

Town Hall #2 October 9, 2022

Questions and Answers

The majority of questions were answered by our guest pastors, Jeff Thomas, Christ Church Council Chair, and Rev. Dr. Temple, while a few were answered at the September Town Hall. The Jeremiah 29 Task Force is providing this transcript of the questions submitted and the answers given during the October 9, 2022 Town Hall.

Please note that comments which were submitted provide context for questions. Comments are in italics and generally precede the questions.

GMC answered by Rev. Jim Bass:

1. What is the commitment which the GMC has made regarding obligations of U.S. congregations to assist the African churches joining the GMC? *Africa is a very complicated situation. Right now, paragraph 2553 does not apply to Central Conferences, and so the African Church is wanting to wait until General Conference 2024 for a path of separation. So, that's a little bit complicated right now. Certainly as we move forward, we do anticipate support for those African churches that do align with the Global Methodist Church.*

Rev. Morgan added: Recently all but one of the bishops signed a statement that told the, everyone to cease and desist on any moving forward toward the GMC or anything like that on the continent of Africa.

Rev. Bass continued: Yeah. There are several of the bishops that didn't quite sign. They were listed there, but didn't quite sign the list. That doesn't necessarily mean the people don't want to align with the GMC, like many bishops here don't always speak for their congregations.

2. If you claim to be open to all to enter the church, yet you appear to openly condemn the LGBTQ+ as sinful, how do you reconcile the two statements? And how do you differ the other "sins" in the Bible from the LGBTQ+ "sin"? *I certainly do not, I don't want to come off as being condemnatory towards persons of LGBTQ+ community. At the same time, there is that tension in what I understand the scripture teaches, and restricts the expression of human sexuality to a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. And, it's certainly not, if you look at it as a sin it is not certainly the greatest or the top sin. I mean there's lots of sins in the Bible, and we all have to deal with those. And, you know as a pastor, I've had to address people who were engaged in sexual practices that weren't in regards to scripture. Some of our leaders, youth leaders, in fact, and those have all been heterosexual. As a college student who moved in with his girlfriend, and I said you know you can't be a leader any more. I'm sorry. But...we*

all have to deal with all of our sins. I think we acknowledge our brokenness and our sins. And so, I don't want to put this particular, what may be contrary to what scripture teaches above any others. So, I think we want to say to someone who is with love and grace that may find the grace and love of Christ. One of my, there's a young man in my church, after we voted, I love him, and he's a great young man, and he said, "well I guess I'm now a gay GMC member now." And we accept him and love him as we did at noon on Sunday, as we did at 9:00 AM on Sunday.

3. Are we being overrun by non-believers in the UMC or is it 2%? It cannot be both! I think Chap sort of addressed that about some of the disobedience.
4. *Rev. Bass mentioned 2 cases of bishops who denied doctrine of the UMC. Can you tell me when and what conference these occurred? One of them was about ten-ish years ago. Bishop Sprague, who wrote a book, gave a lecture at a seminary, and then wrote a book about it, and charges were filed. The second was Karen Oliveto who's the current Bishop of the Mountain Sky Conference. From my perspective, I see it as more than just a few isolated cases. One of the reasons Bishop Jones said he gave for his retirement is the pervasive disobedience to the Discipline of the Church, that it is spreading across our connection. And, he simply said he didn't want to continue to be a part, having to be a Bishop in that context. So, from our perspective, we see it as more pervasive than just the 2%.*

Rev. Morgan asked: Jim can you help me remember...on the Judicial Council regarding the seating of Bishop Oliveto, what did they rule?

Rev. Bass continued: My understanding is they ruled it was, it's been a while, but it was not a legal election, that she was not qualified to be a pastor, nonetheless a Bishop, and they sent it back to the Western Jurisdiction and they have not acted on that.

Rev. Morgan added: Right, because there has been a thing called a pandemic, so we're waiting to see anxiously for 2024. So, some people would not call her a currently seated Bishop because of that.

5. Doesn't leaving UMC hurt the conference, hurt the denomination, hurt smaller churches who depend on the annual conference to help them pay their pastors? I think there was a similar question that was asked, but certainly, I hate this, of where we're at. I believe we've come to this point, but I don't like it. About half of the churches in the annual conference are in discernment. Most of those will leave, and what we anticipate across Texas, about 6-700 Methodist churches to come into the GMC by next summer. So, certainly, yeah, I think each conference

is going to have to reform, is going to have to work in its area of ministry to help reach out with Gospel of Jesus Christ.

