

# Kingsland First United Methodist Church Futures Task Force Plan & Updates

## Update #1

This is the initial update on what will be an ongoing conversation at Kingsland First United Methodist Church about the possibility of a split in the United Methodist Church.

In its Lay Leadership role, your Church Council has:

1. appointed a KFUMC Futures Task Force to facilitate this conversation.
2. committed to studying this issue together in order to be as informed as possible about the issues.
3. met with Coastal District Superintendent David Thompson.
4. committed to keeping you informed of what we learn.

This packet includes the initial documents your Church Council has found helpful. Copies of these documents will be available at the Church Office and online (where possible).

1. Initial announcement of the KFUMC Futures Task Force Plan (KFUMC Bulletin Insert, 11/21/2021)
2. Bishop R. Lawson Bryan *Pastoral Letter* (South Georgia Conference Advocate, 8/17/2021)
3. *General Conference FAQs* (frequently asked questions) – (South Georgia Conference Advocate, 8/17/2021)
4. *A Comprehensive Comparison Chart – UMC, Transitional GMC (Global Methodist Church), WCA (Wesley Covenant Association)* (9/1/2021)
5. *What will the Global Methodist Church Look Like? (WCA)* (undated)
6. *What's Next (WCA)* (undated)
7. *Next Steps (WCA)* (undated)

Please be in prayer for our denomination, our South Georgia Annual Conference, our Coastal District, and our Kingsland First United Methodist Church as we journey through this conversation together.

KFUMC Church Council and Futures Task Force

## KFUMC Futures Task Force Plan

### Background

As many of you are aware, the United Methodist Church is facing the real possibility of a split. In fact, the October 4, 2021 edition of UM News reported

***Facing a proposed denominational separation, many United Methodists expect big decisions ahead about where they will make their church home.***

The proposed split comes after decades of intensifying debate over LGBTQ inclusion. Now the question before many: Do they want to stay with The United Methodist Church or seek out an alternative?

Your Lay Leadership at Kingsland First United Methodist Church has begun looking into this question and what it might mean for our congregation.

- The Church Council was provided with copies of a Pastoral Letter from now retired South Georgia Conference Bishop R. Lawson Bryan in which Bishop Bryan introduced a document entitled ***General Conference FAQs (frequently asked questions)***. Bishop Bryan explained this 17-page document was created based on “... 300+ responses” representing “... more than 100,000 laity and more than 500 churches” across the South Georgia Conference. The Council also received a copy of the FAQ document.

- Bishop Bryan also encouraged congregations to consider an informational gathering at the local church level by contacting their District Superintendent. So, we did.

- On Tuesday, September 14, 2021 Coastal District Superintendent David Thompson met with your Church Council in the KFUMC Worship Center for an hour and a half reviewing the FAQ document, answering questions and clarifying information. He also provided an additional handout entitled:

***A Comprehensive Comparison Chart – UMC, Transitional GMC (Global Methodist Church), WCA (Wesley Covenant Association)***

- On Sunday evening, October 3, 2021, several members of the Church Council attended a WCA presentation at College Place UMC in Brunswick where we were provided with three additional handouts from the WCA –

***(1) What will the Global Methodist Church Look Like? (2) What's Next? (3) Next Steps.*** The handout provided to us by District Superintendent Thompson also was distributed at this meeting.

- On Friday, October 8, 2021, most of those who attend the October 3, 2021 meeting in Brunswick gathered to try and make some sense of the information that was washing over us like a tidal wave. From that conversation we proposed to your Church Council the document you are reading now.
- At their October 26, 2021 meeting, your Church Council approved the following plan and directed it be shared with the congregation at large

### The Plan

1. Inform the KFUMC Congregation before Thanksgiving 2021 of the background we have to date (this document).
2. Invite the KFUMC Congregation to a presentation in order to address the issue of a pending split and what it means for KFUMC.
3. Schedule the presentation between mid-January and the end of February, 2022. (October – December is already full enough).
4. Schedule the presentation on a Sunday morning from 9:00 – 10:00 am.
5. Ensure the presentation includes:
  - a. Background – where we are and how did we get here?
  - b. A description of what decisions are being considered at the:
    - i. General Conference Level.
    - ii. Annual Conference Level – South Georgia Conference.
    - iii. Local Church Level – Kingsland First UMC.
  - c. A timeline of known decision points.

**KFUMC Futures Task Force Members:** Kim Canaday, Church Council Chair; Tom Turner, Lay Leader; Anne Wojcik, Finance Committee Chair; Adam Luke, Trustees Chair; Mark Kevan, Stewardship Chair; At Large Members Avonda Casey & Suzie Tippins; Larry Martin, Church Council Vice Chair, & Rev. Bruce Vaughn, Pastor.

## Letter from Bishop Bryan

### Alive Together at the Table: A response to the survey sent before AC2021

Dear Laity and Clergy of South Georgia,

I am so thankful for you and the many ways we are Alive Together at the Table.

In May, I asked you to respond to a [survey prior to the 2021 Annual Conference session](#). I am grateful for the 300+ responses we received. You represent more than 100,000 laity and more than 500 churches, and my goal for the survey was to listen and learn from you. And that's exactly what we've been able to accomplish.

I loved reading how you are doing both on a personal level and how your local church is active in mission and ministry even as we find ourselves still navigating this pandemic. You shared what has been on your mind and what you'd like to see on my mind and on the minds of our Annual Conference leadership. Collectively, you raised important questions and requested specific kinds of information. Thanks to each of you who responded; you provided a wealth of insight to me and to the leadership teams of our conference. Your voice is important, and it is being heard.

As you will recall, part of the survey focused on General Conference. I want you to be informed about where we are as an Annual Conference and as a denomination. Because I realize everyone comes into the conversation at a different place I asked the leadership of our Annual Conference to create an [FAQ \(Frequently Asked Questions\) document](#). The responses to these questions arose out of the collaborative work of the delegation, the Cabinet, the Leadership Forum Task Force, and the Compass Group. On August 4, the Leadership Forum Task Force met to put this document into a format I think you will find very helpful.

In addition, the Leadership Forum Task Force discussed the October 9 gathering we had previously asked you to mark on your calendar. As you will recall, this date was set prior to the postponement of General Conference, which is now set for August 2022. Two factors were a large part of our discussion. First, would rising COVID-19 infection rates affect our ability to have an in-person gathering? Second, is there a better way to provide opportunities for the greatest number of laity and clergy to meet to discuss General Conference, this FAQ document, and to ask for any additional information that is needed? The Leadership Forum Task Force concluded that the best approach is to pivot from a gathering on October 9 and move toward localized events across South Georgia.

The Leadership Forum Task Force is working with the District Superintendents to offer informational gatherings for groups of churches within each district upon request. This means that laity and clergy in each district can express their desire to have such a gathering, and the District Superintendent will work with the Leadership Forum Task Force to provide knowledgeable facilitators for those gatherings.

Here's what I ask you to do now: 1 - [read the FAQ document](#) and make a note of any additional questions you have ([submit them here](#) or have them ready to ask at an informational gathering near you); and 2- contact your district office, Jay Hanson ([jay@thechapelministries.com](mailto:jay@thechapelministries.com)), or Kelly Roberson ([kelly@sgaumc.com](mailto:kelly@sgaumc.com)) to host a meeting in your area. Together they will help coordinate gatherings in your area.

The survey, the [FAQ document](#), and these district opportunities — these are what it looks like to be Alive Together at the Table. The more informed and equipped we are, the more we can keep our focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Alive Together in Christ,





# The South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church

## General Conference FAQs

### Frequently Asked Questions about General Conference and the Legislation Coming to General Conference

Please note:

1. This document is a response to the survey sent to the clergy and lay members to the 2021 South Georgia Annual Conference Session, created August 2021 by the Leadership Forum Task Force, Delegation, & Cabinet;
2. All references to the General Conference Session refer to the postponed 2020 General Conference, which is currently planned for August 29 - September 6, 2022; and
3. All references to "the Protocol" refer to the [Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation](#).

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## Section 1: General Conference Overview

### 1. What is General Conference?

General Conference sets the rules and establishes procedures for virtually every aspect of the church's life. It also communicates the denomination's official position on a variety of issues and cultural challenges. Every four years, United Methodists from around the world assemble and connect in worship, prayer, Communion, fellowship — and do the legislative work that shapes our shared life.

### 2. How does the General Conference fit into the structure of The United Methodist Church?

The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader. It is organized in a similar fashion to the US Government, with legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and an overarching document, the *Book of Discipline*, serving as a constitution. Duties are divided among three bodies - much like Congress - that include the General Conference, the Council of Bishops, and the Judicial Council. These entities are required by our Constitution to be part of our structure. While each plays a significant role in the life of the church, it is the mission, ministry and love of God through Jesus Christ and the ministry of the local church that are of primary importance.

### 3. What are the responsibilities of delegates to General Conference?

With “full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional” (The Book of Discipline 2016, ¶16, ¶501), General Conference delegates confer and vote on proposals for resourcing and regulating the life and work of The United Methodist Church.

### 4. How many delegates are there and where are they from?

There are 862 delegates elected from Africa, Eurasia, the Philippines, the United States, and autonomous churches with which The United Methodist Church has a concordat relationship. A formula, based on lay and clergy membership, determines the number of delegates from each conference. Every conference is guaranteed at least two delegates - one clergy and one lay. Around 44% of the delegates to the postponed 2020 General Conference come from outside the United States. Thirty-two percent of delegates come from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, and 4.5% from Europe. Fifty-six percent of the delegates are from the United States. The South Georgia Conference is allotted eight delegates - four laity and four clergy.

