

Background on the Question of Affiliation

Preface

The members of the Christ Church Jeremiah 29 Task Force have worked to develop this document that, we hope, will help the reader understand the history, dividing issues and viable options for the direction for Christ Church. In its broadest sense, the document is in a question-and-answer format, but we have provided expanded discussion where needed. More detail, depth, and partisan views regarding these topics can be found among the many references provided on Jeremiah29 Task Force webpage.

The Task Force does not provide an opinion; however, it is possible that individual biases are reflected in this document, despite our best efforts to keep that from occurring. As a committee we are probably just as split in our desires as we suspect the church is. We have consulted pastors within our church and outside our church to check for inaccuracies, misinterpretations, and to ensure that we use language that is reflective and respectful of differing affiliation options.

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Where are we and how did we get here?

Our denomination is splintering. The leaders of all major groups (generally known as centrist, traditionalist, and progressive) within the United Methodist Church (UMC) agree on the inevitability for such a split.

For 48 of its 52 years, the UMC has known ever-increasing levels of conflict regarding human sexuality, primarily whether clergy should be allowed to perform same-sex weddings, and should self-avowed practicing homosexuals be ordained or elected as bishops? There is also conflict regarding the authority and interpretation of the Bible and accountability of the bureaucracy. For a year-by-year snapshot of actions at the General Conferencesⁱ, which are held every four years except 2020, refer to [Brief Overview of General Conferencesⁱⁱ](#).

At the 2012 and 2016 General Conferences, leaders of various constituencies in the UMC discussed whether it was time to separate. Delegates at the 2016 General Conference voted to approve the Council of Bishops request to create the Commission on a Way Forwardⁱⁱⁱ (COWF) with a charge to find a way to “study the issues about which we disagree, make recommendations to help us find a way forward.” Thirty-two members from nine countries with a variety of theological perspectives comprised the COWF.

The COWF^{iv} presented three plans to a special General Conference in February 2019. The **Connectional Conference Plan**, which received little support, would have created three theologically distinct conferences within the UMC, each covering the entire United States and each having a different teaching on the issues involved in the impasse and provide for the Central conferences to align as they choose. The **One Church Plan** would have empowered existing annual conferences, local churches, and pastors to make their own decisions within their missional context, including the definition of marriage and ordination. And the **Traditional Plan** would have the UMC reaffirm its position on ordination and Christian marriage defined in the Book of Discipline (BOD) and enhance accountability for disobedience to the BOD.

In the February 2019 Special Session, the General Conference narrowly adopted the Traditional Plan by a vote of 438 to 384 (53% to 47%), and added language to the Social Principles that many considered harmful to LGBTQ communities. This led to many clergy, laity, congregations, and UMC institutions lamenting and resisting the outcome, and multiple Annual Conferences passed resolutions seeking to bypass the General Conference’s decision as a matter of justice. Another outcome of the 2019 Special Session was the addition of ¶12553^v to the BOD, which allowed disaffiliation from the UMC for reasons regarding changes to the BOD regarding human sexuality.

In the summer of 2019, a mediated negotiation brought together 15 leaders representing every major advocacy group associated with the constituencies involved in the conflict plus three bishops. Eventually, after several sessions, a group of 18 participants arrived at a comprehensive agreement called the “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation,”^{vi} with the objective of ending the conflict within the UMC by facilitating an amicable and orderly separation and division of the denomination assets. It was announced in December 2019.

At almost the same time as the Protocol was announced, delegates from three UMC Central Conferences announced the “Christmas Covenant,”^{vii} which is characterized as a “plea for keeping the denomination intact and as unified as possible.” It also calls for restructuring of the UMC into regional conferences, including a U.S. regional conference.

Beginning in 2020, the Annual and Central conferences began to consider these proposals, and both were planned legislative discussions at the 2020 General Conference. However, the 2020 General Conference was postponed until 2021, then to 2022, and in February 2022, it was postponed yet another two years to 2024. As a result, the next opportunity to adjudicate the conflict via legislative action is the 2020 General Conference, now scheduled for 2024.

In March 2022, the Global Methodist Church (GMC) announced that it would launch May 1, 2022, citing the delay of the 2020 General Conference as a deciding factor. Keith Boyette, a retired UMC minister who chairs the new Global Methodist Church's "transitional council," said in its GMC news release^{viii}: "Many United Methodists have grown impatient with a denomination clearly struggling to function effectively at the general church level. Theologically conservative local churches and annual conferences want to be free of divisive and destructive debates and to have the freedom to move forward together."

