



## **A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church**

United Methodists all over the globe are liturgical, contemporary, charismatic, social activists, urban, suburban, small town, rural and much more. We are children, youth, young adults, senior adults, new Christians, and mature Christians. We are present on four continents, in more than 45 countries, and we comprise an unknown number of cultures and languages. We are a holy communion of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and perspectives united by the Holy Spirit, driven by the mission of Christ, and bearing the good news of an unmerited grace that changes lives and transforms communities.

Christ's prayer for our unity and command to gather all to the table, to make space for one another, appreciate one another, and look for Christ in each other, prohibit us from creating individual tables only for those who think, act, look, and perceive the world like we do. We cannot be a church that fractures its identity and commitment to Christ by aligning itself with political parties. We cannot be a traditional church or a progressive church or a centrist church. We cannot be a gay or straight church. Our churches must be more than echo chambers made in our own image arguing with each other while neglecting our central purpose. This is the way of the world.

Instead, we must be one people, rooted in scripture, centered in Christ, serving in love and united in the essentials. It is hard work. It is sacred work. It is the ministry of reconciliation that Christ gave to each of us. Our best witness is to love each other as Christ loves us, to show the world the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to bind us together despite our differences. This is living out the gospel.

We are a church:

- Confident in what God has done in Christ Jesus for all humankind
- Committed to personal and social salvation/transformation
- Courageous in dismantling the powers of racism, tribalism, and colonialism

All of our members, clergy, local churches, and annual conferences will continue to have a home in the future United Methodist Church, whether they consider themselves liberal, evangelical, progressive, traditionalist, middle of the road, conservative, centrist, or something else. We hold on to our Wesleyan heritage that “the living core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason”.

We are longing for a United Methodist Church that will move towards new forms of being a connectional church, a General Conference focused on global essentials, and an empowerment of regions for contextually relevant forms of living our common mission mandate. Deeply rooted in the Doctrinal Standards of the UMC, we pledge to exercise our episcopal role in ways that enable as many United Methodists, lay and clergy, as are willing to remain in the UMC and – together – to continue in

making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And, because we are part of the Church Universal, we seek to be united visibly and in ministries with other parts of the Body of Christ in God's mission for the human family and creation.

We are committed to strengthening every local church, where the word is preached and Christ is offered, and where the table is set before all who hunger and thirst for righteousness, confident in the prayer we have learned to say and share:

- Make us one with Christ—this is faithfulness.
- Make us one with each other—this is unity.
- Make us one in ministry to all the world—this is fruitfulness.

This is the United Methodist Church we love and serve!

Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church  
November 4, 2021



MATTHEWS UNITED METHODIST

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

**From: Jon Pollack, Carol Hatcher, Chuck Wilson**

**May 25, 2022**

Several months ago, it was announced that the General Conference (GC – the governing body of our denomination) of The United Methodist Church (UMC) had been postponed until 2024. This means that due to the pandemic, the meeting of GC has been postponed 3 times between 2020 and its new projected date of 2024.

This was obviously frustrating news. However, this postponement is necessary due to the global nature of The UMC and the reality that vaccinations are still limited in many areas of the world, especially on the continent of Africa where many faithful United Methodists live. While a virtual gathering might seem to be an alternative, the reality is that reliable internet can be hard to find for folks in the developing world. The security of voting on the crucial matters before the next GC could also be challenging. The option of a 2023 GC was considered, but it was decided that it would not be good stewardship to hold a special session of GC in 2023 and then incur the same costs for the regularly scheduled Conference for 2024. The committee on GC, made up of lay and clergy (not bishops) from across the denomination, made this decision.

Not long after the announced postponement of GC to 2024, The Global Methodist Church, which is a group of traditionalist United Methodists who have been planning for separation from The UMC for some time now, announced that they will launch this new denomination on May 1 of 2022 rather than waiting and launching after the GC 2024. This decision is understandable as everyone is frustrated with the delays in being able to move forward at this point. However, no one planned for a global pandemic, and it's no one's fault for these delays. It just is.

In the wake of these announcements, there has been a great deal of misinformation about all of this and the future of The UMC moving forward. So, we wanted to share some information with you and clear up any misinformation.

First, we want to affirm the reality that even with the possible removal of The UMC *Book of Discipline's* current restrictive language around the ordination of LGBTQ+ persons and the constraints on clergy in performing same-sex weddings, this in no way changes our doctrinal standards which are found in the *Book of Discipline* and cannot be changed at GC. That means that the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, the General Rules of the church, and more continue as the foundation of our faith. This includes our understanding of the authority of scripture and our commitment to the Lordship of Christ. We mention these two points specifically because numerous public statements have been made that the continuing UMC will not be held to these fundamental commitments. It has been said that those choosing to leave are partly doing so because the authority of scripture is at stake.

This is simply not the case. What is being debated is the interpretation of certain scripture passages and how they have meaning for us today around issues of human sexuality. Differences in the interpretation of scripture is nothing new to the church. Obviously, The UMC has interpreted scriptures related to the role of women in the church, differently from other churches, for many years. However, those differences do not lead us to question the commitment to scriptural authority of those we disagree with. We simply agree to disagree. Those disagreements on scriptural interpretation also do not lead us to question the commitment of others to the Lordship of Christ. Those choosing to leave the church over these differences of scriptural interpretation to level such attacks against those who choose to remain are disingenuous and without merit.