### 5. Will the same delegates who were elected in 2019 continue to serve?

Yes. Our current delegation was elected to the 2020 General Conference, which has been postponed. Even with the postponement, the delegation will still be in compliance with its four-year term limit (2019-2023).

### 6. What will the delegates to General Conference consider?

Delegates to General Conference consider all the legislative petitions that have been sent in by individuals, churches, conferences, boards, and agencies. The Advance Daily Christian Advocate (ADCA) contains all legislation submitted for consideration by the delegates at the upcoming 2020 General Conference. The ADCA can be found at:

[www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-conference-2020-advance-daily-christian-advocate](http://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-conference-2020-advance-daily-christian-advocate).

### 7. Why would the church hold this meeting in Minneapolis, MN?

Like the Olympic Games, the location of General Conference is traditionally held in a new location every four years. Minneapolis, MN was chosen contractually long before Minneapolis came to national attention in the Spring of 2020 for political unrest and racial injustices. Some have suggested negotiating out of the contract with Minneapolis, but the decision remains with the Commission on General Conference.

### 8. When did General Conference last meet? What was approved?

General Conference last met in 2016 followed by a special session in 2019 focused on matters of human sexuality. The special session approved a “traditional plan” that retains the traditional language in the Book of Discipline concerning LGBTQ marriage and ordination. That is the Book of Discipline under which we continue to operate.

### 9. Why is there conflict in The United Methodist Church and at General Conference around human sexuality?

Even after the 2019 special session where a “traditional plan” was approved, there continues to be conflict as the church struggles to achieve consensus and compliance around matters related to human sexuality. The conflict is not due to a lack of awareness about Biblical passages related to sexuality, gender, and marriage. Rather, the conflict is due to a difference in how those well-known scriptures are interpreted. On one side of the conflict are those who align themselves with the traditional Christian teaching that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman. On the

other side of the conflict are those who maintain that biblical prohibitions of homosexuality are addressing practices such as ritual prostitution, pederasty, and sexual promiscuity, rather than committed relationships between same-gender persons. Those on both sides of this conflict maintain that they are trying to be faithful to their understanding of the scriptures, which has led to an unfortunate division in the church.

**10. In conversations around General Conference, three terms are often used: traditionalist, progressive, and centrist. What do these terms mean?**

It is important to remember that clergy and laity in The UMC are sincerely seeking to be faithful to their understanding of the scriptures when discussing matters of human sexuality. For the purposes of this document, we have defined those terms as:

**Traditionalists** - those who embrace the traditional Christian teaching that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman. Traditionalists support the phrasing placed in the Social Principles (§161.G) in The Book of Discipline in 1972, which states “homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Further, Traditionalists believe scriptural prohibitions against homosexuality make it improper for the church to ordain or appoint self-avowed, practicing homosexuals as clergy. These positions are the current stance in The Book of Discipline.

**Progressives** - those who believe the biblical verses used to prohibit homosexuality are addressing practices such as ritual prostitution, pederasty, and sexual promiscuity, rather than committed relationships between same-gender persons. Progressives focus on justice to all people and Jesus’ deferential care of the marginalized, and thus advocate for full inclusion of all persons in the church who are living out their God-given identity.

**Centrists** - those who may lean toward either traditionalist or progressive positions on the topic of homosexuality, but are more comfortable living in the tension between the two different views. Another word used in denominational discussions is to call individuals holding these centrist beliefs as “compatibilists.” Centrists value unity in the church while realizing the diversity of opinion on many theological and social matters that has been evident in the church from the very beginning.

**11. What legislative petitions have been submitted to General Conference that deal specifically with the structure of The United Methodist Church?**

Many plans have been submitted to the postponed 2020 General Conference concerning the structure of The United Methodist Church and ways to move The United Methodist Church beyond the current impasse over human sexuality. Once General Conference actually occurs, these various plans can be debated and amended during the session in order to determine which of them might be appealing to the laity and clergy delegates. A summary has been prepared that compares proposals from various groups, in alphabetical order, about the structure of The United Methodist Church. It does not include proposals from individuals. All proposals will be open for amendments at General Conference and may be subject to Judicial Council review. Comparison chart:

[www.sgaumc.org/files/files\\_library/gc+2020+plans+chart.pdf](http://www.sgaumc.org/files/files_library/gc+2020+plans+chart.pdf).

## Section 2: General Conference Postponement

### 1. Why was General Conference postponed?

Covid-19 has had a world-wide impact. Closed countries, travel restrictions, a world-wide pandemic, and the staggered roll out of vaccines are all among the reasons that the 2020 General Conference was postponed.

### 2. If Annual Conferences are able to hold their sessions, why can't General Conference hold its session?

Vaccination availability, internet accessibility, and location (international sites) are obvious concerns when considering how to hold General Conference. The complexities of General Conference with a world-wide delegation is significantly greater than the challenges of conducting a South Georgia Annual Conference session.

### 3. Could General Conference be further postponed?

Yes, there is the possibility that General Conference will be further delayed because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges it presents for a global gathering of this nature.

### 4. Who makes the decision about another possible postponement and when will this decision be made?

The Commission on the General Conference makes the decisions on dates for General Conference, including any decision on another possible postponement. The Commission has indicated they will make a decision regarding the viability of the conference being held on schedule by late in the first quarter of 2022 or early in the second quarter of 2022.

### 5. What happens if General Conference continues to be delayed beyond 2022?

If General Conference is further delayed, South Georgia will continue to operate in compliance with the current Book of Discipline with a traditional view on human sexuality. If there is a delay, South Georgia Conference leadership will be prepared for any implications the delay brings.

### 6. While we are in a delay, can new legislation be introduced to General Conference?

It remains to be seen whether any new proposals will be before delegates. As you might expect, the delay of General Conference has given people more time to review the Protocol and other proposals and to think carefully about the consequences of each plan. Several new proposals have emerged among some United Methodists who feel the options offered by the Protocol were limiting. There are provisions in ¶507 in the Book of Discipline that lay out the process for how new petitions could be received by General Conference.

## Section 3: The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation

Protocol website: [www.gracethroughseparation.com](http://www.gracethroughseparation.com)

### 1. What is the Protocol?

The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation is a proposal for restructuring and separation of The United Methodist Church as we know it today. The proposed separation provides the opportunity for the expansion of Methodism in the world through launching new denominations and a broad reform within The United Methodist Church. Utilizing a mediation process, sixteen United Methodist leaders reached the conclusion that the best option for moving beyond the current conflict over how the church should consider and respond to LGBTQ persons in The United Methodist Church is through separation. The signatories to the Protocol have agreed to support the development and implementation of legislation necessary to implement the terms of the Protocol.

### 2. Who created the Protocol?

The Protocol was developed by a theologically diverse group of United Methodists composed of laity and clergy identifying as progressives, traditionalists, and centrists representing a variety of groups in The United Methodist Church, as well as US and Central Conference Bishops. The 16-member group came together as an outgrowth of a consultation initiated by bishops from Central Conferences located outside of the US.

### 3. What do the writers of the Protocol anticipate as the intended outcome if the Protocol passes?

It is the intention of the Protocol Meditation Team to provide a pathway that enables all groups, no matter their theological conviction, to serve and live out their calling without the threat of punishment or compromise. They hope that: 1 - their work on the Protocol will be the stimulus for a gracious acknowledgement that while we share a common heritage we cannot share a common structure moving forward; and 2 - the outcome of this work will be an amicable process of separation that in a predetermined time frame will create a post-separation UMC and allow for one or more other Methodist denominations to emerge with their own mission, vision, and structure.

### 4. When did the Protocol become official legislation to the General Conference? Why isn't the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation included in the General Conference Advance Daily Christian Advocate (ADCA)?

On February 6, 2020, the team that agreed to the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation released its proposed legislation to implement the Protocol. The Protocol Team proposed a new paragraph of the Book of Discipline, ¶2556 – “Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation and Restructuring.” All of the provisions necessary to implement the Protocol are contained in one paragraph. This was released after the deadline for submitting resolutions and after the printing of the ADCA. However, the mediation team worked through three Annual Conferences to have it presented at their Annual Conference session for adoption as a petition to General Conference (Michigan, Philippines, and Sierra Leone). This is a process outlined in the Book of Discipline ¶507.6 that allows the legislation to be properly presented at General Conference.

Read the full text of the legislation here: [www.gracethroughseparation.com/legislation](http://www.gracethroughseparation.com/legislation).



## **5. What are some of the key components of the Protocol?**

- The mediated agreement allows theological traditionalists - those who want to maintain current church teachings - to leave with local church assets and property and \$25 million in existing UMC funds to start their own traditional denomination.
- The protocol also sets aside \$2 million for other denominations formed.
- Under the Protocol, conferences and local congregations could vote to separate from The UMC to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination created under the agreement within a certain time frame.
- If an Annual Conference does not vote to separate, it remains in The UMC, and local churches remain in The UMC unless they vote to separate.
- If an Annual Conference votes to separate, a local church can vote to remain in The UMC and move to another Annual Conference.
- By default, clergy remain a member of their current Annual Conference unless they choose otherwise.
- Provisions exist for entities that choose to separate to retain their assets and liabilities and be released from the trust clause. Unfunded future pension liability could be transferred to the new denomination which a church or conference joins.
- All current clergy and lay employees would keep the pensions they have already earned regardless of the Methodist denomination with which they ultimately affiliate.