The Texas Annual Conference (TAC), led by Bishop Scott Jones, has vowed to follow this ruling, in keeping with the Book of Discipline. In his remarks at the 2022 TAC, Bishop Jones stated that each congregation within the TAC could choose to disaffiliate from the UMC in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

On June 7, 2022, five members of the 18-member bipartisan mediation group that had unanimously approved and recommended the "Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation" withdrew their support for the Protocol, stating "Given the growing opposition to the Protocol within the constituencies we represent, the dwindling support among General Conference delegates, and the serious reservations of Central Conference leaders, we can no longer in good faith support the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation or work towards its adoption at the next General Conference."^{ix}

On June 17, 2022, Bishop Jones of the TAC announced that he will retire December 31, 2022. The reason he gave was the "Increasing disobedience and escalating conflict in the denomination have made my service as a bishop of the whole church much more problematic."

Many congregations within the UMC have entered a period of discernment to decide whether to continue affiliation with the UMC or to shift their affiliation to another expression of Methodism (such as the GMC or Free Methodist) or leave Methodism for another denomination or to go non-denominational (independent).

Christ Church entered a period of discernment effective June 5, to determine the expression of Methodism with which we want to affiliate, both as a congregation and as individuals.

Why are some Traditionalists leaving the UMC?

Many congregations have apparently decided that now is the time to decide on separation rather than wait to see what happens at the next General Conference, especially since ¶12553 of the Book of Discipline, which provides a pathway for separation, expires on December 31, 2023.

In an open letter to The Woodlands UMC community^x, dated July 7, 2022, Bishop Robert Hayes who is well known to Christ Church members having served as the District Superintendent and is now Bishop in Residence at The Woodlands UMC, provides his explanation of why some traditionalists are leaving the UMC.

Is there an issue regarding UMC Doctrine?

Doctrine refers to a set of beliefs considered essential to one's faith, such as the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, the nature and authority of the Bible, and the physical resurrection of Jesus. The UMC Doctrine is reflected in the Articles of Religion^{xi} and the Confession of Faith^{xii}.

There is currently no conflict about Doctrine; all groups believe in the components. The issues revolve around if and how one's interpretation of scripture leads to a life that reflects the Doctrine they espouse.

What are the issues dividing the church?

While the presenting issues have revolved around human sexuality, the divide goes far deeper. The underlying issues behind the presenting issues are complex and longstanding in the history of the UMC. What follows is an attempt at providing an objective summary view of the major issues contributing to the conflict, categorized for discussion purposes into three subjects:

- Scripture –differences in the interpretations, understandings, and applications of scripture.
- Social Principles - differences in the social principles within the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality as it relates to ordination of clergy, election of Bishops, and Christian marriage.
- Church Administration (also called Polity) – issues regarding church hierarchy (especially bishops) disregarding those parts of the Book of Discipline with which they disagree as a matter of justice; payment of apportionments; transfer of local church property.

These categorical expressions of the issues are not meant as an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but are intended as a summary of some of the major issues dividing the church. Further definition of these issues is provided in other sections of the document. A summary contrasting the views of each faction is also provided in another section of the document.

What are the issues regarding Scripture?

The major issues of Scripture relate to the authority of scripture and how one interprets, understands, and applies scripture.

- Is Scripture the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine as stated in the UMC Book of Discipline?
- Is Scripture authoritative and to be interpreted with the Wesleyan method of tradition, reason and experience?
- Is scripture flawed by the limits of human authors and cultural worldviews present when they were written?
- Is it acceptable to pick and choose which scriptures are authoritative for today's time?
- Is it acceptable to believe that competing teachings on some scriptures can coexist in one church?
- What expressions of human sexuality are part of God's created order?

What are the issues regarding Social Principles?

The Social Principles^{xiii} address a wide range of concerns from poverty to use of tobacco to global warming. The Social Principles primarily at issue concern the expressions of human sexuality regarding the ordination of clergy and Christian marriage.

- What is the scriptural definition of marriage?
- What should the moral standards be for ordained clergy and election of Bishops?

One's views of Scripture will likely guide one's view of the application of Social Principles.

What are the issues regarding Church Administration (Polity)?

