

# Our Path Forward: The Future of The United Methodist Church

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~ Adapted from presentations by  
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# Recent Events

The General Conference has been postponed until 2024. The legislation entitled *A Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation* cannot be considered until 2024.

The *Book of Discipline* cannot change without a General Conference.

The Global Methodist Church launched on May 1.



# + • What does this mean?

- Your relationship to the Western North Carolina Conference and the UMC does not change, and we continue to be The United Methodist Church together.
- Churches wishing to exit the denomination may consider disaffiliation.
- Clergy wishing to withdraw from the denomination may also consider doing so.





# Remaining United Methodist

The current *Book of Discipline* is still in effect and the vital work of your church has not been postponed.



# Our Sources of Strength...

- Our God is faithful.
- Jesus is with us.
- Reading the Bible together.
- God's call on our lives as disciples of Jesus.
- Worship.
- Other spiritual disciplines.
- Our strong and vital connection.

# The United Methodist Church...

- One Body of Christ with many parts.
- A spiritual home for all people.
- Staying rooted in the Movement began by John Wesley.
- A place where lives are changed by Christ and communities are transformed.
- We celebrate our History ... and our Legacy.

## A note about theology ...

- Our doctrinal standards are clear and have not changed:
  - The Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
  - The Lordship of Christ
  - The virgin birth
  - The bodily resurrection
  - Scripture “contains all things necessary to salvation...”


# Our Common Core as Methodists

- The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
- Articles of Religion & Confession of Faith
- The General Rules
  - Do no harm.
  - Do good.
  - Stay in love with God.



# Our Common Core as Methodists

- The Wesley Hymns



1. O for a thou-sand tongues to sing My great Re-deem-er's praise,  
The glo-ries of my God and King, The tri-umphs of His grace.

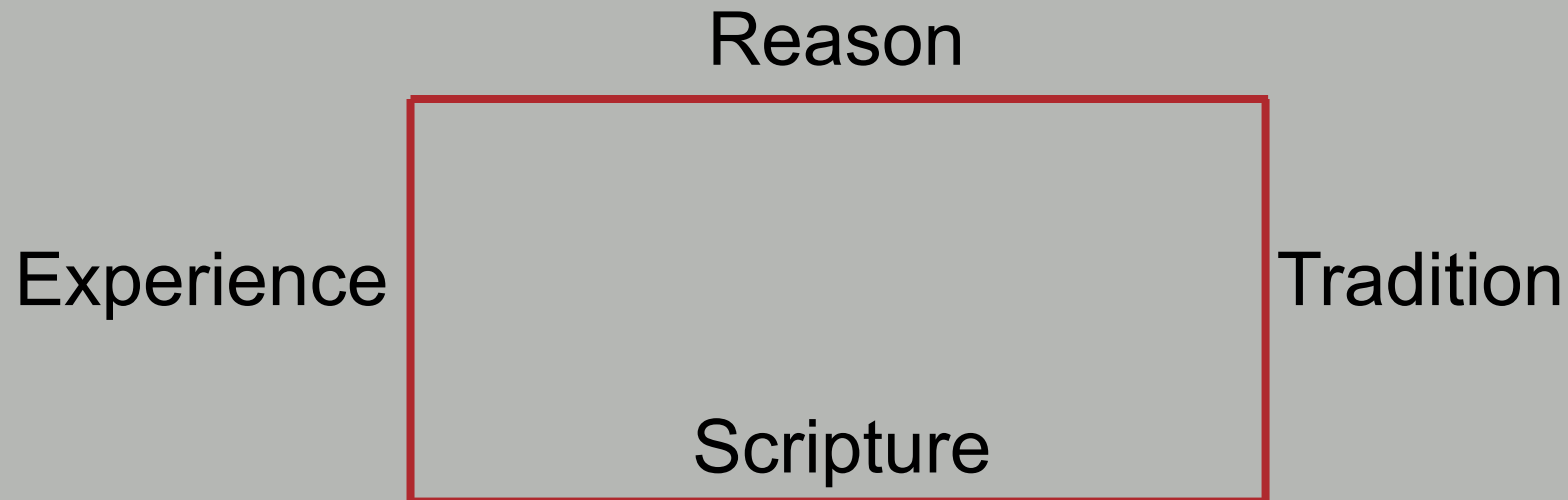
The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/2. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first system of music is for the first line of the hymn, and the second system is for the second line. The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block chords and single notes.

