their College of Bishops in accordance with ¶413. In some instances, the College of Bishops has dismissed a complaint or refused to process a complaint.

**9. Is one of the duties of a Bishop to enforce the *Book of Discipline*? 1) If yes: then why are they not doing so; 2) If not, then whose job is it?**

I cannot answer why Bishops do or do not enforce the *Book of Discipline*. I will say that it is the responsibility of every United Methodist, who makes a vow to uphold The United Methodist Church with their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, to follow what is in the *Book of Discipline* and to hold others accountable to doing the same.

**10. If a member of clergy or district superintendent or Bishop violates the *Book of Discipline*, are they held accountable by our Western Conference or any other conference?**

In the Western North Carolina Conference, if a formal complaint is filed against a clergy, or district superintendent, that complaint is processed in accordance with ¶362 and ¶2702.1. The goal of the complaint process is a just resolution of any violations of the sacred trust of ordination and membership in an annual conference, “in the hope that God’s work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ.”

**11. Why doesn’t the leadership of the church correct Bishops and ministers question scriptures publicly? Recent Examples: Bishop Oliveto – Make an idol of Jesus; Rev. Adam Hamilton – putting scripture in 3 buckets?**

My suggestion would be to correspond with Bishop Oliveto and Rev. Hamilton directly if you disagree with something they said.

**12. Why does it seem that leadership is not walking the talk, rules?**

My initial answer to this question is that we are all sinners saved by grace who are moving on toward perfection. Leaders that are not following the *Discipline* with respect to same-sex marriages and the ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals have reported that they are acting from a conviction that LGBTQIA+ persons are unjustly being excluded from marriage and ordination.

**13. Does the church as a whole, 100%, follow the book of discipline currently? If no, why?**

No, the church does not. Even Wesley Memorial has not followed the *Book of Discipline* 100%. Why? Perhaps because clergy and/or laity don’t know or have forgotten what

the *Discipline* says. Perhaps because the clergy or laity don't agree with what it says. Perhaps because clergy and/or laity view some parts of the *Discipline* as more important than other parts.

**14. What has the United Methodist Church learned from other denominations (like the Lutherans, etc.) who have already gone through this transition?**

Lutheran Bishops have reported that “not as many will leave as we expect to leave, and more will leave than we want to leave.” Other denominational leaders have reminded us of the negative “public witness” that such transitions create. Others have been quick to say that when the transition is complete, there will still be those who need to come to know the saving love of Jesus Christ, and that is our mission.

**15. What exactly is “the vote”? What are we voting on exactly?**

There doesn't have to be a vote. If you want to remain United Methodist, you don't need to do anything. A vote is needed only IF a church chooses to affiliate with the Global Methodist Church (GMC) or another denomination, or if that church wants to become an independent congregation. Currently, a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote of the church conference (professing members of the church) is needed for a local church to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church.

**16. Local churches have autonomy to set their own policies on weddings at their church. If the UMC adopts a more inclusive teaching of human sexuality in the future, can you share how that may or may not affect wedding policy at the local church level?**

Local churches will still have the autonomy to develop their own wedding policies.

**17. Is the question of abortion part of all of this debate?**

The question of abortion is not a part of this debate. You can find more information about the UMC Social Principle regarding abortion in ¶161K of the *2016 Discipline*.

**18. Do I understand that the ministers will make the decisions regarding same sex marriage in the local church?**

According to the current *Discipline*, UM Clergy cannot perform homosexual unions or same-sex marriages.

**19. If the *Book of Discipline* changes what has been the agreed thinking for always, and now will change, is that not a different church?**

The *Book of Discipline* changes every 4 years. For example, at one time, a clergy could not marry a couple where one or both had been divorced. That rule is no longer in the *Discipline*. The current language regarding homosexuality has been in the *Discipline* since 1972. For some, to remove it would be a big change. For others, it would not.

**20. Why change the *Book of Discipline* now; is this a secular impetus or does this change come from a spiritual revelation?**

The impetus for change comes from those who understand the scriptures referring to homosexuality as not to be speaking about an innate orientation lived out in a monogamous, same-sex relationship. Thus, the prohibitions against marriage and ordination are understood as inappropriate for those who are living a Christian life in this way.

**21. Would you respond to these concerns?**

**a. Open defiance of the Discipline and actions of the General Conference with no accountability.**

There are multitudes of ways that clergy and local United Methodist Churches openly defy what's in the *Discipline*, which in and of itself, is the actions of General Conference. For example, not paying apportionments monthly is an open act of defiance. Those who are acting in opposition to the *Discipline's* mandates regarding same-sex marriage and ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals, do so as an act of resistance against Church law that they believe to be unjust.

**b. If we remove references to sexuality in the Discipline, will we be able to bless polygamy (multiple partners in a covenantal relationship). If not, why not? Seems that if we do not it would be discriminatory, exclusionary, and hurtful to those who claim to be born and love more than one person (heterosexual or homosexual).**

Those who advocate for same-sex marriage within the UMC do so understanding Christian marriage to be a monogamous relationship between 2 faithful adults in covenant with God.