## **6. Can the Protocol be amended?**

Yes. While the Protocol design team has strongly suggested adoption in its current form, the General Conference delegates can amend the Protocol through the legislative process.

## **7. Will the Protocol be addressed with high priority on the agenda at General Conference?**

The South Georgia delegation, along with other bodies, has asked the Commission on General Conference and the Council of Bishops in the strongest terms, to put consideration of the Protocol at the highest level of priority.

## **8. Under the terms of the Protocol, will any newly formed Methodist denominations receive financial assets from The United Methodist Church? How were the figures determined? What is the per-member distribution of these funds?**

The General Council on Finance and Administration will hold a total sum of \$25M for a traditional denomination after it is formed and incorporated. If more than one traditional denomination emerges, then an agreement will have to be worked out between those parties. A total sum of \$2 million dollars is to be escrowed by GCFA for payment to potential additional Methodist denominations pursuant to this Protocol after they are formed and incorporated. The Protocol Mediation Team arrived at these figures after review of the financial health of The UMC, and discussion with experts from GCFA and the Connectional Table. It was agreed as a part of this financial settlement that no further claim would be made on any properties or assets retained by the post-separation United Methodist Church. It is impossible to determine the "per-member" distribution prior to any separation because no one knows what decisions will be made by clergy, local churches, and ultimately church members as to which expression of Methodism they will associate. (Page 23, Section 10)

**9. Why are traditionalists the ones being asked to leave The United Methodist Church under the Protocol?**

Traditionalists are not being asked to leave; they are deciding to leave. During the Protocol mediation process it became clear that progressives and centrists are not ready or willing to leave The United Methodist Church. Forcing anyone to leave involuntarily would require numerous church trials that would distract from the church's mission, cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, ruin the church's reputation, and all with no assurance of producing the intended outcome. No one wants to see that happen. Therefore, the traditionalist representatives at the Protocol mediation table felt that starting a new expression of Methodism would provide a fresh start for accountability and flexibility.

**10. Why can't individuals and churches who want to change the Book of Discipline around matters related to human sexuality leave and start their own church?**

Churches that want to change the Book of Discipline could leave, and some have already gone through the disaffiliation process. But there are churches and individuals who want to see the Book of Discipline changed who are choosing to stay because they feel this issue is a matter of justice based on a different interpretation of scripture. Currently, there are some Bishops, Conferences, and Jurisdictions in parts of The UMC who feel so strongly about their position they have chosen to operate in a manner that goes against our current Book of Discipline. This is the tension that brings us to the current conflict in the church, which the Protocol is addressing.

**11. If the Protocol passes at General Conference, how is the process initiated?**

No institution as large as our current United Methodist Church can be altered or re-organized quickly; this will take time. One of the key components of the work yet to be done is to create a realistic yet timely manner in which these changes can be implemented. Care will need to be taken to make sure that all aspects of the work are cared for in a manner that honors the Protocol and the decisions made at the General Conference and any subsequent conferences before the separation takes place.

**12. If the Protocol passes, how could traditionalists retain the name of "The United Methodist Church"?**

As the Protocol is currently written, the post-separation United Methodist Church would retain the name of "The United Methodist Church." Of course, this could be part of the deliberation that will happen at General Conference. (Page 27, Section 12.I)

**13. What is the official decision-making process for an Annual Conference as outlined in the Protocol's legislation?**

The proposed process for decision-making is detailed on page 7, section 4. a and c of the Protocol legislation document.

- A. In its present form, the legislation states that a motion supported by one-fifth of the lay and clergy members present and voting is required to initiate the decision making process at a regular or called session of the Annual Conference.
- B. A 57% super-majority is required of the clergy and lay members present and voting for separation from The UMC.
- C. A process for equalizing the number of lay members is referenced to bring balance due to the number of clergy members who are not represented by a local church due to their clergy status (e.g., retired, leave of absence, etc.). Efforts at lay equalization are made for each Annual Conference session through the use of at-large lay members.

#### **14. How does the Protocol allow for church property to transfer to the local church?**

Page 14 of the Protocol legislation document addresses matters of property, assets and liabilities.

This section has a lot of legal terminology. This is a brief summary for churches who are separating from The UMC in accordance with all the provisions of the proposed legislation:

- A. Local churches departing to unite with a new Methodist denomination would retain all property, assets, and liabilities.
- B. Prior to separation, departing churches will maintain connectional responsibilities (i.e. paying apportionments and direct bills for the church's clergy's benefits).
- C. The Annual Conference session would be required to give approval for departing churches to finalize the process.
- D. Disclaimer: *This is a good faith representation of the basic aspects of the proposed legislation as it relates to churches departing to unite with another denominational expression of Methodism and the transfer of church property. Please read all the fine print in the legislation.*

#### **15. What if the Protocol is not adopted at General Conference?**

There is a possibility that the Protocol will not be adopted. If this happens, the Annual Conference will need to decide its next steps. Regardless of what happens at General Conference, South Georgia's current disaffiliation policy is still in effect. The process for disaffiliation for a local church is available online at [www.sgaumc.org/disaffiliation](http://www.sgaumc.org/disaffiliation).

## **Section 4: South Georgia's Position on the Protocol**

### **1. Does the delegation elected to represent South Georgia support the Protocol?**

Yes. The South Georgia Conference delegation has expressed their support for the Protocol. They see a great need to vote on and pass the Protocol as soon as possible.

### **2. What is the South Georgia Conference's official position on the Protocol?**

- A. The annual gathering (session) of the South Georgia Annual Conference is technically the only body who can decide our conference's position on matters such as this legislation. There has not been an in-person meeting since the Protocol was developed and presented to allow for thorough preparation, discussion, debate, or a time of voting on a position on the matter during an Annual Conference session.
- B. In the meantime, our elected delegates to the General Conference have gone on record as supporting the Protocol in its present form. This decision was made in preparation for their attending the General Conference session.

### **3. Will the South Georgia Conference vote to take a position on the Protocol?**

- A. The current Protocol legislation provides a decision-making process and timeline following the General Conference session when there are finalized details and options for each Annual Conference, local church, and clergy person to consider.
- B. Any vote on the Protocol prior to General Conference action should be viewed as non-binding due to the unpredictable nature of the legislative process. In short, there may be changes to the proposed legislation with which the required number of lay and clergy members voting at the Annual Conference would be uncomfortable. (In the Protocol legislation, a 57% vote is required for the Annual Conference to separate from The UMC and join or form a new Methodist denomination.)

## Section 5: Impact on the South Georgia Conference and Local Churches if the Protocol Passes

### 1. What does the passing of the Protocol potentially mean for local churches and Annual Conferences?

If a local church or an Annual Conference wishes to remain in the post-separation United Methodist Church, there are no actions required. If a local church or an Annual Conference wishes to affiliate with a new traditional Methodist denomination or another new Methodist denomination, there is a clearly stated process that will enable them to do so gracefully and affordably. And, if a local church or Annual Conference wishes to disaffiliate without affiliating with another Methodist denomination, there is an approved process that spells out those requirements ([Page 25, Section 12](#)).

Strong efforts of collaboration and cooperation will be needed from all sides in order to create a consistent narrative concerning the options being considered; to provide strong, non-anxious leadership in the midst of the transitions; and to model how we can bless and send one another into new expressions of who we are as Methodists.

Local churches and Annual Conferences that separate should be prepared for the disciplinary and structural changes that will be approved and instituted by any new Methodist denomination that emerges.

Regardless, each local Church and Annual Conference can expect change to occur. They can also expect to be supported in their efforts to provide meaningful, contextual ministry to the people in their communities and under their care as well as to continue every effort to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

### 2. If the Protocol passes, will my local church be required to vote, and if so, when?

- A. Local churches would only be called upon to vote on this matter if the Annual Conference session takes action with which a sufficient number of local church members disagree. This applies to churches who would prefer to join a new Methodist denomination or to remain part of the post-separation United Methodist Church.
- B. According to the Protocol legislation in its current form, ([Section 4.c](#)), the local church council (or equivalent body) decides whether to require a majority vote or a  $\frac{2}{3}$  super-majority vote prior to taking the vote. Note that this is a difference in percentage of vote required at the local church level than at the Annual Conference level.
- C. Churches that do not take a vote will default to the choice of the Annual Conference session.
- D. Local churches have several timelines that will likely be adjusted because of the postponement of the 2020 General Conference session. However, it should be noted that the local church can actually vote on their denomination affiliation anytime after the adjournment of the General Conference session.

### 3. Is there a defined process if a local church wants to remain in the post-separation UMC? Will there be a clear path for those who remain in the post-separation UMC to join another Annual Conference so that local churches can remain connected and vital in ministry?

If the Annual Conference votes to remain in the post-separation UMC no action will be required for a local church that wants to remain in the post-separation UMC. If the Annual Conference votes to

affiliate with a new traditional Methodist denomination or another new Methodist denomination, then the local church would need to vote to leave the Annual Conference in order to be a part of the post-separation UMC. The same vote threshold will be required as set by the church council prior to any vote (majority or  $\frac{2}{3}$ ). The process of those churches joining a new Annual Conference has not been defined yet. The Annual Conference with which such a church would align would be determined after seeing where post-separation UMC churches exist. Under the Protocol, there is a clear path for every congregation to live into their connectional identity and shared ministry as part of an Annual Conference. Once decisions are made, individuals will have a better idea whether he or she can remain a member of their church, or whether they will choose to affiliate with another church. Every South Georgia United Methodist is encouraged to be a part of the conversation in their local church and model respectful and loving dialogue.