6. Members who want to remain UMC have plenty options in the area to move to. What options are in place for people who firmly want to be in a GMC church? Well as someone who is moving into the GMC church and as one of the leadership of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, I certainly hope that Christ Church will be one of those options to move into the GMC church on Wednesday, but I believe Faith Richmond in the area has voted to disaffiliate. First Church, First Methodist Church in Sugar Land is also in discernment and most likely will disaffiliate.
7. When will the GMC hold its convening conference to ratify its (transitional) Book of Discipline? Until that happens, who/what body is in charge of appointing pastors, taking in apportionments, etc.? The GMC is looking to the Spring 2024 for its convening conference. That has not yet been set, but that is when they anticipate to do that. The Transitional Book of Doctrines and Disciplines, which you can go online now and read globalmethodist.org. You can download it and look at it online. That's going to be the discipline that will go into the convening conference, just like our Book of Discipline goes into the General Conference and is amended and changed every four years. Until that happens, we have formed the Eastern Texas Annual Conference of the GMC. There is a website of etxgmc.org, and we are looking to appoint a conference superintendent or a convening elder who will serve as a bishop until bishops are elected. We're also now in the process of placing or nominating presiding elders, going back to the old method. Instead of district superintendents, but presiding elders under a smaller geographic areas. So those will carry on with the appointment process in that time.
8. *I hear the UMC only applies discipline to clergy and lay ministers and not to individual members. I hear the GMC plans to apply discipline to members also, leaving open to acting against those who come to the GMC but do not change their lifestyle. Is this correct?* But really the Discipline, what we understand is that clergy is called to the highest ideals of the Christian faith. That's what we say, and so it's what we expect and hold them to very high moral standards and ethical behaviors and upholding the doctrines and disciplines of the church. That will remain in the GMC, although it is possible for a Global congregation that is pursuing doctrines that is pursuing practices that is contrary to the Doctrines and Disciplines to be disaffiliated from the denomination unless they come in line to

the practices and doctrines of the church, but there is not an envisioning that the GMC will discipline members.

9. *The UMC has programs to support financially struggling churches, and indeed helped out our church in lean years in the 1980s.* Does the GMC have programs to support a floundering church? *We are a new church start, in essence. We are forming our annual conferences. So, at the moment, we do not have those funds or those programs. The Texas Annual Conference over its many years has been able to accumulate tens of millions of dollars in reserves. We do not have those resources for the moment, but we will be working as we form to help support those churches that need that assistance.*
10. Will the GMC accept and promote the speaking in tongues and other charismata? *Yes; there is no stance in the GMC at this point in terms of the charismatic gifts and speaking in tongues. There will be openly charismatic GMC churches. Several I know who have disaffiliated. Wesley was not a secessionist, by the way. He embraced many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and we see in the GMC for many of the leaders an openness to all the gifts and the workings of the Spirit, and we want to promote that. That will become part of the GMC, specifically the speaking in tongues and the different charismatic gifts, there's not a particular official position on that. There is an openness not a requirement for these gifts in both the GMC and the UMC.*

UMC answered by Rev. Brad Morgan:

11. Is it true that if you want to remain a UMC member, you'll need to move your membership before Jan.1? *I was going to ask the same question, because you mentioned about welcoming them into the GMC, but technically that doesn't take effect until December 31st.*

Rev. Bass clarified: The Conference Disaffiliation Plan is that all churches that disaffiliate will cease to be United Methodist on December 31st, and other churches will continue to come and we'll accept them, the way the conference is anticipating is that they will go into the GMC, That is what we are recommending, that churches that disaffiliate will go into the GMC January 1. That is how there is a very easy flow. Some churches are going to disaffiliate and then they are going to discern later on about joining the GMC or other options.

Rev. Morgan continued: Right, and I'm working on a group that is working to try to look at some of these places that are going to be UMC deserts, how to provide services: pastoral care and help, but I do plan to also that we should be working collegially to make sure also that if there are members within UMC churches that

are not having their needs met by that that we help them to that expected collegiality from my colleagues.

12. What will happen to the church school and Sunday Schools if we stay with the United Methodist Church? What will be taught to our children? Well, I hope, I'm pretty sure y'all have a Safe Sanctuary policy in place as do we. No child under the age of 18 is to be sexualized in any way on any campus over any topic. So very simply, as far as changing what's taught, nothing, especially staying UMC. I don't know if the GMC has a different curriculum.