**c. How do you see those churches and pastors who hold traditional Biblical views on marriage being "honored and protected" in the "big tent" idea of United Methodism from being labeled and mismatched in the appointive process.**

Presently, the Bishop and Cabinet consider theological perspectives when making appointments. That will not change. With regards to labels, progressives, centrists, and traditionalists are equal opportunity offenders. The truth is that while a person might be traditional regarding one aspect of the Christian life, he/she may be progressive regarding another aspect. All United Methodists are called not to disparage those with whom they disagree. Doing so is a poor witness to the world outside of the church.

**22. Where in the scripture is homosexuality approved?**

None of the six passages which speak about homosexuality do so in a positive way. However, the question can be asked whether these Old and New Testament authors are speaking about a sexual orientation and/or a monogamous relationship between two adults. There are those who would argue that these passages may refer to rape or

attempted rape, cultic prostitution, male prostitution, or pederasty. United Methodists disagree over the interpretation of these 6 scriptures.

**23. Are the Methodist seminaries that educate and provide clergy to our local churches providing teaching consistent with BOD, or other published rules, codes, etc? Is Duke School of Divinity providing teaching per above?**

Every UM clergy is required to take courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity which covers what's in the Book of Discipline.

**24. Where can I find the reasons why the 41 churches disaffiliated?**

The disaffiliation resolutions are published in the Annual Conference Journal each year. PDFs of the legal documents for disaffiliation for each church are posted at <https://www.wnccumc.org/ac2020>; [www.AC2021.org](http://www.AC2021.org); and [www.AC2022.org](http://www.AC2022.org).

**25. Is there a rough estimate of what the current \$ amount would be if WMUMC wanted to disaffiliate?** (minus legal costs, but estimated on the list that was provided on the slide.) Our current process is that after a church sends a letter to the district superintendent, signed by several church officers, saying that they would like to explore disaffiliation, the district superintendent will come and meet with that group of leaders and share the benefits and challenges of disaffiliation along with an estimate of the cost of the pension liability, 2 years of apportionments, and any vitality grants received over the last 10 years.

**26. What value do WMUMC member receive for our annual dues?**

The primary way that local churches support the ministries of the global United Methodist Church is through our apportioned funds, a method of giving that proportionally allocates the churchwide budget to conferences and local churches. Through this connection, we accomplish what no single church, district, or annual conference could do alone. Through your apportionments, you underwrite Christian mission around the world. You empower United Methodist evangelistic efforts. You assist those who are called into ordained ministry. You support higher education, and particularly Africa University. You make possible partnerships with other Christian communions, witnessing to a common Christian faith. Additionally, you are offered the resourcing and support of the Conference staff, our General Boards and Agencies, the UM Publishing House, and other programs and services designed to assist you in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**27. You also mentioned apportionments and I think it is important to understand how the apportionments are calculated. Is there a formula for the calculations? If so, what is it. Is it consistent with all churches? Currently it is my understanding that no one outside of a very small group know that information and do not give it out. Again, in order to make sound decisions it is important for the local church to understand how**

**apportionments are calculated and what goes where. Also, it might help to understand the budget of the district and conference and how the money is spent.**

We are as transparent as possible about all conference and district finances. Our Conference Apportionment Funds are consistently calculated for each local church on the basis of a church's 3-year average of "net expenses" as reflected in the annual end-of-year statistical reports from the churches and pastors. For example, the [2023 apportionments](#) for Wesley Memorial were calculated on the [net expenses for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021](#). Your three-year average net expenses is then multiplied by the multiplier, which is the figure obtained by dividing the total 2023 funds by the average net expenditures of all the churches. For 2023, the multiplier is 0.0797913632.

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## **28. What is the Methodist Trust Clause and what is its purpose?**

The Trust Clause is a statement included in property deeds declaring that the local church owns the property, in trust, for the benefit of the entire denomination. Its purpose is connectional, to ensure that United Methodist local church property will continue to be used for United Methodist Church purposes. The history of the Trust Clause can be traced back to our founder, John Wesley, who in 1750, asked three lawyers to draft deeds for 3 Methodist preaching houses in England ensuring that a local society could not take control of these properties from the Methodist connection he was creating.