**4. How can individuals who want to remain in the post-separation UMC affiliate with others if his or her church wants to join a new Methodist denomination?**

Any member whose church moves in a direction different than he or she feels led can transfer their membership at any time to a church which aligns with his or her theological conviction.

**5. Is the South Georgia Conference already working to join the Global Methodist Church?**

The South Georgia Conference, as an official body, has not taken any formal steps to join the Global Methodist Church. The Annual Conference is the only body who could make this decision.

*\*\*The Protocol anticipates new expressions of Methodism emerging from The United Methodist Church. One of these new expressions is the Global Methodist Church, created by theologically conservative United Methodists. While it has not been legally formed and is not operating as a church at this time, leadership of the GMC expects the Global Methodist Church will be legally formed and begin to operate as a church when the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopts the Protocol.*

**6. Will the South Georgia Annual Conference be permitted to leave as a whole? Is the South Georgia Annual Conference planning to leave The United Methodist Church and be a denomination on its own?**

No formal option currently exists for an Annual Conference to disaffiliate or form its own independent denomination. The Annual Conference, as an official body, has not taken any formal steps to leave The UMC or be a denomination on its own.

**7. What are our options for uniting with an expression of Methodism that maintains the traditional teachings on human sexuality, marriage, and ordination?**

Presently, there is at least one new Methodist denomination in the process of organizing - the Global Methodist Church. It is possible other similar denominations will be formed so it is prudent for the conference to monitor various options.

**8. If the Protocol passes and the Annual Conference votes to separate from The UMC, will churches immediately become a part of a new denomination or can this occur only after organizing conferences of the respective denomination?**

Any plan of separation that is approved is likely to have a window of 1-2 years during which time local churches can study the situation and decide where they best align. Once a new denomination is formally organized and legally instituted (including, for instance, tax status, health and pension plans,

doctrines and by-laws) and holds their organizing conference, then local churches and Annual Conferences may decide whether or not they wish to join a new denomination.

**9. If General Conference is delayed beyond 2022, or if no decision is reached in 2022, is there a plan for our conference or its local churches to disaffiliate from The UMC with the same terms (financial and property) as the original Protocol?**

No. There is no such process currently defined by the General Conference. The South Georgia Conference already has a policy in place for a local church to disaffiliate that expires on December 31, 2023. Whenever there is an opportunity to respond, conference leadership will provide the mechanism for the conference to decide its future.

**10. How will the South Georgia Conference continue to thrive if many of our clergy and churches decide to join another denomination?**

While we don't know how everything is going to settle out, we have confidence that all our churches will continue to share the love of Christ with those around them no matter what denominational affiliation they may have.

## Section 6: Conference Leadership

**1. Has the South Georgia Conference leadership taken a position on the Protocol?**

While individuals serving in leadership positions may have taken a personal position on the Protocol, only the Annual Conference session - meaning voting clergy and lay members to Annual Conference - can speak for or make decisions on behalf of "the" conference. The delegation, however, has stated their position is one in favor of the Protocol as they prepare for the upcoming General Conference.

**2. Is our Conference leadership (Cabinet, staff, etc.) working for a Conference decision to affiliate with a new traditional Methodist denomination?**

The Annual Conference, as an official body, has not taken any formal steps to affiliate with a new traditional Methodist movement. The Annual Conference is the only body who could make this decision. Conference leadership is currently engaged in scenario planning in preparation for the future, recognizing most of the conference supports the current Book of Discipline.

**3. While what is approved by the General Conference cannot yet be known because of the nature of the legislative process, how will the South Georgia Conference help prepare local churches in the meantime for the possibility of denominational separation and the kinds of decisions the Annual Conference and local churches will have to make?**

The Leadership Forum, Leadership Forum Task Force, Delegation, and Cabinet are working to provide necessary information to help educate church leaders and members about the legislation, its implications, and options available. The timeline for this process is outlined in Section 11 of this FAQ document. District informational sessions are planned for this Fall. In addition, the conference has trained facilitators who can help congregations navigate through the process of making decisions around denominational matters ([www.sgaumc.org/navigators](http://www.sgaumc.org/navigators)).

**4. How will Bishop Graves help the South Georgia Conference proceed after General Conference with such limited time and knowledge of our conference? How will South Georgia United Methodists know who is making decisions?**

While Bishop Graves is the Episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference, decisions regarding the future of the South Georgia Conference will ultimately be made by the clergy and lay members of the Annual Conference. Bishop Graves begins his new episcopal assignment in South Georgia on September 1. He has made the commitment to spend the first 100 days in our conference, meeting with Conference and District lay leadership, Cabinet members, and local church pastors. Bishop Graves continues to say that as the episcopal leader he wants to help churches and individuals get to where God is leading them. He will make decisions as needed, and other Conference leaders will remain in place to assist in decisions. Bishop Graves and Conference leaders have a desire to bring people to the table and into conversation so that they are prepared to make the necessary decisions. Good communication will continue to be one of our most valuable tools as we act together as a conference.

## **Section 7: Delegation**

**1. Will the delegation seek response from clergy and lay members to Annual Conference in regards to the Protocol? Is it anticipated that our delegation, or some other group, will bring a recommendation to the 2022 Annual Conference?**

The South Georgia delegation, along with other groups, are planning informational conversations this Fall at the district and local church levels to talk about denominational matters as it relates to General Conference and the Protocol. The delegation represents and can give leadership to the Annual Conference. However, the Annual Conference itself is the only decision-making body. The delegation has stated that it will submit a resolution to be voted on by the 2022 South Georgia Annual Conference session - a statement of declaration in support of the Protocol and the desire to be part of a traditional denomination. While this would not be a binding vote, the delegation feels it would express the direction of the Annual Conference.

**2. Will there be a definite decision made by delegates at General Conference or will it lead to more questions without answers?**

The delegation sees a great need to vote on and pass the "Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation." While the delegation knows that it is possible for congregations who wish to disaffiliate to do so now under our current Book of Discipline, they recognize it is significantly more expensive. Therefore, it is the hope of the delegation that: 1 - there will be a definitive decision reached at General Conference for a peaceful separation into two or more Methodist denominations; 2 - if the Protocol passes, then each Annual Conference, church, member, and pastor can decide where they can best live out their faith and calling; 3 - the Protocol will provide a means for those desiring to disaffiliate from The UMC for doctrinal reasons to do so gracefully and affordably and affiliate with a new denomination that is traditional in nature.

**3. How long does the delegation think The UMC can remain together to make necessary decisions when meetings and decisions are delayed because of the pandemic?**

If General Conference is delayed or the Protocol is not passed, the delegation feels there will be adverse effects within the South Georgia Conference. While the delegation realizes the current Book of Discipline with a traditional view of human sexuality remains in place, the delegation feels that the

disobedience of the BOD on the parts of some Bishops, Conferences, and Jurisdictions to our agreed upon polity has created great angst and unrest in our denomination and is why the next General Conference is so important. The delegation wants to find a “win/win” for the churches, members, and clergy in the South Georgia Conference. The delegation wants there to be a “good place to land” for both traditional, progressive, and centrist congregations. They feel it is time for every congregation to follow their conscience and understanding of scripture and our Wesleyan heritage without penalty.

The delegation has also asked the Commission on General Conference to consider and vote on the Protocol at the earliest possible date. Recognizing that vaccination distribution and travel restrictions continue to be an issue, the South Georgia delegation has said they will use their collective voices to urge the Committee on General Conference to explore hybrid methods of meeting should an in-person gathering not be possible.

#### **4. Does the delegation have what they need?**

Yes, the delegation feels they have the information they need to make decisions at General Conference. The delegation continues to ask for prayers for wisdom and discernment.

## **Section 8: Disaffiliation**

### **Local Church Disaffiliation**

*Addressing how a local church could disaffiliate from the South Georgia Conference*

#### **1. What steps does a local church take to disaffiliate? What is the deadline for a local church to disaffiliate?**

A disaffiliation policy was approved by the South Georgia Conference at the 2019 Annual Conference session. The process for disaffiliation for a local church is available online at [www.sgaumc.org/disaffiliation](http://www.sgaumc.org/disaffiliation). A church can also contact their District Superintendent. The vote by a local church to disaffiliate under this policy shall be made no later than April 1 of the year in which the local church intends to seek Annual Conference consent to disaffiliate. The latest date by which a local church can elect to disaffiliate under this policy is April 1, 2023. The provisions of this policy and ¶2553 expire on December 31, 2023.

#### **2. What guidance is offered to churches who have made the decision to disaffiliate?**

The disaffiliation policy calls for District Superintendents to guide churches through the process of disaffiliation. Details are found in section 4 of the disaffiliation policy. The process seeks to be as fair as possible, releasing the trust clause, and releasing the property and buildings to the local church. The local church is only assessed for pension liability and apportionments through the next Annual Conference session. District Superintendents provide guidance to local churches throughout the process.



## **Annual Conference Disaffiliation**

*Addressing how the Annual Conference could separate from The UMC*

### **3. Why is there no option for an Annual Conference to separate from The United Methodist Church?**

No disciplinary option currently exists for an Annual Conference to separate from The UMC. Until recent years, no one foresaw that an Annual Conference would need this option. Such an option is part of the Protocol legislation. Until any legislation is approved by General Conference there is no current means for a conference to separate from The United Methodist Church as a whole.

### **4. Will our Annual Conference separate from The United Methodist Church?**

No one knows the answer to this question. The options and processes for separation will not be fully known until after the General Conference takes its action. Currently, there is no disciplinary provision for the Annual Conference to make a decision to separate. In the meantime, it is prudent for the conference and local churches to prepare for various scenarios and to prayerfully allow time for the legislative process to unfold.

