

Matthews United Methodist Church

Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, Postponement of the 2022 UMC General Conference and MUMC's Path Forward

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) *update: 30 June 2022*

Q1. Who makes decisions for the UMC?

R1. The UMC General Conference

- sets official policy and speaks for the denomination
- meets every 4 years (2016, 2020, 2024, etc)
- international body of nearly 1,000 delegates (US, Africa, Europe & Philippines)
- delegates elected by Annual Conferences

Q2. Weren't the LGBTQ+ issues of marriage and ordination of clergy resolved by the UMC adoption of the Traditional Plan at the Special Session of the General Conference in 2019?

R2. The UMC (worldwide church) delegates at 2019 Special Session of the General Conference voted against the One Church Plan recommended by the Council of Bishops 47% to 53% and approved the Traditional Plan by a vote of 53% to 47%. The One Church Plan allowed space for Annual Conferences and local churches to decide these issues for themselves. The Traditional Plan that was approved affirmed the current wording in the *Book of Discipline* regarding these issues and added more restrictive requirements/penalties.

The 2019 vote was close and not considered a mandate, especially in the US where 67% of the delegates to the Special Conference voted for the One Church Plan. The 2019 Special Conference decision did not resolve the conflicted space present at the Conference and which continues today.

Q3. What is the Protocol of Reconciliation of Grace Through Separation?

R3. After 50+ years of impasse in the UMC concerning LGBTQ+ issues of marriage and ordination of clergy and after the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, progressives, centrists and traditionalists met and determined that separation into 3 Methodist denominations was the only way to resolve this impasse. Please watch Rev. Tom Berlin's video for background and summary of the Protocol. <https://vimeo.com/393722398>

- Q4. What are the 3 new Methodist denominations proposed in the Protocol?
- R4. The 3 new Methodist denominations that can form after the Protocol is adopted are:
1. Post separation United Methodist Church (Centrists)- the existing United Methodist Church with revisions to the *Book of Discipline* to allow same gender marriages and ordination of gay clergy
 2. Traditional Methodist church- see Q8/R8
 3. Progressive Methodist church (name to be determined by new denomination following adoption of the *Protocol*)
- Q5. Will each of the new denominations have their own Methodist *Book of Discipline*?
- Q5. Yes...however, the doctrinal standards and our common core as Methodists will remain the same and central to each denomination's *Book of Discipline*.
- Q6. Why hasn't the UMC General Conference voted on the Protocol?
- R6. The 2020 UMC General Conference was postponed in 2020, 2021 and 2022 due to continuing issues related to COVID-19. We are a global church with Conferences in the US, Africa, Philippines and Europe. On March 3, 2022 the General Conference Committee determined that meeting in-person or virtually would be impractical for many reasons that include:
- potential new variants
 - testing/quarantines
 - 2-year backlog/cost of visas
 - availability of vaccines
 - availability/reliability of Wi-Fi
 - practicality of meeting across 9 different time zones, etc.
- The postponed 2020 conference is now scheduled to meet at its next regular 4-year cycle session in 2024.
- Q7. What are the impacts of the postponement of the 2022 UMC General Conference?
- R7. Some of the major impacts are:
- all are disappointed
 - creates further difficulty for local churches to keep members and seek new one
 - 2 additional years of indecision creates challenges for growth in ministry and mission
 - all want to move beyond the last 50+ years

- some have decided that they cannot wait until 2024 to separate
 - Liberation Methodist Connexion (LMX)
(new progressive virtual denomination, no physical church property)
 - Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA)
Global Methodist Church

Q8. What is the Wesleyan Covenant Association/Global Methodist Church?

R8. The WCA

- is a “global connection of local churches, laity, and regional chapter that seeks to partner with like-minded orthodox Christians to build a new global church.”
- has been actively forming a new Methodist Church since 2018
- announced the formation of the Global Methodist Church in February 2021
- WCA/GMC has formed a Transitional Leadership Council and adopted a *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.
- After 2022 General Conference postponement announced the launch of the Global Methodist Church denomination on May 1, 2022.

Q9. How many local UMC churches are part of the WCA (an association, not a denomination)?

R9. The UMC has 30,500+ churches in the US

- WCA estimates that 3,000-5,000 churches are likely to join the Global Methodist Church by late 2022
- WCA estimates that an additional 1,000 churches may join by the end of 2024
- this represents approximately 20 % of UMC churches

Q10. How do churches join the Global Methodist Church (GMC) at this time without the *Protocol* and its separation process being adopted by the UMC General Conference? If MUMC would decide to disaffiliate, what would be the cost?

