

The Future of the United Methodist Church Webinar (Aug. 25, 2022)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the best reason why churches should stay in the UMC?

A: We are a unique blend of personal holiness and social holiness, what some commentators have called “the extreme center.” That means we hold all the essential doctrines: salvation through Christ, the essential elements of the traditional creeds and statements of faith, but also hold to the direct experience of the Holy Spirit that leads us to spiritual conviction and faithful service. There is no other witness like that of United Methodism combining all those elements. On a daily basis that’s lived out in a world-wide network to witness and to serve, as well as, to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We are simply unique and blessed.

Q: What is the best thing about the UMC?

A: The blend of what John Wesley would have called “vital piety” with social action. Shaped by Christ and yet totally into the world for the sake of the world’s transformation.

Q: Do you think the UMC will eventually tell conservative churches to leave?

A: Absolutely not. You don’t tell your sister or brother in Christ to leave. We need each other. We grow from encountering the witness of the Spirit in each other. To quote Scripture, “Iron sharpens iron.”

Q: What would a “brighter day ahead” look like for the UMC?

A: As Bishop Fairley has said, the brighter day is when we center ourselves on Jesus and get about doing his work. We have always evangelized and made disciples. We are about that work now and will always be. When that work becomes centered for us all again, with these denominational concerns retreat to their rightful place, we will be at the better day.

Q: We need reasons to be UM. The doctrine of all Wesleyan groups such as the GMC are the same, the dedication is the same. Why should I remain UM when the entire traditional group in my church have been marginalized and demonized by the “Progressives”? I believe pretty much every thing being said but feel the UMC has strayed from its Discipline and need reasons to go stay with UMC.

A: We need each other and no one should “demonize” a fellow Christian believer. We have always disagreed with each other on many topics, but centered in Christ, have surmounted disagreements and lived in a unity of the Spirit. United Methodists have a unique theological heritage as well as a practical history of living our beliefs out in the world where we make a difference. No one is being asked to leave nor ever will be.

Q: In the event that whole communities, particularly in rural areas, are left without a United Methodist presence after disaffiliations, are there plans in place to form a United Methodist presence in those communities? Particularly in the case of “remnant congregations” being left there?

A: We will always work to ensure that the United Methodist witness is in every community to the best of our abilities. New communities may well be formed as the disaffiliation process affects various communities, rural and urban.

Q: The UMC has done amazing things for prevent malaria, disaster relief, continues to plant new churches, and congregations around the world are winning people for Christ and are making it “on earth as it in Heaven.” Could you speak specifically to what lies ahead as we serve Christ together and what concrete things can we point to that a church that might be considering disaffiliation can look to and see that we are better together?

A: We will continue to do those amazing things: remember its our beliefs as UM Christians that have led us to those actions and we have created the means by which to fulfill our calling to serve through the Church.

Q: Does the book of Discipline state that we accept persons regardless of sexual orientation? I know it says we accept people regardless of race, etc.... But does it specifically list "sexual orientation"?

A: The Discipline says that “all people are of sacred worth,” in a section where human sexuality is discussed (BOD, Para. 161) , meaning that we accept all people regardless of their sexual orientation.

Q: At our last recent Church Council meeting it was stated by a member that the issue for disassociation and formation of the Global Methodist Church is not just about homosexuality - that is a small issue - that the bigger issues are porposals by the UMC to make the Bible less literal and more fluid AND saying that Jesus is just a guy!

A: We are not familiar with the proposals you heard about. All proposals to General Conference can be found in the proposed legislation published prior to General Conference.

Q: How can we support the team and the Bishop during this time?

A: The bishop and team always stand in need of your prayer and especially during challenging times. Other helpful support includes asking questions to get official information and not repeating information that has not been verified ot be true. We are thankful for the blessing of the United Methodist family coming together to support each other.

Q: what is the "new Thing" you're referring to that's coming in the future?

A: The “new thing” is a renewed thing: an emphasis on Jesus as the center of what and of all we are and do.

Q: Previous sessions have included more "nuts and bolts" issues. This may be a more private question - many of my counseling clients have shared that one DS has asked all pastors to present the disaffiliation process, one is calling retired pastors to see willingness to serve in fill in fashion until next AC, one is saying "you may be the only UMC left in the area" The wide variety of messaging is causing great anxiety about the nuts and bolts from November 19- Annual Conference in June. Is there a game plan that can be shared so clergy are on the same page?

A: While we want everyone and all churches to be in the place where they understand Jesus is calling them, Bishop Fairley and our Conference leadership is all clear that we do not want any church to disaffiliate. The one central source of information about this entire matter is on the NCC website at nccumc.org/disaffiliation.

Q: I believe the real question is: will the doctrinal standards be taught and upheld, and not ignored? Response?

A: Yes, they are and need to be taught at every point: local church, district, annual conference and general church.

Q: One of the biggest critiques I see is that those who violate the doctrinal standards aren't held accountable. What will accountability to the Discipline look like?

A: As Bishop Fairley has said, accountability is at every point of the church, including in local churches. We are constantly working to model ourselves after Jesus' example.

Q: Will bishops set an example of teaching the church's doctrinal standards?

A: As Bishop Fairley has said, he will and tries always to be faithful to those standards and each of us is to be too.

Q: Will we follow the Book of Discipline?

A: Yes, in every community and at every level of the church.

Q: For congregation members with questions about what the UMC will look like going forward if there is a change in Discipline, what is the single and most accurate/reliable resource we can point them to?

A: The General Conference is the only body that can alter the Book of Discipline. It meets again in 2024. Many materials will be available before it meets. No denomination, including those now forming, can predict the future for itself beyond a point, just as none of us can as individuals.

Q: Why offer disaffiliation now when the General Conference will evidently approve the Protocol in 2024 offering separation? Do monetary issues have anything to do with it?

A: The 2019 Special Session of General Conference passed a motion allowing for the current actions. (Para. 2553)

Q: The schism/separation is occurring because certain bishops did not uphold the church's discipline. Will that end in the post-separation United Methodist Church?

A: You have heard Bishop Fairley speak to this: yes, bishops are and will continue to be expected and held accountable for support of The Discipline.

Q: The current Disaffiliation is because of one issue: Gay Marriage and Gay Pastors. This has not been addressed. Why are Churches disaffiliating if it is not clear where the UMC is going on this issue.

A: The Discipline has not changed. When it meets again it will consider all aspects of The Book of Discipline as it always has.

Q: Beautiful, bishop, the center is Jesus Christ -- who is to be trusted and obeyed by the Church. Good conclusion.

A: Thank you!