The major issues of church administration involve church structure and governance, accountability, and apportionments. If you are unfamiliar with the structure of the UMC^{xiv}, you can find an explanation on our church webpage Future of Our Church^{xv}.

- Should the structure of the UMC be streamlined?
- Should/how should the power of Bishops be limited?
- What is the accountability for Bishops?
- Should a trust clause^{xvi} remain in effect where the denomination retains ownership of local church property in the event the church disbands or leaves the denomination?
- Should there be any flexibility allowed in the payment of apportionments for local congregations with ethical objections to General Conference activities and investments?

What are the views of the centrists?

Honor diversity of opinion

- Working to find a way to maintain space in the future UMC for differing theological perspectives.
- Acknowledgement that the future UMC may allow pastors, bishops, board of ministries, local churches, each in their own context, to each establish the practice of ministry they affirm regarding the definition of Christian marriage and requirements for ordination.
- There are theologically motivated compatibilists from both traditional and progressive perspectives, along with institutional compatibilists who are motivated by denominational loyalty and by a shared commitment to finding a way forward together.

Scripture

The Bible is inspired by God and is the living word of God, offering guidance and instruction for faithful living.

Theology

- Creeds (Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed), which contain the historic Christian faith.
- Trinitarian (God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

- Belief in incarnation, resurrection, and saving work of Jesus.
- Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.
- All persons are of sacred worth and welcome to participate in the ministry of the church.
- Focus on quoting statements from paragraphs 4 and 5 of Wesley’s introduction to his sermon, “Catholic Spirit” based on 2 Kings 10: “...Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?... Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?... If it be, give me thine hand, if your heart is as mine”. Centrists often consider LGBTQ inclusion in the church, same-gender marriage, and/or ordination to be something other than an “essential element” of Christian faith.

Possible Legislative Focus

Centrists advocate for models of polity (church organization) where room can be made for theological variance regarding various issues, including human sexuality. The primary legislative proposal is the “Christmas Covenant.” Centrists are interested in increasing accountability for bishops and for ineffective clergy; how that will take shape is unknown at this time.

What are the views of the traditionalists?

Value for Orthodoxy

- Traditional Wesleyan Christianity.
- Jesus is our Lord and Savior.
- All people are created in the image of God and are of sacred worth.
- All are called to holiness of heart and life, which requires humble submission to the Lord and repentance from sin.

Scripture

The Bible is God’s inspired word that teaches us how to live and please God and how to love one another. It is authoritative in all things necessary for salvation and human flourishing.

Theology

- Creeds (Apostle’s Creed, Nicene Creed), which contain the historic Christian faith.
- Trinitarian (God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- Doctrine, Discipline, and Faith leading to Holy Mission – (people should do what they commit to when taking vows of membership/ordination/episcopacy).
- Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.
- Biblical definition of Christian marriage as one man and one woman.
- Pastors commit to celibacy in singleness or faithfulness in Christian marriage.
- All persons are of sacred worth and welcome to participate in the ministry of the church.

Possible Legislative Focus

Traditionalists advocate for continuing the United Methodist definition of Biblical Christian marriage and standards for ordination along with working to restore the covenant that is being broken throughout the connection. If the covenant cannot be restored, they would seek the creation of an amicable and peaceful exit pathway.

What are the views of the progressives?

Value for inclusion

A church should be welcoming and affirming of LGBTQIA+ persons in all aspects of the church life including pastoral leadership (clergy ordination) and marriage.

Scripture

The Bible is a critical source for God’s revelation to humankind. Reason and experience help us to contextualize the application of scripture.

Theology

- As a matter of Biblical justice, all persons are of sacred worth and welcome to participate in the ministry of the church.
- Some struggle to affirm any supernatural testimony of scripture including miracles, the incarnation, or bodily resurrection of Jesus.
- Some are Universalist; believing that many religions point to the same God, and/or a general disbelief in the existence of hell.

Possible Legislative Focus

Progressives advocate for removing all restrictive language regarding LGBTQIA+ persons from The Book of Discipline. They would disallow all forms of restriction regarding marriage and ordination by allowing all pastors to perform, but not require, same gender weddings, churches to host same gender weddings, and churches to receive openly gay clergy.

How do the visions for Methodism compare regarding the issues?

The table summarizes contrasting each faction’s views regarding the major issues.