R10. Since the *Protocol* outlining a process for graceful separation has not been approved by the UMC General Conference, any local churches wanting to separate from the UMC at this time...whether to join the GMC or to become independent...must initiate disaffiliation using ¶2553 of the *Book of Discipline* through a defined process.

- request initiated by lay leadership to the District Superintendent
- payment of 2 years of apportionments (for MUMC~ \$0.5M)

- payment of any unfunded pension liabilities (for MUMC~ \$1.6M)
- 67% approval through a called local church conference
- vote of Annual Conference
- process takes up to a year+ to complete

Q11. How can the centrist post separation Methodist church still be called the United Methodist Church?

R11. The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 with the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

Q12. Will the UMC Central Conferences/churches in other parts of the world (Africa, Philippines, Europe, etc) be part of the new Global Methodist Church? ...will the post separation United Methodist Church and Progressive Methodist denominations be global?

R12. All UMC Central Conferences/churches will have the same opportunity as the Annual Conferences/churches in the United States to become part of either of the new Methodist denominations. Even though “global” is not in each of the denomination’s names, all of the new Methodist denominations will be global and connectional around the world.

Q13. Will MUMC pursue disaffiliation using ¶2553 of the *Book of Discipline*?

R13. All UM churches are still under the legislation approved at the 2019 Special General Conference (Traditional Plan) and the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, everything is still on pause and there is no internal change causing churches to exit the UMC ahead of the 2024 General Conference.

MUMC desires to remain faithful to the UMC and to let the 2024 General Conference provide a path and process for churches to discern their best path forward.

MUMC does not plan to pursue disaffiliation from the UMC.

Q14. 2 years to the 2024 UMC General Conference is a long time...how will we know of any proposed changes and provide input?

R14. MUMC Communications Team will continue to update information on our website (click [here](#)).

MUMC General Conference Team will continue to hold Our Path Forward sessions to provide information and seek input/comments from our church members...next session: **Sunday August 28**, 9:30a & 10:45a in the Commons

Members may submit questions/comments to questions@matthewsumc.org.

Members may subscribe to the UMC News Service (no cost) for updates on all UMC issues/activities. (Click [here](#).)

Q15. We have recently read in the UMNews that 5 of the 16-member *Protocol* mediation team have rescinded their support for the agreement. Will the Protocol still be considered for approval by the 2024 UMC General Conference?

R15. Yes. 7 Bishops who were also part of the mediation team, including our Bishop Ken Carter, responded by issuing this statement.

“As signatories of the *Protocol*, we continue to affirm this work... We acknowledge that the *Protocol* is now in legislative form and is the appropriate discernment of the delegates to the upcoming General Conference.” Click [here](#) to read the complete statement.

Those who rescinded their support did so for reasons related to the pandemic...4-year delay in a decision by the UMC General Conference and a decision by the Wesleyan Covenant Association (traditionalists) to start a new Global Methodist Church on May 1, 2022 without waiting for adoption of the *Protocol* at the 2024 UMC General Conference. Click [here](#) for more info.

Q16. What is MUMC’s Path Forward leading to the 2024 UMC General Conference?

R16. MUMC will continue to:

- **affirm** our Vision Statement, inscribed in granite, and located in our sanctuary welcoming space for nearly 30 years:
“Matthews United Methodist Church seeks to be an all-inclusive community which lifts high the Cross and shares the love of Jesus.”
- **affirm** our Welcome Statement:
“Welcome! Matthews UMC embraces God’s gift of diversity and rejoices in a loving, diverse community united in Christ! Our Church strives to live the love of Christ in all we do and affirms the sacred worth of all persons, deserving of every sacrament and rite. We affirm and celebrate individuals of every sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual abilities, economic status, political perspective, age, family composition, country of origin

and citizenship status. We all are made in Christ's image, worthy of God's love and grace! We recognize our differences and do not seek to erase them but to use them as a source of strength, as we journey together toward greater understanding, mutual respect, and love for each other, while humbly serving our God."

- **embrace** the fundamentals of our Wesleyan tradition of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- **embrace** a church anchored in scripture and theology of grace
- **embrace** a church that aspires to be a more just force in the world
- **be connected** to Methodists working toward good in the world
- **do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God and one another (Micah 6:8)**
- **be Christ centered and Spirit led** as we look to the future and discern new ways to live out our faith and to serve