As we know from previous discussions, The UMC has made room for various understandings in interpreting these scriptures and The UMC of the future will continue to do so. The potential removal of the restrictive language that could lead to more full inclusion for LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the church does not mean that we are all going to agree on this. It does mean that MUMC and its pastors have the freedom to offer more inclusive ministry in individual contexts.

Obviously, no final decisions can be made until the meeting of GC in 2024.

In the meantime, for those churches who feel that any such potential change will violate their conscience and values, there is a pathway for disaffiliation that was outlined in the special called 2019 GC. Our Western North Carolina Annual Conference is working with both pastors and churches who have gone through a careful, open discernment process, the steps for which are outlined by the Conference, and is following the GC guidelines for disaffiliation which includes:

- Payment of unpaid apportionments for 12 months immediately prior to disaffiliation,
- Payment of an additional 12 months of apportionments,
- Payment of an amount equal to the Local Church's pro-rata share of the Annual Conference's unfunded pension obligations which is determined by a formula by the Western North Carolina Annual Conference,
- Payment of any unpaid pension, salary, or ministry protection costs,
- Payment of all legal costs related to disaffiliation.

We share that to affirm that the language we have heard used in some circles around "fighting" with the Annual Conference is again not based in reality. There is already a fair, established process for churches that choose to disaffiliate.

We're sure there are currently churches seeking disaffiliation. While you may read other numbers floating around social media, we have learned that there are churches on some lists that are supposedly disaffiliating and had no idea they were on such a list!

As your church leaders, we have every intention of continuing to serve and lead MUMC in the continuing UMC here in the Western North Carolina Conference. We believe in our mission to love God, love each other, and love our neighbors in extraordinary ways. We also believe in the mission of the worldwide UMC, which continues to practice the theology of the open table - where everyone is welcome to find a place and where the grace of Christ is the cornerstone of mission and ministry in Christ's name. Even in this hard season of painful division, The UMC continues to make disciples of Jesus Christ every day. The UMC continues to teach and preach the gospel. The UMC continues to tend to the needs of the sick and the suffering. The UMC continues to serve and care for our neighbors in need and to promote justice in the world. We will respect and bless those who choose to leave, trusting that God uses many forms of church to bless the world even as we continue to seek to bless the world from our own United Methodist theological tradition here in Matthews, NC.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this more, we will do our very best to be available to answer your questions.

**Faithfully yours,**

**Jon Pollack, Servant Leader for the Administrative Council**

**Carol Hatcher, Lay Leader**

**Dr. Charles (Chuck) W. Wilson II, Pastor**

**P.S. On Sunday, June 5, in The Commons, at 9:30 am and 10:45 am, Rev. Amy Coles, Special Assistant to Bishop Ken Carter will be with us.**

# 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)

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. Why hasn't the UMC General Conference voted on the Protocol?

R4. 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.

Q5. What are the impacts of the postponement of the 2022 UMC General Conference?

R5. 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

Q6. What is the Wesleyan Covenant Association/Global Methodist Church?

R6. 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.

Q7. How many local UMC churches are part of the WCA (an association, not a denomination)?

R7. 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

Q8. How do churches join the Global Methodist Church?

R8. 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 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~ \$500,000)
- 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

Q9. Will MUMC pursue disaffiliation using ¶2553 of the *Book of Discipline*?

R9. 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.

Q10. 2 years to the 2024 UMC General Conference is a long time...how will we know of any proposed changes and provide input?

R10. MUMC Communications Team will continue to update information on our website. <https://matthewsumc.org/the-united-methodist-church/>

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 June 5<sup>th</sup>, 9:30a & 10:45a in the Commons

Members may submit questions/comments to [questions@matthewsumc.org](mailto:questions@matthewsumc.org)

Members may subscribe to the UMC News Service (no cost) for updates on all UMC issues/activities. <https://newsdesk@umc.com.org>

Q11. What is MUMC's Path Forward leading to the 2024 UMC General Conference?

R11. MUMC will continue to:

- 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



# Matthews United Methodist Church

## Healthy Conversations/ Our Path Forward

### Resources:

#### UMC News

- <https://newsdesk@umc.com.org>

#### MUMC

- <https://matthewsumc.org/the-united-methodist-church/>
  - Protocol
  - Protocol FAQ's
  - Rev Tom Berlin's Protocol video
  - UMC General Conference Postponement Announcement
  - Bishop Carter's Pastoral Response to the General Conference Announcement
  - Council of Bishops Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church
  - Dream UMC: A Vision of the future for United Methodists in Western North Carolina
  - Bishop Carter's video: Living in Connection in a Season of Waiting
  - Western North Carolina Conference (WNCC)/ FAQ's on the Further Postponement of General Conference
  - Our Path Forward: The Future of the United Methodist Church- from MUMC Leadership