Faction	Issue	Faction Perspective
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Centrist	Scripture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture is the authoritative word of God. However, for some, portions of scripture do not reflect the heart of God, not when originally written or today. 2. While Scripture is accepted as the authoritative word of God, contradictory interpretations on some matters can co-exist in one church. 3. All persons are of sacred worth. 4. Human sexuality is a gift. Most centrists do not believe same-sex sexual activity is necessarily a sin, but some do. Centrists believe it is better for the greater church not to have an official position on this that applies across the board to all churches.
	Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While some may see same-sex sexual relations as a matter of Biblical ethics for moral determinations, many centrist see it as one of “contextualization” of their ministry field and offering freedom of choice depending on location and culture.
	Church Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep the structures of the UMC in place, including the trust clause, which requires the “holder” (the local church) to use the property exclusively for the purposes of and to benefit The United Methodist Church. If the “holder” chooses no longer to function as part of The United Methodist Church, it forfeits all rights to continue to hold the property, and the property itself and all other assets transfer to the denomination. 2. Many centrists believe the church laws prohibiting ordaining practicing (non-celibate) gay persons or performing same sex weddings are unjust. Some centrist believe the current rules should be obeyed until they are changed by the normal processes of General Conference, but others believe civil disobedience is a justifiable means of change without it being a lack of integrity issue. 3. All apportionments should be paid, including those that support the work of General Boards and Agencies and the Episcopal fund which covers the costs of Bishop’s compensation.
	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Honoring the diversity of the church and living in unity is the main priority. 2. The LGBT+ community in the U.S. has been marginalized and hurt in the past in the culture and in the church. The negative perceptions of the church in culture as being “anti-gay” or “unwelcoming” is preventing people from participating in the UMC. This must be resolved in local church reality as well as cultural perception for the UMC to have a future.
Traditionalist	Scripture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The scriptures are the inspired and authoritative word of God.

		<p>Like the nature of Christ, they are of both human and divine origins and yet are true. All portions are inspired and deserving of reading and careful interpreting for God’s will at the time so that they can be properly applied for our time today. It is not acceptable to pick and choose them or cast aside portions that are disagreeable to persons or the contemporary culture at large.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. All persons are of sacred worth. 3. Human sexuality is a gift. Scripture clearly affirms sexual activity only within the context of marriage between a man and a woman. The full diversity of sexual expressions present in the world may not be the result of God’s intentional will, but a result of the brokenness of creation.
	Discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The current laws of the UMC prohibiting same sex weddings being performed in UM churches or by UM pastors have been consistently endorsed by the General Conference as the will of the UMC. Traditionalists believe the laws are not unjust or out of line with the scriptures or Christian tradition or with the majority of Christian churches throughout the world today. 2. Fidelity in Christian marriage between one man and one woman and celibacy in singleness are the given boundaries of sexual expression in scripture. Clergy and candidates for ministry are to accept for themselves the highest of moral standards including these boundaries of sexual expression.

	Church Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With such widespread breaking of covenant and rules of governance at all levels of leadership in the UMC connection, many traditionalists desire freedom from the trust clause that places ownership of local church properties with the denomination and conference. This potential avenue of poor stewardship in the future of the UMC is to be avoided. 2. Bishops, Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry and individual Pastors who have performed same sex weddings or ordained or commissioned practicing (non-celibate) LGBT+ persons have disobeyed the will of the church, have broken their vows to uphold the discipline and doctrines of the church, and have broken covenant with the UM connection. The result has been a trust deficit across the connection, a crisis in governance and unsustainable financial patterns for the whole worldwide organization looking forward. 3. Apportionments should not necessarily all be paid. Whereas only the General Conference can speak for the will of the church, and where areas of the church are intentionally violating the will of the church in controversial matters, the ethical case for continued financial support has lost standing. Disobedience and mistrust have broken the covenant and unity of the UMC. The prohibition of clergy and candidates of ordination in same-sex marriages is but one area of broken covenant (but most often publicized).
	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faithfulness to God as revealed in the scriptures and in the historic orthodox doctrines of the church is the main thing. 2. The LGBT+ community in the U.S. has been marginalized and hurt in the past in the culture and in the church. The church needs to do better in reaching out to LGBT+ persons and welcoming them into the life of the church as full members and participants. However, traditionalists don't believe redefining traditional Christian marriage between one man and one woman or commissioning or ordaining practicing (non-celibate) gay and lesbian persons as clergy is necessary to do so. In fact, either of the above would likely be received as a public endorsement of actions that the scriptures appear to discourage (even while valuing all persons as of sacred worth). However, as the church pushes for deeper and fuller expressions and experiences of God's grace, Spirit, truth and love in community, all persons, regardless of whatever personal sins, temptations or brokenness they may be struggling with, should be able to find their acceptance, help, encouragement and Christian transformation.