## **Section 9: Clergy**

### **1. If the Protocol passes, how does a pastor leave the Annual Conference if he or she does not agree with the Conference's choice of denomination? How difficult will it be to find a conference with which a clergy could associate?**

The Book of Discipline has outlined the transfer procedures in ¶347. This procedure will be honored should a clergy member wish to transfer to another Annual Conference. While no one can predict the decisions of the approximate 38,000 clergy and 30,000 congregations in the 54 US Annual Conferences, clergy would surely find options.

### **2. If the South Georgia Conference votes to separate from The United Methodist Church could a retired clergy person remain in the post-separation UMC?**

A retired United Methodist clergy may remain in the post-separation United Methodist. Under the provisions of the Protocol, the retired clergy would transfer to another Annual Conference that is in the post-separation UMC. Regardless, pastors currently in retirement would see no change in their pension, no matter the expression with which they affiliate.

### **3. Will the Bishop and Cabinet make clergy appointments in 2022 with a pending General Conference scheduled for later that year?**

Appointments will be made in the Spring of 2022. As always, some pastoral changes will be necessary. However, the Cabinet has expressed their hope and desire for sustained leadership, stability, and a limited number of appointment changes.

### **4. What happens to the pension plans of The United Methodist Church and the pension benefits of its clergy and lay employees if the Protocol passes?**

The pension plans of The United Methodist Church will remain in place for all current clergy and lay employees affiliated with The United Methodist Church, regardless of the Methodist denomination under the Protocol with which they affiliate. The liability of Annual Conferences and local churches for pension benefits shall transfer with such entities to the Methodist denomination with which they affiliate.

## Section 10: The Local Church

### 1. How do conversations around denominational matters and the Protocol affect my local church right now?

The hope is that you are so busy sharing the love of Christ that these conversations have minimal impact on your church right now! However, at some point after General Conference meets, your charge's lay member to Annual Conference will represent your church as the Annual Conference decides what its future will be. Once the conference decides, your church may align with the Annual Conference or choose another path. The prayer for everyone is that there will be minimal impact to your local church's worship, outreach, or evangelism efforts.

### 2. How does the delay of General Conference influence how the local church conducts ministry?

Hopefully, the delay of General Conference does not significantly impact your worship, outreach, or evangelism efforts of any of our local churches. While the matters before General Conference need to be resolved, the reality is the conversations at General Conference are not what churches and clergy deal with on a daily basis. While some churches have lost members or seen a financial impact in this interim period, none of those distractions keep us from sharing the Gospel with people who need to know they are loved.

### 3. What role does the small membership church play in these discussions?

Every church - no matter its size - plays an important role in deciding the future of the South Georgia Conference. Every charge elects and sends at least one lay member to represent them at the Annual Conference session, where conference decisions are made. Through the annual election of the local church's charge-wide lay member, each church has a voice and the opportunity to be part of both the discussion and the decision making.

### 4. How does our local church navigate this time?

The best thing is to realize that the clergy of South Georgia and the lay member representing each charge will determine South Georgia's response when the options for us become known. In the meantime, local churches continue to be about the business of the Church: making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. All United Methodists can model loving and respectful conversations in order to keep divisiveness from hurting the church's witness, bringing harm to members of the church family, or hindering the church's mission and ministry. The conference has trained facilitators who can help congregations navigate through the process of making decisions around denominational matters ([www.sgaumc.org/navigators](http://www.sgaumc.org/navigators)).

### 5. How can a local church avoid a church vote and the conflict that it may produce?

Once the Annual Conference decides its path forward, churches agreeing with the decision will not be required to vote. Only churches who disagree with the Annual Conference's decision and want to separate from the Annual Conference will be required to have a church vote. Local churches in South Georgia have persons with a variety of viewpoints who have successfully worshipped together and served Christ for decades. Conference leaders recognize that if any local church has to vote it could cause conflict to surface in the church.

**6. Why is every pastor not talking about these denominational matters with his or her congregation?**

Pastors and the lay leadership of the local church walk a fine line between helping the church stay informed while avoiding divisive conversations within the church family. Some pastors are preparing their congregations, while others may not feel adequately prepared or fully informed themselves. Some might not want to distract from crucial ministry until they feel the time is right. If you feel like your congregation is not well informed on these matters, it is probably best to lovingly talk with your pastor and ask him or her if you can help the congregation prepare for the conversations and decisions which are likely to develop in the months ahead. Church leaders should consider together how best to inform their membership in a manner that allows open conversation. The conference has trained facilitators who can help congregations navigate through the process of making decisions around denominational matters ([www.sgaumc.org/navigators](http://www.sgaumc.org/navigators)).

**7. If a church disaffiliates from the South Georgia Conference can it still be called United Methodist?**

As the Protocol is written, if a church votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church it is no longer a part of The United Methodist Church and should not refer to itself as a United Methodist Church. In Georgia there are court rulings affirming that a church may not use the name "Methodist" unless it is part of one of the various Methodist denominations.

## **Section 11: Timeline**

**1. What target dates are being entertained for the South Georgia Conference to prepare for and make decisions for the outcome of General Conference?**

Here is the timeline and process for preparation developed by our delegation in collaboration with other leadership groups of the Annual Conference. This also addresses the process to be followed after General Conference.

Fall 2021

Time of Information

- Informational video for congregations which objectively outlines where we currently are as it relates to General Conference (already released)
- Release of the FAQ document
- Informational gatherings in the districts
- Navigators (trained facilitators) available to work with local congregations

January - May 2022

Time of Preparation

- Town Hall meetings
- Special Town Hall meeting for licensed local pastors
- Navigators (trained facilitators) available to work with local congregations
- Additional videos for congregations which objectively outline the known options coming before General Conference
- Conference leadership continuously relays all known matters coming before General Conference

June 5 - 7 or 8, 2022

Annual Conference 2022

- Time of discussion around General Conference matters.
- If needed, conduct another conference survey after options have become more clear and new alternatives may have arisen.

August 29 - September 6, 2022

Next regular session of General Conference

September 2022 or October 2022

Special Called Annual Conference

- Assuming General Conference is able to meet in 2022, the South Georgia Annual Conference session will meet to decide how it will respond as an Annual Conference to the outcome of General Conference.

## **2. If the Protocol passes at General Conference, what is the timeline to make decisions?**

The Protocol legislation provides a decision-making process and timeline following the General Conference session when there are finalized details and options for each Annual Conference, local church, and clergy person to consider. A special called Annual Conference is scheduled in September or October 2022 to respond as an Annual Conference to the outcome of the August 2022 General Conference. The Protocol envisions a gracious timeline for all churches, clergy, and individual members to make the necessary decisions to find their place.

## **3. What do we do until General Conference occurs?**

Here are some suggestions:

- A. Let's focus on doing the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in our local churches and Conference. Thankfully, no one has to wait on any committee or legislation to continue doing what Jesus has commissioned us to do.
- B. Continue to educate your church leadership regarding the current reality in The United Methodist Church and the options before us.
- C. Pray - "Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 (NLT)
- D. Educate ourselves about our Wesleyan roots in hopes of recapturing the passion and zeal for Christ and lost souls, for which we were once known. "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out." John Wesley, 1786

*For additional information, visit [www.sgaumc.org/gc2020](http://www.sgaumc.org/gc2020).*



# UNITED METHODISTS: Structure of The UMC



# A Comprehensive Comparison Chart

## UMC, Transitional GMC, WCA Proposals

By Thomas Lambrecht – Published September 1, 2021

How will the Global Methodist Church (GMC) differ from what we now know in United Methodism with respect to its governing documents? This comparison chart will show how the transitional GMC will be alike or different from the current UM Church. Then it will also look at the proposals developed by the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) as to how the GMC might be structured after the transition. Elements of the WCA proposed *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* will be legislative proposals to the convening General Conference of the GMC and subject to its approval. While the transitional GMC makes some changes to the basic governance as it exists in the UM Church, it also keeps a fair amount of continuity with the current UM governance in order to make for an easier transition and to ensure that the members of the GMC make the more critical decisions on changes at its convening General Conference. In some areas, the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* develops details more fully because they are necessary for the immediate functioning of the church. The convening General Conference of the GMC may make more far-reaching decisions about how the new denomination will function into the medium and long term. This comparison is accurate as of August 3, 2021, the date of the most recent *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline* of the GMC and the WCA proposed *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. Refinement is ongoing, so some provisions may change in the future, and all provisions are subject to the decisions of the convening GMC General Conference, as well as subsequent General Conferences.