## Our Common Core as Methodists

- Works of Piety, Mercy and Justice
- Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist
- Small Group Accountability and Support
- A Connectional Way of Life

# Our Common Core as Methodists

- Disciplined Engagement with Scripture



# Biblical Authority

The extent to which one can regard the commandments and doctrines within the Old and New Testament scriptures as authoritative over humans' belief and conduct.

“We share with many Christian communions a recognition of the authority of Scripture in matters of faith....” (¶ 102)

“The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any [one] that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” (¶ 104)

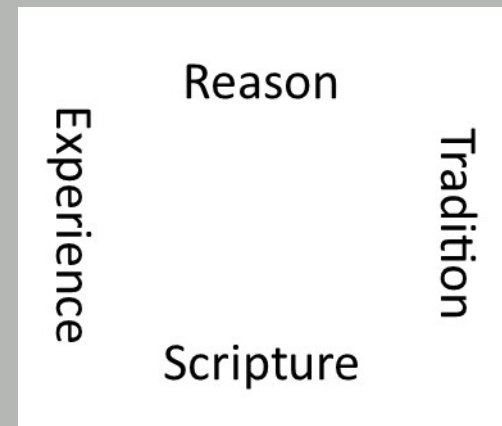
“We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.” (¶ 104)

# Biblical Interpretation

Interpreting Scripture is the process of discovering what God through God's human authors intended the biblical text to mean and effect.

“to understand” ~ “to translate” ~ “to explain” ~ ¶105

1. Genre
2. Context
3. Culture
4. Language
5. Theology – theological themes
6. How does it fit into the whole?



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# Remaining United Methodist:

Consider what it means  
to you to #BeUMC



# Our Future

*The only future worth building  
includes everyone.*

Pope Francis

*Disagreement is unavoidable,  
division is always a choice.*

Andy Stanley

**At  
Our  
Scriptural  
Core**

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is no male and female, for you all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 3:28

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that who ever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16


*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

Romans 15:7



# How to Remain United Methodist

There is no vote needed. You don't need to do anything.



# **Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation**

# Protocol

- One of many legislative proposals that will come before the postponed General Conference.
- Began as a vision of Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone.
- Developed by a very diverse team of clergy, laity, and bishops with the help of a trained mediator – Kenneth Feinberg.
- Released in January of 2020, placed in legislative form and sent by several annual conferences to the General Conference that was to take place in May of 2020.

# Goal of the Negotiated Protocol

To try and give something of value to those who have real differences.

- For some on the mediation team, this meant ensuring the continuation of The United Methodist Church that could focus on the mission of the church and avoid trials.
- For others on the mediation team, this meant ensuring the ability for local churches to separate from The United Methodist Church while retaining property and caring for clergy pensions.

# Protocol

- Offers a local church the opportunity to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination.
  - Must be supported by 57% of the professing members of the local church.
  - Retains its assets and liabilities.
  - Annual Conference releases the trust clause.

# Protocol

- \$25 million given to new Traditional Methodist denomination(s); \$2 million given to Other Methodist denomination(s).
- Ministries to Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander Communities and Africa University given \$39M over 2 quadrennia.

# What is disaffiliation and why are we talking about it?

- We want you to have accurate information since we know some churches have talked about this and there is incomplete information online.
- To be clear - No one is asking or encouraging you to disaffiliate. We want you to remain. There is a spiritual home for all people in the UMC.
- General Conference discerns our next steps as a UMC, so there is likely no need to make any decisions before General Conference happens in May of 2024.

## What is disaffiliation and why are we talking about it?

- This should be done in relationship. Talk with your District Superintendent first. Disaffiliation is not a conversation or process to rush into.
- We will treat churches fairly and with dignity and honor the *Discipline* process.
- We had 7 churches disaffiliate in 2020; 16 disaffiliate in 2021; and 18 disaffiliate in 2022.