Progressives	Scripture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scripture is inspired by God, but flawed by the limitations of human authors and the cultural worldviews present when they were written. The church existed before the scriptures, and therefore the church has authority over the scriptures. It is acceptable to pick and choose which scriptures are authoritative for today's time. 2. All persons are of sacred worth. 3. Human sexuality is a gift, the full diversity of sexual expressions is part of the intended beauty of God's created order. Same gender sexual activity is not necessarily a sin in a committed consensual relationship between adults.
	Discipline	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The definition of marriage should not be limited to be between one man and one woman. UM pastors should be allowed to counsel and perform weddings between persons of various gender identities and sexual orientation identities. 2. There should be moral standards for ordained clergy and candidates for ordination, but non-celibate LGBT+ candidates should not necessarily disqualify anyone for ordained ministry.
	Church Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep the structures of the UMC in place, including the trust clause for the denomination owning properties. 2. Church laws should be modified to allow bishops, Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry and individual pastors to perform same sex weddings or commission or ordain practicing (non-celibate) LGBT+ persons and clergy. They hold that they are justified in defying church laws they feel are unjust. 3. All apportionments should be paid.
	Priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doing good and loving people are the main priorities. 2. The LGBT+ community in the U.S. has been marginalized and hurt in the past in the culture and in the church and should come to an end in both.

Why is Christ Church considering affiliation now?

Christ Church voted June 5, 2022, to enter discernment. We bring this information on the options surrounding this issue to the congregation now to give all constituencies within our congregation an opportunity to exercise their will while certain options for action consistent with the Book of Discipline still exist. Should the will of the congregation be to remain affiliated with the UMC, then the timing of this decision does not matter.

However, should the will of the congregation call for affiliation with the GMC, or another denomination or to be independent, it may be prudent to seek approval for disaffiliation from the UMC at the December 3, 2022, Special Annual Conference, or before the regular Annual Conference meeting in May 2023, for the following reasons:

1. **Withdrawn Support for the “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation.”** Some leaders who participated in crafting the Protocol have now publicly withdrawn their support. Some believe this has closed the window for a truly amicable separation resulting in uncertainty regarding terms of separation that may result from legislative action, should legislative action be pursued at the 2024 General Conference.
2. **Shift in power.** Should a large number of traditionalist churches choose to disaffiliate from the UMC, some speculate that the TAC will become more centrist and progressive.
3. **Changes in Christ Church leadership.** Pastor Temple has announced that he will retire next year probably around May 31, 2023. It will be to Christ Church’s advantage for the will of the congregation regarding the UMC conflict to be understood before a new pastor is appointed so that the new Bishop can try to match a pastor with the preference of the congregation.
4. **Unfunded pension liability.** The TAC voted at the 2022 Annual Conference in May to apply the excess pension funds to the unfunded pension liability, significantly reducing the amount for which disaffiliating churches are obligated in accordance with ¶2553 of the BOD. The unfunded pension liability for Christ Church has been reduced from about \$300,000 to a current amount of \$0 as a result of this provision and an improvement in the rate of return on the assets. It is unknown how long the amount will stay at zero, as the balance is reviewed every quarter.

What are the affiliation choices for Christ Church?

There are three main choices for affiliation:

- Continue affiliation with the UMC
- Affiliate with the GMC
- Affiliate with another Methodist denomination, another recognized Christian denomination, or become independent

What would it mean to continue our affiliation with the UMC?

Affiliating with the UMC will basically mean no change for Christ Church, except for any decisions our current pastors make individually. The structure and business of the church will remain as it has been in the past. The TAC Bishop will appoint a new lead pastor next year effective with Pastor Temple’s retirement. The bishop will also appoint replacements for pastors who may leave for the GMC or other appointments within the UMC.

There are no anticipated changes to existing ministries and missions.

Additional factors to consider include:

- Financial Implications - Apportionments continue at what has been an average of around 8.5% of our budget over the last three years.
- Operational Implications - No operational implications present themselves at this time.
- Property - The property of the local church, while deeded to Christ Church, will continue to be held by the TAC according to the UMC Trust Clause which states, “the property and assets of a

local church or United Methodist Body are held 'in trust' for the benefit of the entire denomination." (UMC.org).