	Current UMC BOD	Transitional GMC BDD	WCA Proposed BDD
<b>DOCTRINE</b>			
Doctrinal Standards	Initially (1968) viewed as “non-judicial,” today not often enforced	Mandatory for all clergy to preach and maintain	Mandatory for all clergy to preach and maintain
Apostles Creed Nicene Creed Definition of Chalcedon	Referenced, but not spelled out in BOD. Used for worship, but no doctrinal standing	Foundational Documents spelled out in BDD expressing orthodox Christian teaching	Foundational Documents spelled out in BDD expressing orthodox Christian teaching
Articles of Religion Confession of Faith	Stated Doctrinal Standards seldom referenced; “deemed congruent” but not reconciled to each other	Doctrinal Standards that define the doctrinal boundaries of the GMC	Doctrinal Standards that define the doctrinal boundaries of the GMC
Wesley’s Standard Sermons Wesley’s Notes Upon the New Testament	Stated Doctrinal standards but not specified in BOD	Normative Wesleyan Standards that define Methodist teaching, specified in BDD	Normative Wesleyan Standards that define Methodist teaching, specified in BDD

General Rules	Stated Doctrinal Standards	Spells out explicit expectations of Methodist discipleship	Spells out explicit expectations of Methodist discipleship
Holy Scripture	“Primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine” In practice, can be modified or reinterpreted by other sources	Primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured	Primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured
Restrictive Rule	Protects Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith, General Rules, episcopacy, right to trial and appeal, use of income from Publishing House	Protects Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, requires 75 percent vote to change	Protects entire doctrine section, requires two-thirds vote to change
Liturgical Norms and Guidelines	Book of Worship	Not specifically addressed – Assumes continued use of Book of Worship and other resources during transition period	To be developed, approved by convening General Conference
<b>SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/WITNESS</b>			
Social Principles, Resolutions	Not binding, instructive and persuasive	Require 75 percent majority, binding on clergy and congregations (implies there will be fewer and more general statements)	Require 75 percent majority, binding on clergy and congregations (implies there will be fewer and more general statements) The convening General Conference shall determine whether to establish a task force to develop specific principles for our social witness that provide counsel as to how biblical principles may be applied to social and cultural contexts
Purpose	Not church law but intended to be instructive and persuasive in prophetic spirit	Consensus vision of faithful discipleship transcending cultures	Consensus vision of faithful discipleship transcending cultures
Length	61 pages plus <i>Book of Resolutions</i> (873 pages)	2 pages	2 pages

Abortion	Balances sanctity of unborn life with life and well-being of mother and child; rejects abortion as means of birth control or gender selection (likely to be changed in a post-separation UMC)	Believing in the sacredness of all life, resists the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life. Do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection. All Christians to support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources.	Believing in the sacredness of all life, resists the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life. Do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection. All Christians to support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources.
Human Sexuality	God's gift to all persons; affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage (Likely to be changed in a post-separation UMC)	Human sexuality is a gift of God, affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman	Human sexuality is a gift of God, affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman
Homosexuality	Affirms sacred worth of all, God's grace available to all. Does not condone practice of homosexuality; considers the practice incompatible with Christian teaching. (Likely to be changed in a post-separation UMC)	No explicit reference to homosexuality; rejects pornography, polygamy and promiscuity; commits church to be a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for all experiencing sexual brokenness.	No explicit reference to homosexuality; rejects pornography, polygamy and promiscuity; commits church to be a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for all experiencing sexual brokenness.
Marriage	Affirms marriage covenant expressed in love, support, commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman (Likely to be changed in a post-separation UMC)	Defined as a legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous relationship between one man and one woman	Defined as a legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous relationship between one man and one woman
<b>LOCAL CHURCH</b>			
Mission of the Church	Make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world	Make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly	To "spread scriptural holiness across the land"
Membership Categories	Baptized and Professing	Baptized and Professing	Preparatory and Professing



Meaning and means of Baptism	Not stated in BOD	Expounded in BDD	Expounded in BDD
Rebaptism	No	No	No
Baptism of infants and children	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confirmation	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accountable discipleship groups	Encouraged of each member	Expected of each member	Expected of each member
Removal of inactive members	After 3 years	After 2 years	After 3 years
Local Church Organization	Charge/Church Conference Church Council Nominations and Leadership Development Committee Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Committee on Finance Board of Trustees Other committees as desired	Charge/Church Conference Church Council Flexible structure for all other functions below: Nominations and Leadership Development Committee Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Committee on Finance Board of Trustees Other committees as desired	Charge/Church Conference Church Council Flexible structure for all other functions below: Nominations and Leadership Development Committee Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Committee on Finance Stewardship Committee Board of Trustees Other committees as desired
General Church and Annual Conference Apportionments/ Connectional Funding	General church budget adopted by General Conference, allocated to annual conferences by formula. Annual conference calculates local apportionment amount by formula. Generally 7 - 15 percent of local budget	1.5 percent of local operating income for general church operations. 5 percent of local operating income for annual conference operations for churches aligning separately from their annual conference. Annual conferences that vote to align with the GMC set local percentage for annual conference operations and must reduce connectional funding for annual conference operations to not more than 10 percent of local operating income within five years of aligning with the GMC.	Not yet determined

Fidelity of Churches	Not stated	Expected of all churches; allow for involuntary disaffiliation if necessary for churches teaching doctrines or engaging in practices contrary to the GMC BDD	Not stated
Closing of Churches	If local church no longer serves its purpose or is no longer used for United Methodist worship. By annual conference action and by action of the bishop (with consent of cabinet and others)	If local church advances doctrines or practices not in conformity with GMC BDD or withholds connectional funding. Process of engagement required. May be involuntarily disaffiliated by 2/3 vote of Transitional Leadership Council	Not stated
Church Property	Held in trust for the denomination	Owned by local church Pension liabilities owed where applicable, secured by a lien on the property	Owned by local church Pension liabilities owed where applicable, secured by a lien on the property
Voluntary Disaffiliation of Local Church Retaining Property	2/3 vote of congregation Majority vote of annual conference Payment of 2 years' apportionments and pension liability	Majority vote of congregation No payments except pension liabilities where applicable, secured by a lien on the property	Not stated
<b>MINISTRY</b>			
Certified Laity in Ministry	Certified lay servants, certified lay speakers, certified lay ministers, deaconesses, home missionaries, lay missionaries	Combines all into one category called certified lay ministers – can specialize to serve in any of the previous areas	Combines all into one category called certified lay ministers – can specialize to serve in any of the previous areas
Orders of Ministry	Ordained deacon a separate order from ordained elder – all deacons permanent	Order of deacon contains both permanent deacons and those going on to elder's orders (nested orders: laity—deacons—elders)	Order of deacon contains both permanent deacons and those going on to elder's orders (nested orders: laity—deacons—elders)
Sequence of Ordination	Candidacy – Commissioning – Ordination (Deacon or Elder) and Full Connection	Candidacy – Ordination as Deacon – Ordination as Elder (for those called to elder's orders)	Candidacy – Ordination as Deacon – Ordination as Elder (for those called to elder's orders)
Length of Candidacy	Minimum of one year, maximum of twelve years	Minimum of six months – based on completing requirements	Minimum of six months – based on completing requirements

Educational Requirements for First Level	For Provisional Membership/Commissioning: Bachelor's Degree One-half of a Master's Degree (36-53 credit hours for MDiv) OR Completed Basic and Advanced Course of Study (60+ credit hours)	For Deacon's Orders: 5-6 courses in prescribed subjects After ordination, complete 4-5 additional courses within 7 years	For Deacon's Orders: 5-6 courses in prescribed subjects After ordination, complete 4-5 additional courses within 7 years
Educational Requirements for Second Level	For Full Membership/Ordination: MDiv or master's degree in specialized ministry	For Elder's Orders: 6 courses in prescribed subjects in addition to deacon's level After ordination, complete 4 additional courses within 7 years	For Elder's Orders: 6 courses in prescribed subjects in addition to deacon's level After ordination, complete 4 additional courses within 7 years
Length of First Level	Provisional members for at least two years following completion of second level education, maximum of eight years	Two years' service as a Deacon, including the length of time to complete first level education and education for elder's orders	Two years' service as a Deacon, including the length of time to complete first level education and education for elder's orders All requirements must be completed within 7 years of declaring candidacy for elder
Rights and privileges of First Level	For Provisional Members: Vote on all matters except constitutional amendments and clergy ordination May not serve as GC or JC delegates Sacramental authority within the site of appointed ministry	For Deacons: Full voice and vote on all matters except the ordination of elders Sacramental authority within the site of appointed ministry	For Deacons: Full voice and vote on all matters except the ordination of elders Sacramental authority within the site of appointed ministry
Financing Theological Education	Grants, loans, tuition reduction available, particularly at UM seminaries	Theological education fund to make loans to students that are forgivable (20 percent for each year of service to the church)	Theological education fund to make loans to students that are forgivable (20 percent for each year of service to the church)
Licensed Local Pastors (long-term, non-ordained)	Yes	No, transitioned to ordained Deacons	No, transitioned to ordained Deacons

Lay Supply Pastors	Yes		Yes – must be ordained Deacon within three years, no sacramental authority	Yes – must be ordained Deacon within three years, no sacramental authority
Retirement for Clergy	Mandatory retirement at age 72		No mandatory retirement, may choose senior status (releases one from obligation to accept an appointment)	No mandatory retirement, may choose retired status (releases one from obligation to accept an appointment)
Rights of Retired Clergy	Full members of annual conference with voice and vote until death		Full members of annual conference with voice and vote for 7 years following choice of senior status, or if serving at least ¼ time appointment After initial 7 years, senior clergy not under appointment have voice but not vote as delegates	Retired clergy under appointment have voice and vote at annual conference, may serve as GC or JC delegates Retired clergy not under appointment have voice but not vote, may not serve as delegates
<b>SUPERINTENDENCY</b>				
Bishops	Elected by jurisdictional or central conference for life (U.S. and some central conferences) or for term determined by central conference		Election process not stated Term of office to be determined by General Conference, uniform for all bishops Transitional Leadership Council appoints president <i>pro tempore</i> in new annual conferences that have no bishop	Two candidates nominated by each annual conference, GC elects pool of potential bishops at least as many as the number of annual conferences Term of office = 12 years' service maximum
Deployment of Bishops	Deployed by jurisdictional or central conference episcopacy committee, service of 4-12 years in one episcopal area		Assigned as necessary by Transitional Leadership Council during transitional period	Annual conference episcopacy committee conducts search from episcopal pool, selection affirmed by Council of Bishops and General Episcopacy Committee