13. *It took Methodists about 70 years to accept remarriage of divorced persons. Was that change in error?* If the UMC moves to accept gay marriage, would that be an error? Friends, I'm going to say that I hope that was not in error for the United Methodist Church to accept remarriage of divorced persons. There are many reasons why a person may choose to get divorced, and I think that's something we've learned to live with. As far as on gay marriage, would that be an error, I am not going to speak to that at this time, because I don't want to do harm to any of my church members who might be watching.

14. How can you support the UMC when UMC policies and procedures are in direct conflict with the Bible? If I felt they were in direct conflict with the Bible, I would not be able to support the United Methodist Church. I do not believe that is currently operational or the way things are happening, especially in this annual conference. So, I would like to tell you that I feel very firmly that a traditionalist with high view of scripture, as you've heard one of your other clergy person say here, can not only be a United Methodist, but live very well within the United Methodist Church and have a vibrant orthodox ministry.

15. How guarantee seminaries will produce elders with traditional orthodox views? *Several are currently using apportionments to teach not only progressive views, but also non-Christian theology.* I'm actually on the Executive Board of Perkins School of Theology, and recently taught in the Wesley House at Truett Seminary at Baylor. So, I'm pretty familiar with these institutions. I can assure you they don't get apportionment dollars, first of all. They are well funded from other sources, but they are not getting actual apportionment dollars. Additionally, how do they ensure they have orthodox views. The seminaries and schools of theology, that is not their actual responsibility. They teach those things and provide those things for the students. It is actually the local church through the Staff Parish Relations Committee; It's also, it actually sends the candidate out.

Then the District Council on Ministries, then the Board of Ordained Ministries from each annual conference that is responsible for maintaining those values in those that they ordain.

16. How can UMC claim to be Methodist and Christian but openly deny Biblical integrity, authority, and Methodist Discipline? *I don't think anyone here would say the United Methodist Church is somehow denying the integrity, authority of scripture, and in fact I think I was pretty clear that we have a Bible, a Book of Discipline, and hymnal; that when the Book of Discipline and hymnal are out of synchronicity with the Bible, it is the Bible that prevails. Did I say that in my talk? I'm just making sure that There are parts I had to cut for time. I wanted to make sure I said it.*

17. How can the UMC guarantee there will NEVER be a speaker, teacher, or other leader in our church like the well known sot after speaker in the UMC, Ms. Penny Co st? *I don't know the name, but there is another one who is fully booked in the UMC, who calls Jesus the "Great Queer One". This is troubling. It can't, nor can any GMC group. I've even known of churches where people come in and kinda like take the mic and say something. SO, if you're trying to hold to a standard that nothing will ever be said contrary to doctrine or discipline, I think that's just an impossibility.*

18. Why is the UMC sanctioning drag queen children's sermons as they did at Allendale UMC in St. Petersburg, Florida by Isaac Simmons, aka "Ms. Penny Cost"?

19. Why is the UMC ordaining transvestites who proclaim "God is nothing" and "Queerness is divine"? (Isaac Simmons/Ms. Penny Cost)

20. Will the UMC in Katy which advertised and hosted a drag queen party be held accountable or is that the beginning of the future?

That was not a UMC church. It was First Christian Church of Katy.

21. What procedures are planned to provide accountability for bishops and clergy as far as adhering to the BOD and discipline for false teaching?

See question #11 under Polity in the Q&A from Town Hall #1 on the J29 website.

22. Wondering why the UMC Bishops and Annual Conferences didn't ask the pastors who were not following the Book of Discipline, UMC Doctrine, and the Bible to leave the denomination and instead we (the traditional followers) have to make a choice to leave our church or conform to staying in UMC and hope it will all be ok?

See question #11 under Polity in the Q&A from Town Hall #1 on the J29 website.

23. Why do we never hear of elders being disciplined for preaching doctrine contrary to the confession of faith/Articles of Religion? What being discussed for fixing this? Broken/rebellious leadership

See question #11 under Polity in the Q&A from Town Hall #1 on the J29 website.

UMC Bishops: From Rev. Morgan:

I got a whole series of questions here. I think there are four of them about "What are the Bishop's opinions on different items in our church", and I think I can save us a lot of time.