- Staff - Staff members are not affected unless they initiate the process for resignation with the SPRC.
- Pastors - Pastors may choose to affiliate with the denomination of their choice. They are not affected unless they initiate a request with the district superintendent/bishop.
- Costs – There are no incremental costs of staying with the UMC other than the possible additional costs of apportionments relative to other choices. There are no legal fees to stay.
- Size of the congregation – members, who wanted to change affiliation, could decide to move their membership to another denomination, thus creating an unknown impact on our ministries and finances.

What would it mean to affiliate with the Global Methodist Church (GMC)?

Affiliating with the GMC will require Christ Church to first disaffiliate from the UMC, and then affiliate with the GMC. The steps for becoming a Global Methodist local church are to call a congregation meeting; at that meeting, professing members can vote to adopt a motion authorizing the local church to become a member congregation of the GMC. There are no fees to be paid to the Global Methodist Church as part of the process of becoming a member congregation.

If the congregation is served by a clergy person who wants to become a member of the GMC, pending their credential's acceptance, and both the congregation and the clergy person desire to continue in relationship, the appointment will remain the same as the congregation and the pastor join the Global Methodist Church together. The GMC bishop, with the advice and consent of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, will appoint any new clergy required.

There are no anticipated changes to existing ministries and missions.

Additional factors to consider regarding affiliation with the GMC include:

- Christ Church would have unencumbered title to all church assets no longer subject to the existing trust clause within the UMC Book of Discipline. Christ Church would continue to have total financial responsibility for its assets.
- Christ Church apportionments to the UMC for 2022 are \$221,750 on projected income of \$2,990,000, or 7.42%. The GMC Transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines caps the total amount at 6.5%, resulting in an estimated annual savings of about \$27,500. The GMC Transitional Leadership Council, however, has set the amounts for the provisional period lower at 2%.
- Pastors - Pastors may choose to affiliate with the denomination of their choice. They are not affected unless they initiate a request with the district superintendent/bishop.
- Staff - Staff members are not affected unless they initiate the process for resignation with the SPRC.

- Costs – Currently there are no incremental costs from disaffiliating from the UMC and joining the GMC, other than some legal and administrative fees, which are expected to be in the range of \$25,000, for things like name change, deed and legal filing with the county and State, updated signage, and other related items.
- Size of the congregation – members, who wanted to maintain UMC affiliation, could decide to move their membership to another UMC church, thus creating an unknown impact on our ministries and finances.

What would it mean to affiliate with another denomination or be independent?

Christ Church could elect to affiliate with another Methodist or Christian denomination. The process would depend on the specific denomination with which Christ Church would choose to affiliate. Christ Church could also choose not to affiliate with any denomination and operate as an independent church. The Jeremiah29 Task Force has briefly considered this option and chosen not to pursue it at this time. If you would like to learn more about other options go to the [Future of Our Church webpage](#).

What is the Global Methodist Church?

The [Global Methodist Church](#)^{xvii} (GMC) was launched May 1, 2022, as a traditional expression of Methodism. The GMC Transitional Leadership Council determined it would be best to launch the Global Methodist Church this year so local churches, Annual Conferences, and Central Conferences could join it as soon as desired.

For approximately 12 to 18 months, the GMC will be a church in transition as it prepares for its convening General Conference. During the transitional period, the GMC will operate under the [Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline](#)^{xviii}.

What are the differences between the GMC and the UMC?

The following provides a summary of the major differences between the GMC and the UMC as reflected in their current Books of Discipline. A more comprehensive and detailed comparison is available on the webpage [Future of Our Church](#)^{xix}.

Areas of similarity:

Connectional conference structure. The connectional conference structure is similar with both having General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference (called Regional Conference in the GMC); Annual Conference, District Conference, and Charge/Church Conference in the local church.

Local church organization. The basic local church organization is similar with both having a Church Council, Staff Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees, and Nominations Committee.

Sacrament of Baptism. Both groups practice baptism of infants, children, youth, and adults, with the traditional Wesleyan understanding of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

Sacrament of Holy Communion. Both groups practice an open table for celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Confirmation. The UMC and the GMC both emphasize the importance of the confirmation process for youth to make a profession of faith.