# *Discipline Process for Disaffiliation*

- ¶2553 is the current process for churches to disaffiliate from the Western North Carolina Conference as recommended by the Council of Bishops and supported by the Judicial Council's recent rulings.
- ¶2553 was passed at the Special Session of General Conference in 2019.
- Other ¶s in the Discipline (¶ 2549 – closure and ¶ 2548.2 – withdrawal) have not been commonly used as a process for disaffiliation.

# *Discipline Process for Disaffiliation*

- The rationale for disaffiliation under ¶2553 is related to the current impasse regarding human sexuality (see ¶2553 .1).
- Requires approval by 2/3 majority vote at a church conference.
- Requires the approval of the annual conference session.

# Financial Requirements of Disaffiliation

- Payment of **unpaid apportionments** for 12 months immediately prior to the disaffiliation as calculated by the Annual Conference
- Payment of an **additional 12 months of apportionments** as calculated by the Annual Conference
- Payment of an amount equal to the Local Church's **pro rata share of the Annual Conference's unfunded pension obligations**, as determined by Wespath & the Annual Conference.
- Payment of any **unpaid pension, health benefits, or salary**
- Payment of any and **all legal costs related to disaffiliation**
- Payment of any **vitality grants** received from the district or conference in the last **10 years**.

## Agreement with local church

- Retains its properties, assets and liabilities
- Local church will be released from the historic trust clause. (Note: The basis for the trust clause is that a United Methodist Church was founded for the purpose of being a United Methodist Church.)

# Things for churches to consider ...

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- Pace yourself. You have time to wait and see how things develop and how the UMC will walk with churches.
- No one is asking you now or in the proposed Protocol legislation to change to your local church's practice around weddings or to accept clergy without consultation.

# Things for churches to consider ...

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- Consider the connectional reality of being a United Methodist (UMCOR, Camps, Campus Ministry, Missions).
- Consider the unintended consequences of any future decision around clergy appointments, financial impact, insurance/legal matters, and the possible missional impact of division within a local church.

# How to help prepare your church

- Stay focused on the mission of the church: Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World
- Continue to highlight the important ministries of your local church.
- Build relationships across differences.
- Give simple, accurate information and ask others for resources.

# How to help prepare your church

- Listen. Allow for multiple perspectives to be shared in an open and transparent process.
- Go slow. Have multiple conversations. Be intentional.
- There is no rush. Churches will have years after General Conference 2024 to process any results and respond.



# Western North Carolina Conference commitment ...

- We will walk with you.
- We will respond appropriately and timely to your questions and concerns.
- We will continue to guard the unity of the church by allowing for a contextual approach to ministry.

# Western North Carolina Conference commitment ...

- We understand that some may depart. We will treat any persons or churches who choose to depart with respect and dignity and follow the *Discipline* process.
- We will continue to highlight ways to be in ministry together by creating pathways to the post-COVID church.

# Our Pathways to the post-COVID church

1. Vital, Sustainable, Innovative Local Churches and Fresh Expressions of Church.
2. Anti-Racism as Discipleship and Sanctification
3. Resilience and Health of Clergy and Spiritual Leaders
4. The Continuing United Methodist Church as a source of Unity and Connection for the purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

# A Time of Questions and Answers



To learn  
more ...

[www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)

[www.resourceumc.org](http://www.resourceumc.org)

[www.umnews.org](http://www.umnews.org)

#BeUMC @ [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org)

Protocol:

[www.gracethroughseparation.com](http://www.gracethroughseparation.com)

# A few closing reminders ...

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- Stay in connection with one another.
- Keep prayer at the center.
- A spirit of convicted humility.
- We are all on a journey toward the Kingdom of God, a place where ... God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven.

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- God is not done with any of us yet. We are all on a journey of discipleship and sanctification.
  - God remains God; Christ is with us; God will never let us go. To God be the glory!

# Closing Blessing & The Lord's Prayer

