



October 27, 2022

Legacy United Methodist Church is composed of people who confess Jesus is Lord and follow him in the Methodist way of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace. Around that unity, there is a great diversity, a wide range of different theological, political and philosophical understandings. One could say we are a church of the messy middle, as described in Romans 14.

We are people who live, work and share faith with others with differing understandings than our own. As such, we seek to honor everyone as we build a culture that strives to **ask anything, listen well, freely disagree, and love regardless.**

Moreover, we believe issues of our Social Principles should be decided at the General and Annual Conference levels. In our life together as Legacy, we seek to not have divisive votes that can cause pain for those whose positions do not prevail.

We are a congregation that honors our denominational covenant; among other commitments, United Methodists practice a traditional view of marriage. However, our attenders, regulars and members have a variety of perspectives on same-sex marriage and ordination standards. We reject the practice of compartmentalizing people into categories according to their actual or perceived perspectives.

We recognize we are living in a transitional season in the life of the Methodist movement. There are many factors that will determine the future; the final forms are not clearly in sight. We are “seeing but through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Here are some of the unknowns:

- Actions of the 2024 United Methodist General (worldwide) Conference
- Some UM churches are moving to the Global Methodist Church (GMC); shape, polity and actual practice of the GMC still developing, as they will not officially gather until sometime in 2023
- Future of the Dakotas Annual Conference after some churches exit for GMC

We will carefully and intentionally explore all options and seek the best course for the future of our church. During the season of unknowns that will exist for the next few years, we seek to continue the powerful ministry of Legacy that has been known for the past 125 years.

We covenant that this season of transition will not affect the vital ministries of Legacy Church. We exist **to intentionally be a multi-generational and multi-ethnic community of impact growing hope, healing and wholeness through Jesus.**



We do that through being a people who:

- **discover** Jesus through passionate worship & radical hospitality
- **connect** in groups growing intentional faith development & authentic faith sharing
- **impact** through hands-on projects developing risk-taking mission and service & extravagant generosity

As we have the past 125 years, we will continue to:

- express a generous orthodoxy, affirming the tenets of the Apostle's Creed
- teach the Holy Scripture
- reach future generations (focusing on ministry to children, youth, & young adults)
- be not just hearers of the word, but doers of the word. We want to be living examples of Jesus' injunction in John 15:12 "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

As we move into the future, we want to be a part of a revitalized Methodism, one that leaves behind the rancor and division of the past fifty years, and moves into a new season of ministry and fruitfulness. We recognize that in this season of uncertainty, our human efforts and understandings are imperfect and dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us.

The most important thing we can do in this hour is **to pray for wisdom and direction**. We know that Jesus is with us and is praying for us even now. Jesus prayed that we may be one and that we bear much fruit. This is what it means to be a church where many people, with many perspectives, sit at the table together and seek to live as followers of Jesus together!

Serving Jesus with You,

Legacy's Administrative Team, Pastors and Staff

Going Forward:

Pray • Learn • Ask Anything • Listen Well • Freely Disagree • Love Regardless

1) Stay UMC

- 1) No change to historic doctrines such as Jesus' birth, death and resurrection
- 2) No church vote required
- 3) One of the reasons given to disaffiliate is uneven application of Discipline statements, restrictions, and requirements regarding historic doctrines, human sexuality and others. However, they are more upheld across the whole worldwide denomination than not.
- 4) Given the global makeup of the UMC & upcoming Judicial Council decisions, it is unknown if there will be any human sexuality shifts at the 2024 General Conference
- 5) There is no financial cost to remain where we are. Apportionments continue at 14% of general offerings, with the stated goal of 10% in coming years

2) Leave UMC, Go GMC

- 1) The Global Methodist Church is a new traditionalist denomination that will keep to the current UMC standards regarding historic doctrines and human sexuality, while simplifying church structure and increasing accountability
- 2) Vote required of 67% of congregation to change denominations
- 3) GMC is still in infancy. Convening conference by end of 2023. Health and pension started January 1. A provisional annual conference exists in Dakotas & Minnesota. IRS recognized 501c3 status. It is unclear when conference support will be available (i.e. finding a pastor).
- 4) There is a financial cost, including paying back recent grants (i.e. Legacy South), estimating \$100,000, to change denominations. GMC apportionments start at 6.5%.
- 5) Currently forming in Angola, Bulgaria, Democratic Republic of Congo, England, Panama, the Philippines, Slovakia, & the United States

3) Leave UMC, Go Independent

- 1) Legacy would be entirely it's own entity, needing to create completely new structures for accountability and pastoral support - can be a permanent or transitional phase
- 2) It gives Legacy the most freedom but is the most work in behind the scenes setup and structure - all on our own for pastoral recruitment, accountability, support, etc.
- 3) The cost to depart in this pathway is the same as #2 as well as an all-church vote of 67% to support the move
- 4) An independent Methodist Church is, by our history, not how Methodists do church.
- 5) Loss of legal support and institutional checks and balances with no broader connection.