The United Methodist Council of Bishops and no other elder of the United Methodist Church actually speaks on behalf of the United Methodist Church. Only the General Conference of the United Methodist Church through its Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions speak on behalf of the United Methodist Church. This is one of the most common misconceptions in media is that we get a lot of anecdotal evidence of some of these 26.4 million people, some of whom I want you to know you disagree with. I disagree with them, too, and it's reported as if United Methodists believe this. But this is not accurate. We actually limit how much we can say incorrectly by only having it once every four years and do that. But all these questions regarding Bishops is asking an opinion on what they think about abortion; what they think about Roe v. Wade; another letter on Roe v. Wade, and about whether or not traditionalists are there and what they believe about Jesus, and I'd say you'd have to ask those Bishops.

24. Is the UMC Council of Bishops pro abortion?

25. What is the denominational reaction to the UMC Bishop's response to the legality of the Supreme Court's ruling on Roe vs Wade?

26. *UMC Council of Bishops wrote letter condemning overturning of Roe v. Wade.* Why do the Bishops sanction abortion, thereby denying the sanctity of human life and the protection of the unborn and the unwanted?

27. *As the UMC governing Bishops are not following the BOD and as traditionalists are leaving the UMC, how will this church guarantee there is NEVER any speakers, preachers, and other leaders questioning the Holy Bible and the divinity of Jesus?*

Christ Church by Jeff Thomas, Church Council Chair:

28. *Christ Church is undergoing a significant shortfall with financial giving. Because UMC operates under an honor system for paying apportionments, a church who is having trouble “keeping the lights on”, would not face disciplinary actions for not paying apportionments owed. Considering our financial situation, would it be fair to say that if we stay UMC we can apply those escrowed funds to our more immediate needs, which is about \$150,000. Is my understanding correct that in leaving UMC, we would have to pay those apportionments plus 2023? Plus legal fees? See answers from September Town Hall Questions and Answers Financial/Physical Matters #1, 2, 3, 4, 5 posted on the J29 website.*

29. *Where can we find financial impact information regarding disaffiliation? See the J29 website. One of top bullets on our Future of the Church.*

30. *Does the Jeremiah 29 work group think Christ Church congregation has received unbiased information from our local leadership? I feel like we've worked hard to present a fair and balanced representation of the issues.*

31. *Given that the Wednesday vote is only on whether or not to disaffiliate...when and who/what group will decide our future affiliation? Will there be another vote? My understanding is that if we do vote to disaffiliate, it won't happen that evening, but that it will be another time when we have a decision made to have a vote. Within a month from this Wednesday we'll have another conference vote where we will make a choice.*

32. *Pastor Temple is joining the GMC effective January...in what position, and if he leaves as lead pastor - whichever way we vote - what will be the process to appoint a new pastor Jan-July?*

Pastor Temple answered: I have had a conversation with Scott Jones. Should Christ Church elect to remain in the United Methodist Church, I am going into the Global Methodist Church, January 1. It is possible I could remain here as a

Global Methodist pastor. However, there's only two off ramps, one is January 1 and the other is June 30th. I don't believe it would be helpful to remain here until June 30th, which leaves it back to the 1st of January, and if that's the case, I am desirous and think this church would be as well, that Bishop Jones, who knows us, makes the appointment for us. And, if that's the case, that appointment will be made in the coming weeks to be effective January 1, with a new lead pastor.

33. *14 previous CUMC pastors have publicly stated their intent to remain UMC.* What past pastors are becoming GMC?

34. If we vote to stay UMC will we finally honor the pledges of members and submit our withheld apportionments?

See Financial/Physical Matters in the Q&A from Town Hall #1 on the J29 website.

35. *It feels like CUMC may be on the verge of divorce from the UMC.* How do you suggest we talk to the children and the youth of this church about why some of their church friends from Sunday School or Youth may no longer be attending this church if the "divorce" is final?

Pastor Temple answered: I will tell you I believe this analogy is a little bit flawed. It is not a divorce. It is a separation that is going to take people in different directions. If we have families who leave this church over this, they won't be the first families to have left this church over something. It will be the same as we've always had to deal with that. *Kids, that family felt like they were a better fit in a different congregation, and we're happy for them. You can still be friends with them. You can still have the relationships.* And, in point of fact, if we leave the UMC, I hope those relationships will continue and we'll find ways of doing that with those. Our youth are going to have to sort it through as well, and this is a good time for families to have good discussions within their families, the same as your family did asking if you wanted to join here (speaking to Rev. Morgan). I think that's an appropriate thing for parents to have with their children.