Compensation for Bishops	Salary and benefits set by GCFA, paid by Episcopal Fund from general church apportionments	Salary and benefits set by Transitional Leadership Council, paid by annual conference (U.S.) or by partnership with U.S. annual conferences (non-U.S.)	Guidelines for salary and benefits set by General Episcopacy Committee. Actual salary and benefits set by Annual Conference Episcopacy Committee and paid by individual annual conference.
District Superintendents	Appointed by the bishop, 6-year term, 12-year limit with 2-year extension possible	Presiding Elder appointed by the bishop in consultation with cabinet and district leaders Term of office to be determined by the convening General Conference	Bishop selects one Presiding Elder of three candidates elected by the district to be served. Serves at the pleasure of the bishop, no more than 12 years. May simultaneously serve as local church pastor or be retired. Recommended district of 20-30 churches
Appointment Process	Bishop and cabinet appoint, after consultation with clergy and P/SPR Committee	Maintain existing appointments during transition if possible Bishop or president <i>pro tempore</i> makes appointment after extensive consultation with clergy and P/SPR Committee, including feedback on fit from clergy and P/SPRC and rationale from bishop for the appointment	Church council decides whether to do its own search or request candidates from the bishop. Transition team (larger than P/SPRC) manages transition, interviews candidates, makes final recommendation. Approval of bishop, presiding elder, transition team, and clergy needed to set appointment Candidates interviewed must include at least one female and one cross-cultural clergy
Guaranteed Appointment	Yes	No – written rationale given when no appointment made	No

<b>Ecumenical Relationships</b>	World Council of Churches National Council of Churches World Methodist Council Pan-Methodist Commission Covenant relationships with other denominations Participation in other ecumenical bodies	Commission to explore organic union with other Wesleyan denominations or associations of churches. Membership in World Methodist Council. Explore membership in other Wesleyan associations. Affiliated covenant relationships and partnership with other denominations in mutually agreed ministry	Not developed
<b>CONFERENCES</b>			
Adaptability of <i>Book of Discipline</i>	Central conferences can adapt certain parts of the <i>Discipline</i> to fit legal and cultural situation	<i>Book of Doctrines and Discipline</i> is not adaptable unless a particular provision states that it may be adapted	<i>Book of Doctrines and Discipline</i> is not adaptable unless a particular provision states that it may be adapted
Composition of General Conference	Equal numbers of clergy and lay delegates elected by annual conferences, apportioned by General Conference secretary 600 to 1,000 delegates	Equal numbers of clergy and lay delegates elected by annual conferences and newly formed conferences, apportioned by Transitional Leadership Council	Equal numbers of clergy and lay delegates elected by annual or regional conferences proportional to membership 200 to 700 delegates
<b>Church Structure</b>			
Governing Body	General Conference – delegates elected by annual conferences	Transitional Leadership Council – current TLC to expand as new annual conferences are added and formed	General Conference – delegates elected by annual conferences
General Agency Structures	Councils, Boards, Commissions, Committees, Other	Transitional Commissions	Commissions
Members elected by	Jurisdictional Conference, Council of Bishops	Transitional Leadership Council	General Conference
Agency Structures	Prescribed by General Conference	Determined by each Commission	Determined by each Commission
Prescribed Membership	1/3 clergy, 1/3 laymen, 1/3 laywomen recommended, inclusion of mandated categories	Based on gifts and expertise, inclusiveness encouraged	Based on gifts, training, and experience, inclusiveness encouraged

Term on Agency	Two four-year terms	None specified	Two six-year terms
<b>Mandated Agencies</b>	<p>Connectional Table</p> <p>Council on Finance and Administration</p> <p>Board of Church and Society</p> <p>Board of Discipleship</p> <p>Board of Global Ministries</p> <p>Board of Higher Education and Ministry</p> <p>Board of Pension and Health Benefits</p> <p>United Methodist Publishing House</p> <p>Commission on Archives and History</p> <p>Commission on Communication</p> <p>United Methodist Women</p> <p>Commission on United Methodist Men</p> <p>Commission on Religion and Race</p> <p>Commission on the Status and Role of Women</p> <p>Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters</p>	<p>None mandated, suggested Transitional Commissions:</p> <p>Evangelism, Missions, and Church Planting</p> <p>Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry</p> <p>Ministry</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits</p> <p>Connectional Council</p> <p>General Episcopacy Committee</p>	<p>Evangelism, Missions, and Church Planting</p> <p>Discipleship, Doctrine, and Just Ministry</p> <p>Higher Education and Ministry</p> <p>Communications</p> <p>Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits</p> <p>Connectional Council</p> <p>General Episcopacy Committee</p>
<b>Agency Staff</b>	Employed by each agency (12 year term limit for all staff)	Employed by Transitional Leadership Council	<p>Connectional Operating Officer employed by Connectional Council (12 year term limit)</p> <p>Other staff employed by COO and shared among Commissions</p>
<b>Jurisdictional/Central Conferences</b>	Boundaries established by General Conference and in the Constitution	Transitional Leadership Council may form regional conferences and establish their boundaries	General Conference may form regional conferences

Annual Conference Composition	All clergy (active and retired), plus an equal number of laity, including specific conference officers	All active clergy, senior clergy within first 7 years of senior status or serving at least ¼ time, plus at least an equal number of laity, can include additional lay officers	All active clergy, retired clergy serving at least ¼ time, plus an equal number of laity
Annual Conference Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conference Lay Leader</li> <li>2. Connectional Ministries Staff</li> <li>3. Council on Finance and Administration</li> <li>4. Commission on Equitable Compensation</li> <li>5. Board of Church and Society</li> <li>6. Board of Discipleship</li> <li>7. Board of Laity</li> <li>8. Committee on Ethnic Local Church</li> <li>9. Board of Global Ministries</li> <li>10. Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry</li> <li>11. Board of Ordained Ministry</li> <li>12. Administrative Review Committee</li> <li>13. Committee on Episcopacy</li> <li>14. Board of Pensions</li> <li>15. Board of Trustees</li> <li>16. Commission on Archives and History</li> <li>17. Committee on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships</li> <li>18. Commission on Religion and Race</li> <li>19. Commission on the Status and Role of Women</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Board of Ministry</li> <li>2. Episcopacy Committee</li> <li>3. Finance, Administration, Pensions, and Benefits Committee</li> <li>4. Leadership Committee</li> <li>5. Committee on Investigation</li> <li>6. Administrative Review Committee</li> <li>7. Additional boards and committees established by annual conference</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Board of Ministry</li> <li>2. Episcopacy Committee</li> <li>3. Finance Committee</li> <li>4. Board of Trustees</li> <li>5. Committee on Investigation</li> <li>6. Administrative Review Committee</li> <li>7. Additional boards and committees established by annual conference</li> </ol>



	20. Commission on the Small Membership Church 21. Commission on Communications 22. United Methodist Women 23. United Methodist Men 24. Council on Youth Ministry 25. Ethnic Caucuses			
<b>ACCOUNTABILITY</b>				
Accountability for Clergy	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform clergy duties Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to annual conference clergy	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform clergy duties Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to annual conference clergy	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform episcopal duties Accountable to General Episcopacy Committee Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to global committee on investigation, global trial court	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform clergy duties Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to annual conference clergy
Accountability for Bishops	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform episcopal duties Accountable to jurisdictional episcopacy committee Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to jurisdictional college of bishops, episcopacy committee, complaint process	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform episcopal duties Accountable to Transitional Leadership Council Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to global committee on investigation, global trial court	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform episcopal duties Accountable to General Episcopacy Committee Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to global committee on investigation, global trial court	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform episcopal duties Accountable to General Episcopacy Committee Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to global committee on investigation, global trial court
Chargeable Offenses	1. immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage 2. practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including	1. Conviction or admission of guilt in criminal activities, including but not limited to child or elder abuse, theft, or assault 2. Fiscal malfeasance or gross financial mismanagement	1. Conviction or admission of guilt in criminal activities, including but not limited to child or elder abuse, theft, or assault 2. Fiscal malfeasance or gross financial mismanagement	1. Conviction or admission of guilt in criminal activities, including but not limited to child or elder abuse, theft, or assault 2. Fiscal malfeasance or gross financial mismanagement

	<p>but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>crime</li> <li>disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church</li> <li>dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church</li> <li>relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor</li> <li>child abuse</li> <li>sexual abuse</li> <li>sexual misconduct including the use or possession of pornography</li> <li>harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment</li> <li>racial or gender discrimination</li> <li>fiscal malfeasance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racial, gender, or sexual discrimination or harassment</li> <li>Promoting or engaging in doctrines or practices, or conducting ceremonies or services, that are not in accord with those established by the Global Methodist Church</li> <li>Disobedience to the order and discipline of the Global Methodist Church</li> <li>Relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor</li> <li>Engaging in sexual activities outside the bonds of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman, including but not limited to sexual abuse or misconduct, the use or possession of pornography, or infidelity.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Racial, gender, or sexual discrimination or harassment</li> <li>Promoting doctrines or practices, or conducting ceremonies or services, that are not in accord with those established by the Global Methodist Church</li> <li>Disobedience to the order and discipline of the Global Methodist Church</li> <li>Relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor</li> <li>Engaging in sexual activities outside the bonds of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman, including but not limited to sexual abuse or misconduct, the use or possession of pornography, or infidelity</li> </ol>
Deadline for Completing Supervisory Response	<p>For clergy – 90 Days For bishops – 120 days with two possible 120-day extensions</p>	60 Days with possible 30-day extension	60 Days with possible 30-day extension