4) Leave UMC, Go Emerging Methodist Network & Other Notes

- 1) New Methodist networks, such as The Foundry, The Methodist Collegiate Church, The Sanctification Project, and The Wesley Methodist Society have emerged.
- 2) The denominational options will be a changing dynamic for years to come
- 3) One disaffiliation pathway expires December 31, 2023 with our conference looking to extend until December 31, 2024 - this will be determined at June 2023 Annual Conference
- 4) Churches have disaffiliated in the past and can continue once this pathway ends
- 5) Health, retirement and benefits for pastors and staff can continue with changes with our current provider, Wespath, under options 2-4
- 6) Current pastors could choose to stay in the UMC which means Legacy would have to find and hire pastors independently with no conference or network support.

LGBTQ+ Practices

*From Our Beliefs webpage: legacyumc.org/beliefs/
Discussed with Ad Team & Staff April 24, 2021*

We believe that unity of the church is a primary practice for the Body of Christ generally and for Legacy Church specifically. Unity is not the same as uniformity. Legacy Church is full of people with a variety of theological perspectives concerning many issues facing the current Church, including the biblical understanding of human sexuality.

Our intention is to love the way that God loves us by doing no harm and doing all the good we can. We will maintain the historic biblical picture of marriage being between one man and one woman, at the same time recognizing that some within our congregation may have a different biblical interpretation. We will teach and listen with compassion as we walk alongside each other.

- Everyone is welcome to serve in all ministries as long as they meet ministry-specific criteria.
- Everyone is welcome to participate in any group or event offered by Legacy Church for personal enrichment.
- Everyone is invited to become a member and explore a call to leadership.
- Everyone's marriage relationship will be respected at Legacy Church.
- Legacy will provide marital support of all married couples. All can participate in any marriage course.

Aligned with current United Methodist policy, Legacy clergy will not officiate same-sex weddings, nor will our facilities be used for same-sex weddings. However, clergy will continue to offer pastoral support as same-sex couples navigate personal issues concerning faith and life, just as we minister to divorced, widowed, remarried and single persons.

1968

The Evangelical United Brethren Church and The Methodist Church merge to become The United Methodist Church

1972

The newly adopted United Methodist Social Principles includes the first statement on homosexuality and recognizes divorce and the right of divorced people to remarry. The decades-long church debate on homosexuality begins. In *The Book of Discipline*, the sentence, "We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider it incompatible with Christian teaching," is added to the phrase, "Persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth." The Discipline also makes the first reference to homosexual unions: "We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex."

1975

The United Methodist Gay Caucus organizes in Evanston, Illinois.

1976

General Conference adds 3 statements banning the use of church funds to promote homosexuality.

1980

The General Conference fails to add the phrase "no self-avowed, practicing homosexual therefore shall be ordained or appointed in The United Methodist Church" to the Discipline. The conference notes the denomination "has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless."

1984

General Conference reverses its 1980 decision and declares that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church". The conference also inserts the phrase "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" regarding qualifications for ordination.

1988

- General Conference approves a study of homosexuality to report to the 1992 General Conference.
- Added "...we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

1992

General Conference votes to retain the church's stance

1996

General Conference adds three significant points to the church's position on homosexuality: a footnote defining "self-avowed practicing homosexual," a declaration that ceremonies to celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist clergy or in United Methodist churches and a call for the U.S. military not to exclude people from service "solely on the basis of sexual orientation."

2000

General Conference votes to add to the Social Principles the language, "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends."

2001

The Judicial Council rules that the central conferences (conferences outside of the US) have jurisdiction over adaptations of the Discipline except for matters protected by The United Methodist Church constitution.

2004

- Chargeable offenses related to homosexuality are added to the Discipline.
- Delegates endorse "A Resolution on Church Unity." "As United Methodists we remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement, and affirm our commitment to work together for the common mission of making disciples throughout the world."

2008

- The Protestant Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire is received into full membership in The United Methodist Church with the Rev. Benjamin Boni as bishop.
- General Conference approves a new resolution to oppose homophobia and heterosexism.

2012

- Two items stating Christians have different opinions about homosexuality were not approved, leaving the current language intact.
- General Conference delegates authorize a fourth episcopal area for the Congo Central Conference to accommodate church growth in that region.

