

A Message from The Pastor



In the past few years the UMC has been in the midst of a time of change and upheaval as we have moved forward towards an understanding of what it means to be church and how we relate and are in ministry to and with the LGBTQIA+ community. This has led to decades of conversation, interchurch debates and General conferences that have been divided over what direction to take.

In 2019 a special General conference was held to consider same-sex marriage and gay ordination and any related topics. Out of this session came several possible proposals to divide the denomination. The following information is excerpted from an article by Heather Hahn from UM News. More information is available at church.

The most endorsed of these is the **Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation**, negotiated by a professional mediator with a theologically diverse group of United Methodist bishops and advocacy group leaders. The proposal offers a series of steps that would enable churches and conferences that support restrictions on gay marriage and ordination to leave with church property and \$25 million in United Methodist funds to form a new traditionalist denomination.

However, the protocol has yet to receive a General Conference vote. Complications from the COVID-19 pandemic have led to three postponements of the international legislative assembly, from May 2020 to now 2024.

Bottom line: The protocol is not currently part of United Methodist church law, and it is not operative.

After the third postponement, **Global Methodist Church** organizers announced they were no longer waiting for General Conference to act and instead moving up their new traditionalist denomination's launch date to May 1. However, the organizers are doing so without the formal separation plan they hoped the protocol would provide.

The **Wesleyan Covenant Association**, a theologically conservative unofficial advocacy group in The United Methodist Church, has served as the main organizing force behind the new denomination. The WCA plans to mark the new denomination's launch at a legislative assembly May 6 and a global gathering May 7 near Indianapolis. The Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA president and chairman of the new denomination's Transitional Leadership Council, has served as the designated spokesman for both groups but declined to be interviewed for this article.

On its website under launch information, the Global Methodist Church announced that it would be a church in transition as it prepares for its own convening General Conference in 12 to 18 months. With no protocol, congregations that wish to depart The United Methodist Church must do so using already existing measures in the Book of Discipline, the denomination's law book. In practice, that means annual conferences — church regional bodies — are responsible for handling church disaffiliations.

By an overwhelming majority, the United Methodist Council of Bishops has affirmed that conferences should use the Discipline's Paragraph 2553 as the primary paragraph for disaffiliation and separation. Passed during the special 2019 General Conference, the church law allows congregations to exit with property "for reasons of conscience" related to homosexuality.

Paragraph 2553 requires that exiting churches meet certain financial and procedural obligations to be released from the trust clause. It also states that annual conferences "may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph."

So, what does that mean for our local church?

Currently there is no movement towards disinflation, nor has it been raised to the church leadership by anyone within the church. We are continuing to be open and affirming to anyone who wishes to be a part of Perry Hall UMC.

We are currently continuing to follow the practices surrounding marriage and ordination as they are laid out in our current discipline (the restrictions are still in place) as the denomination discerns what will come next.

If you have any questions or concern, please feel free to reach out to me and I will do my best to answer them based on the information that is at hand.

Blessing!

Pastor Vic