Pastor Appointments. The appointment system of pastors is similar with the bishop making appointments in consultation with the Cabinet and the local church.

Role of District Superintendents. Both denominations have District Superintendents who oversee the pastors and churches within a district, but in the GMC, they are called Presiding Elders (a historical term used in the Methodist movement in the past).

Slight differences:

Mission statement. The mission of the UMC is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” whereas in the GMC it is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.”

Role of Bishops. Bishops provide leadership in both denominations, but there are some differences. In the UMC, bishops are elected for life by the jurisdictional conference. In the GMC, they have term limits and the process for election has not yet been determined. In both denominations, the bishops’ salaries and benefits are set by the general church, but in the UMC they are paid through a general church apportionment, while in the GMC they are paid from the annual conference budget. Bishops are considered an employee of the GMC annual conference.

Pastor qualifications. The educational requirements for pastors have differences in that the GMC does not require a seminary degree to be ordained as an elder or deacon, but there is a lengthy list of required courses that could be fulfilled with a seminary degree.

Human sexuality. The UMC teaching on human sexuality affirms the sacred worth of all people and states that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. The GMC says human sexuality is a gift of God to be exercised only between a man and woman within the covenant of marriage and gender is defined at birth.

Major differences:

Theological beliefs. The biggest difference between the two denominations will be their expectations of local churches and clergy as it relates to theological beliefs and what is taught in churches. The UMC espouses a broad tent perspective as it relates to clergy and local church beliefs so that pastors and churches can preach and teach views that fall from one end of the theological spectrum to the other, from very conservative to very progressive. There is no real means of enforcement of the theology. In the GMC, there is a requirement that pastors and churches will teach and preach traditional Biblical and Wesleyan doctrines as outlined in the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline. This is referred to as “congregational fidelity.” If churches fail to teach orthodox, Wesleyan theology, they can be removed from the denomination. The same kind of standards applies also to clergy. There is no formal mechanism to monitor this in either GMC or UMC.

Church property. Local church property, while fully owned and controlled by the local church, is held in trust by the Annual conference for the denomination in the UMC. In the GMC, there is no trust clause, and the local church has full ownership and control of their property.

Ordination of clergy. The ordination of pastors looks similar but there are some significant differences. In the UMC someone sensing a call to ministry enters a candidacy process, followed by commissioning, and then ordination as an elder or they can go through the course of study process to become a local pastor. Approval authority for ordinands is provided by the Board of Ministry. In the GMC, there is only one process that involves candidacy, ordination as a deacon, and then possible ordination as an elder. If

someone is called to be the lead pastor of a church, they will be moving eventually toward ordination as an elder. There are no local pastors in the GMC. Approval authority for ordinands is currently provided by the bishop.

Apportionments. Both denominations use an apportionment system. Apportionments are capped in the GMC at 1.5% for general church ministry and 5% for annual conference ministry. The percentage is calculated based on a local church's operating income from the previous year. In the UMC, there is no cap and a local church's portion is calculated average operating expenses for three prior years. This has averaged around 8.5% of our operating expense for Christ Church. Apportionments will likely be significantly lower for most churches in the GMC.

Apportionment accountability. Apportionment accountability in the GMC will be much higher than in UMC. Apportionments are expected to be paid monthly and a church can be asked to leave the denomination if they have a persistent pattern of not paying their apportionments. The UMC requires apportionment payments, but does not have a clear accountability process.

Social statements. Both denominations have social statements that deal with pertinent social issues in their respective Disciplines. The UMC has Social Principles, and the GMC has Social Witness. The major difference lies in the fact that the Social Principles are not binding on clergy or the local churches in the UMC. But in the GMC, clergy and local churches must agree to support and teach the Social Witness.

Ordained elders. Ordained elders are guaranteed an appointment in the UMC, but not in the GMC.

Clergy retirement. Clergy retirement is mandatory at 72 in the UMC. The GMC has no mandatory retirement, but a pastor may choose "senior status," which removes the obligation to be appointed.

What are the steps and cost for disaffiliation from the UMC?

There are seven steps for disaffiliation. The following are the minimum requirements for the Texas Annual Conference to approve a church's disaffiliation under the current Book of Discipline:

1. Members of the local church must complete an appropriate process of discernment. The determination of whether a process is appropriate is made by the church's District Superintendent.
2. After the local church nears completion of the process of discernment, the Annual Conference will calculate apportionment and unfunded pension liability estimates for that local church.
3. The local church may vote to move forward with the disaffiliation process. To move forward, disaffiliation must be affirmed at a duly called church conference by a two-thirds majority in accordance with ¶2553.
4. The local church must pay in full the previous year's apportionments and the current year's apportionments.