The Book of Discipline provides the wording for the Trust Clause depending upon whether the property is a place of worship, a parsonage, intended for some other use, or acquired from another United Methodist entity. It is required to appear in the deeds of all United Methodist properties as a "fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church." (§12501)

**29. I have United Methodist family in other conferences. Some conferences seem to be hostile to the move to split and others seems to be amicable to the protocol way of doing things. Why is this conference not amicable to those who want to separate?**

We are following the disciplinary path for those who want to leave The United Methodist Church and keep their property. To do otherwise would be to violate the *Discipline*. A part of Paragraph 2553 states that “Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.” Thus, various annual conferences have added some additional requirements to those disaffiliating, like a percentage of the value of their property, an 8-month discernment process, etc. The Judicial Council upheld this requirement in Decision 1424, stating that the final decision concerning exiting local churches belongs to the annual conference as part of its “reserved rights.” In WNC, the only thing that we’ve added is repayment of district or conference vitality grants received over the past 10 years. The rationale for this addition is that a local church was given a grant or grants in order to enable them to become a more vital United Methodist Church. Repayment of those grants gives the district and conference an opportunity to share those grants with continuing United Methodist Churches.

**30. What rules and guidelines govern the UMC Foundations disbursements of funds? ie why would those funds be used to support non-democratic political entities or causes?**

I would need more details to appropriately answer this question.

**31. Will you please share tonight’s PowerPoint with those who attended and for WMUMC’s website?** Yes. I have shared the PowerPoint and the handouts with the Discernment Team and asked them to please post them.

**32. Do you support the Protocol? Why or why not?**

I have continued to support God’s gifts of **reconciliation** and **grace** present in the Protocol, not only as a way of separation, but also as the way we live together in the interim. I believe that the Protocol was mediated in such a way to give something of value to groups that have real differences, particularly as it became apparent that there were persons determined to begin a new denomination. I have been disappointed in the disparagement and misinformation that have surrounded the launch of the Global Methodist Church, which are clear violations of the spirit of the Protocol.

**33. Can’t we love everyone without affirming everyone’s behavior?**

Certainly. The question becomes who chooses which behaviors are affirmed and which are not? In our Wesleyan understanding, determining the answer to that question is a function of the Christian community wrestling with what it looks like to model Christlike behavior within their context. (Acts 15)



**34. How can we know right from wrong?**

For Wesleyans, we know right from wrong through abiding by the General Rules (Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.). We develop our Christian ethics through disciplined engagement with the Scripture, interpreting it through the lenses of tradition, reason, and experience.

**35. What does it mean that Jesus was full of grace and truth?**

From John Wesley's [Explanatory Notes on John 1:14](#):

*“Grace and truth - We are all by nature liars and children of wrath, to whom both grace and truth are unknown. But we are made partakers of them, when we are accepted through the Beloved. The whole verse might be paraphrased thus: And in order to raise us to this dignity and happiness, the eternal Word, by a most amazing condescension, was made flesh, united himself to our miserable nature, with all its innocent infirmities. And he did not make us a transient visit, but tabernacled among us on earth, displaying his glory in a more eminent manner, than even of old in the tabernacle of Moses. And we who are now recording these things beheld his glory with so strict an attention, that we can testify, it was in every respect such a glory as became the only begotten of the Father. For it shone forth not only in his transfiguration, and in his continual miracles, but in all his tempers, ministrations, and conduct through the whole series of his life. In all he appeared full of grace and truth: he was himself most benevolent and upright; made those ample discoveries of pardon to sinners, which the Mosaic dispensation could not do: and really exhibited the most substantial blessings, whereas that was but a shadow of good things to come.”*

**36. What is sin?**

The Articles of Religion, Article XII—Of Sin After Justification Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

The Confession of Faith, 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.

**37. John Wesley preached extensively on the New Birth: what does it mean to be born again?**

In our Wesleyan Tradition, being born again means embracing the justifying grace which allows us to say “yes” to a relationship with the God we know in Jesus Christ. In doing

so, we embark on a journey of sanctification or becoming more and more Christlike in our thoughts, words, and actions.

### **38. Why do we need the Cross?**

The empty cross is a reminder that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been saved by grace through faith. (Ephesians 2) In turn, we respond to that Grace through living a cruciform life. (Philippians 2)

### **39. You mentioned the Trust Clause and I believe you said that the most recent opinion is that the real property (buildings and grounds) will remain with the local church. When the Bishop visited earlier this year, the understanding was that the endowments, cash, debt, etc remain with the local church and the real property went to the conference(s).**

In short, as of the latest opinion, the Trust Clause allows everything to go to the local church.

The Trust Clause does not allow everything to go to the local church. Unless a local church is **released** from the Trust Clause through disaffiliation according to ¶2553, all property is still held in trust for the denomination and would become the property of the Annual Conference if the local church were to close or leave the denomination. If the church disaffiliates according to ¶2553, then the trust clause is released and the local church retains its properties, assets, and liabilities. With regard to Endowments, the terms of the Endowment would guide what happens to it.

### **40. You also mentioned apportionments and I think it is important to understand how the apportionments are calculated. Is there a formula for the calculations? if so what is it. Is it consistent with all churches? Currently it is my understanding that no one outside of a very small group know that information and do not give it out. Again in order to make sound decisions it is important for the local church to understand how apportionments are calculated and what goes where. Also it might help to understand the budget of the district and conference and how the money is spent.**

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