2016

- Approval is given for five new bishops in Africa starting in 2020.
- N. Oswald Tweh Sr., a layman from Liberia, is the first member from outside the United States to be elected president of the Judicial Council.
- General Conference authorizes the Council of Bishops to create a commission to study how the church can find unity amid growing divisions over homosexuality.

2016

- The Western Jurisdiction elects the Rev. Karen Oliveto as the denomination's first female bishop married to a woman.
- The Wesleyan Covenant Association, a membership-based advocacy group for United Methodists seeking to uphold church teachings, held a convening meeting in Chicago.

2017-2018

- The Council of Bishops announces a call to a special General Conference Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis to act on their report based on recommendations from the Commission on a Way Forward.
- Three plans emerged from The Commission on a Way Forward and were widely debated. The Connectional Conference Plan would have re-organized the church into two separate but connected expressions. The One Church Plan, endorsed by the Council of Bishops, would allow conferences, clergy, and local churches to make their own decisions on same-sex marriage. The Traditional Plan, initially left in outline form, would uphold church teaching and enable exit to those who could not tolerate this.
- Books were published, new caucuses were formed, and resolutions were passed on the future of the UMC.

2019

- A specially-called General Conference was held in St. Louis to consider recommendations by The Commission on a Way Forward and other relevant legislation. The bishops preferred plan ranked low among delegate priorities. The Traditional Plan upholding church teaching was approved, but without the planned gracious exit provision for those who disagreed. A separate disaffiliation process was also approved for churches that wanted to become independent.
- Blame and recriminations abounded in the wake of General Conference 2019. Several U.S. conferences passed resolutions in resistance to the decision of General Conference. In elections for General Conference 2020 delegates, more progressive delegates were elected in the U.S.
- A group of progressives, centrists, and traditionalists met in Indianapolis to negotiate a plan for denominational separation. The result was "The Indianapolis Plan" that allowed centrist/progressives to control the UMC in exchange for a gracious exit path for conferences and congregations to leave with their properties and assets.
- The Wesleyan Covenant Association began pulling together plans for a new denomination.
- Bishop Yambasu of Sierra Leone assembled a group of top bishops and advocacy group leaders to solve the UMC crisis. Noted attorney Kenneth Feinberg donated his services to create a plan for separation.

2020

January

- The “Feinberg Separation Protocol” was announced as legislation coming to General Conference 2020 in Minneapolis. Like the earlier Indianapolis Plan, it ceded control of the UMC to centrist/progressives in exchange for a gracious exit for traditional conferences and congregations to leave with their real estate and assets. The ultimate fate of the growing African majority in the UMC continued to be an open question.

March

- A global pandemic caused the postponement of General Conference until 2021. This was later changed to August/September 2022.
- Large congregations began to negotiate out of United Methodism, including the largest churches in the California-Pacific Conference, the Indiana Conference, the Texas Conference, and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

August

- Bishop Yambasu, the convener of the Protocol Team, died tragically in an auto accident. Africans honor his leadership amid mixed feelings about the agreement he helped to broker.

December

- The Wesleyan Covenant Association invited a wider group of UM traditionalists, including bishops, to help form a Transitional Leadership Council for the new denomination envisioned by the Protocol.

2021

November

- The UM Council of Bishops released a Narrative for a Continuing United Methodist Church.
- It came to light that members of the Transitional Leadership Council for the new denomination met over several months with representatives of the UMC Council of Bishops to draft a Comity Agreement for transfer of churches leaving the UMC for the new denomination. A draft of a plan was distributed to COB member but never officially approved.

December

- Plans for an ultra-progressive Methodist denomination, The Liberation Methodist Connexion ended

2022

March

- A second delay in General Conference was announced. This time, until 2024. Traditionalists strongly objected to this decision and speculated it was made for political reasons. At least one member of the Commission on General Conference resigned and wrote about the deliberations leading up to the further delay. The formation of the Global Methodist Church was announced on that same day.

May-June

- The Global Methodist Church officially formed and began receiving congregations.
- The Judicial Council of the UMC ruled that annual conferences cannot leave the UMC unless General Conference meets and approved a process for that.
- Five Centrist/Progressive Protocol negotiators withdraw their support for the formal separation plan.

August

- The Judicial Council ruled that congregations cannot use long-standing ecumenical practices to transfer directly from the UMC to the GMC. This means disaffiliation is the only workable course of action for those seeking exit from the UMC. The disaffiliation provision sunsets on December 31, 2023 and all disaffiliations, including annual conference approvals, must be completed by then.
- Reporting surfaced that a group of former United Methodist mega-churches is forming The Foundry Network for large congregations who want to be more autonomous.

Current

- Annual conferences hold regular and specially-called sessions to approve local church disaffiliations. Not without controversy, conferences have mixed approaches and price tags for disaffiliation.