Note: Christ Church is either current with all apportionments or has escrowed any unpaid apportionments. As a result, funding to meet the apportionment liabilities is available.

5. The local church must pay in full the unfunded pension liability, as calculated by the TAC Board of Pensions in accordance with Wespathguidance. s^{xx}
 - The valuation is based on a market valuation of unfunded liability

- The valuation takes in to account the local church's share of the liability
- The valuation gives the local church credit for its contributions to the Conference's pension reserves with credit for earning over time

Note: The unfunded pension liability is set each quarter. Christ Church had an unfunded pension liability of about \$20,000 that was set for the second quarter of 2022. As of July 1, 2022 the pension reserves for the whole conference were more than the unfunded liability. As a result, Christ Church, and other churches in TAC, now has an unfunded pension liability of \$0. However, the unfunded liability is re-evaluated and recalculated every quarter.

6. The local church must complete all forms in accordance with disaffiliation guidance.
7. After all foregoing steps have been completed, the TAC Board of Trustees must vote to release the local church from any obligations under the trust clause in ¶2503 in accordance with the then applicable Book of Discipline. A Special Annual Conference for this purpose has been called for December 3, 2022.

What is the process Christ Church will use to make a decision regarding affiliation?

Christ Church is following the steps set forth in the Texas Annual Conference (TAC) Disaffiliation Timeline and Principles Regarding Local Church Requests for Disaffiliation^{xxi} approved at the August 2020 TAC.

We are currently in the discernment period, and we have requested and received financial information from the TAC Treasurer's Office. A joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Trustees on August 15, 2022, discussed the financial aspects of a potential disaffiliation. Forty Days of Prayer began on September 1, 2022.

At the September 25, 2022, Church Conference meeting there may be a motion introduced to call a second Church Conference for the purpose of voting on whether to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church. This September 25 Church Conference vote is not whether to disaffiliate or not, but whether to even have a vote on that question. All members of Christ Church present at the Church Conference meeting will be entitled to vote. The vote will be decided by simple majority (50% + 1).

If the September 25 Church Conference vote decides in favor of calling a second Church Conference for the purpose of holding a vote regarding disaffiliation, a Church Conference date has been reserved for 7:00 p.m., Thursday, October 13, 2022. It was necessary to reserve a date in advance to assure the District Superintendent would be available, as required by the Book of Discipline.

Should this Church Conference be called to vote on affiliation motion(s), all Christ Church members as of October 2, 2022, will be eligible to vote. By the requirement of the Book of Discipline, voting must occur in person; no proxies can be submitted. A two-thirds majority will be required to change our affiliation in accordance with BOD ¶2553.

References and Terms

- ⁱ The General Conference, the only body of the UMC that can enact changes to the BOD, meets every four years. It is a worldwide gathering with 800+ clergy and laity from all U.S. Conferences and the Central Conferences that represent the rest of the world.
- ⁱⁱ [Brief Overview of General Conferences](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [The Commission on a way Forward Report: What you should know](#)
- ^{iv} [The Commission on a Way Forward Report](#)
- ^v [Book of Discipline, ¶2553](#)
- ^{vi} [Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation](#)
- ^{vii} [The Christmas Covenant](#)
- ^{viii} [Global Methodist Church Sets Official Launch Date](#)
- ^{ix} [Protocol's Day has passed, some negotiators say](#)
- ^x [The Time has Come](#)
- ^{xi} [Articles of Religion](#)
- ^{xii} [Confession of Faith](#)
- ^{xiii} [UMC Social Principles](#)
- ^{xiv} [Structure of the UMC](#)
- ^{xv} [Future of our Church](#)
- ^{xvi} [UMC Trust Clause](#)
- ^{xvii} [Global Methodist Church](#)
- ^{xviii} [Transitional Book of Discipline, Global Methodist Church](#)
- ^{xix} [Future of our Church](#)
- ^{xx} [Wespath](#) provides retirement plans, investment solutions and health benefit plans rooted in the principles of the United Methodist Church.
- ^{xxi} [Principles Regarding Local Church Requests for Disaffiliation](#)