Supervisory Process Handled By	For clergy – their bishop or bishop's designee For bishop – jurisdictional/central conference college of bishops refers complaint to committee appointed by the chair of the jurisdictional/central conference episcopacy committee, one clergy, one lay from the episcopacy committee	For clergy – their bishop or presiding elder For bishop – chair of the Transitional Leadership Council or their designee	For clergy – their bishop or presiding elder For bishop – Council of Bishops president
Supervisory officials dismiss complaint at supervisory level	If no basis in law or fact, with consent of cabinet, written rationale	If no basis in law or fact, with consent of cabinet, written rationale	If no basis in law or fact, with consent of cabinet, written rationale
If no just resolution and not dismissed	Referred to counsel for the Church	Administrative Complaint referred to Board of Ministry for investigation Judicial Complaint referred to counsel for the Church	Administrative Complaint referred to Board of Ministry for investigation Judicial Complaint referred to counsel for the Church
Investigation of Administrative Complaint	For clergy – Hearing by conference relations committee in case of recommended involuntary status change (rest of process unclear) For bishops – Jurisdictional/central conference episcopacy committee	For clergy – At least five members of Board of Ministry For bishops – a subcommittee of Transitional Leadership Council. Public hearing with evidence and verbatim record Decision of committee: 1. Dismiss complaint 2. Require remedial action 3. Recommend involuntary status change	For clergy – At least five members of Board of Ministry For bishops – a subcommittee of Global Episcopacy Committee. Public hearing with evidence and verbatim record Decision of committee: 1. Dismiss complaint 2. Require remedial action 3. Recommend involuntary status change
Involuntary status change	Approved by committee, board of ordained ministry, clergy session	For clergy – $\frac{3}{4}$ vote by hearing body, majority vote by board of ministry and clergy session For bishops – $\frac{3}{4}$ vote by hearing body and $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of Transitional Leadership Council	For clergy – $\frac{3}{4}$ vote by hearing body, majority vote by board of ministry and clergy session For bishops – $\frac{3}{4}$ vote by hearing body and $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of Global Episcopacy Committee

Appeal of Administrative Complaint Decision	For clergy – Board of ordained ministry, then clergy session For bishops – unclear	For clergy – Board of ordained ministry, then clergy session For bishops – No appeal beyond Transitional Leadership Council	For clergy – Board of ordained ministry, then clergy session For bishops – Global Episcopacy Committee, then Council of Bishops
Deadline for completing administrative process after supervision	90 Days	60 Days with possible 30-day extension	60 Days with possible 30-day extension
Investigation of Judicial Complaint for Clergy	Elected committee on investigation (4 clergy & 3 lay) To advance charges requires at least 5 votes in favor	Elected committee on investigation (4 clergy & 3 lay) To advance charges requires at least 5 votes in favor	Elected committee on investigation (4 clergy & 3 lay) To advance charges requires at least 5 votes in favor
Investigation of Judicial Complaint for Bishops	Committee on investigation elected by jurisdictional or central conference (7 clergy and 2 lay observers) To advance charges requires at least 5 clergy votes in favor	Committee on investigation appointed by Transitional Leadership Council from the global church (5 clergy & 4 lay) To advance charges requires at least 6 votes in favor	Committee on investigation nominated by Council of Bishops, elected by General Conference from the global church (5 clergy & 4 lay) To advance charges requires at least 6 votes in favor
Composition of Trial Court Pool for Clergy	13 persons selected out of a pool of 35 clergy in full connection appointed by the district superintendents from the annual conference	13 persons selected out of a pool of 35 ordained clergy appointed by the presiding elders from the annual conference	13 persons (9 clergy and 4 laity) selected out of a pool of 25 clergy and 15 laity chosen by lot from the annual conference members
Composition of Trial Court Pool for Bishops	13 persons selected out of a pool of 35 clergy in full connection appointed by the College of Bishops in equal numbers from the episcopal areas of that jurisdiction or central conference	13 persons selected out of a pool of 35 ordained clergy appointed by the Transitional Leadership Council in equal numbers from the episcopal areas in the bishop's geographical region, but excluding the bishop's episcopal area	13 persons (9 clergy and 4 laity) selected out of a pool of 25 clergy and 15 lay annual conference members chosen by lot in equal numbers from the episcopal areas in the bishop's geographical region, but excluding the bishop's episcopal area

# WHAT WILL THE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

For Traditional Methodists of South Georgia

## 1. Overview

The GMC will be a church that is alive! A church that holds Jesus over all things and the Holy Spirit as its engine.

It will be a church that understands that we are privileged to be God's Plan A to transform the world, and that understands there is no Plan B.

A church that works hard to meet people at their point of need and offer them Jesus Christ.

A church that knows it MUST reach the next generation for Jesus, and is burdened for their souls.

A church that gathers in connection, locally, nationally and globally and is overwhelmed with the presence of the Holy Spirit as we worship, pray and dream together.

Gatherings that are passion-filled and Spirit led so that we are restored, supported and strengthened as we stand together on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

## 2. Theology

The GMC will maintain orthodox Wesleyan theology firmly rooted in the scriptures and in line with 2,000 years of Christian doctrine and tradition.

It will be a church that believes in scriptural authority, is clear about its doctrine and mission, and holds people accountable for missional purposes.

## 3. Same-Sex Marriage & Ordination of LGBTQ+ persons

The GMC will be a church that's clear about what it is "for" and no longer distracted by decades of fighting over what it is "against".

The GMC will maintain the current UMC Book of Discipline's traditional stance on same-sex marriage and ordination of LGBTQ+ persons. The Transitional Book of Discipline & Doctrines defines marriage as "a legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous relationship between one man and one woman."

It affirms that "human sexuality is a gift of God, affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman."

#### 4. Organization & Structure

A church that is streamlined, less complex and has less costly overhead.

This structure will allow the local churches to make as many decisions as possible at the local level.

**Bishops** will be elected for **set terms** - no lifetime appointments.

There will be a significant enhancement of accountability at all levels of the church.

**Apportionments** will be significantly **lower**.

There will be no **TRUST CLAUSE**.

There will be a strong commitment to female clergy and clergy persons of color.

There will be no guaranteed appointment of clergy.

The clergy appointive process will be similar to what we have now but with added, guaranteed input from the local church.

#### 5. **Resources**

- **The website for the Global Methodist Church is [www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org).**

## WHAT'S NEXT?

For Traditional Methodists of South Georgia

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. If Traditionalists are the ones who have obeyed church law, why are we having to leave?**

It's not that traditionalists have to leave, it's that they're willing to leave for two reasons. First, traditionalists are willing to leave so we can build a new church that has a less expensive structure, that is streamlined, and is less complex. Leaving means that we can immediately be leaner and more effective in making disciples of Jesus. There will be less overhead and infrastructure to support. This means there will be more money in the treasuries of local churches to use directly for ministry. Second, leaving gives a new denomination the chance to forge a new brand. Separation and the formation of a new denomination will hopefully begin a process of forging a new reputation for orthodox Wesleyanism.

**2. Do churches have to wait for the South Georgia Annual Conference to vote on which denomination it will align with before they can vote?**

No! The legislation enacting the Protocol states that churches do not have to wait for their Annual Conference to decide before they can vote. In South Georgia, assuming the Protocol passes, it is likely South GA Annual Conference will join the Global Methodist Church. However, there are no absolute guarantees that this will happen. That's why it is important to consider all options available to your church.

**3. If the pastor of our church won't call for a church conference to vote to align with the Global Methodist Church, can the laity call for a church conference?**

Yes! The Protocol legislation creates a new paragraph 2556.4.c that allows the church council (or equivalent body in your church) to call for a church conference. Additionally, the *Book of Discipline* already allows for church conferences to be called by the request of 10% of the church membership. At the same time the church council calls for the church conference, it will also decide what the voting threshold will be to align with the new denomination. Once the church council makes the request to hold a church conference, the district superintendent must hold the church conference within 60 days.

**4. If we vote to join the Global Methodist Church, what will be different about it theologically?**

Nothing! You will literally go to bed the night before your effective date to join the Global Methodist Church and wake up the next morning with your church holding the same theological beliefs. The GMC will be orthodox in its theology including holding to the 6,000 year Judeo/Christian definition of marriage.

**5. What will change if our church joins the Global Methodist Church?**

There will be some differences, and we believe that they are all good! The Global Methodist Church will be leaner and less complex. For example, the GMC Book of Doctrines and Discipline is 103 pages. The UMC Book of Discipline is 898 pages! There will be less infrastructure and overhead to support with apportionments. That will mean local churches will retain more money to be used to make disciples of Jesus that worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. Local churches will have much more control over how they organize. The ordination process will be simpler and allow qualified clergy to be ordained much faster. There will be no trust clause allowing local churches to fully own their property.

**6. What is the voting threshold a church conference needs to align with the Global Methodist Church?**

When the church conference calls a vote on aligning with the Global Methodist Church, the church council has a decision to make. It can set the threshold for the alignment vote to be either (a) simple majority or (b) two-thirds majority. Obviously, we encourage church councils to set the threshold as a simple majority. We believe the will of the majority should be allowed to make the decision without setting up hurdles. Setting a threshold at two-thirds allows the minority to control the future of the church. Additionally, if a two-thirds threshold is selected and 66% of the church conference votes to align with the GMC, the vote will fail. If 66% of your church votes to align with the GMC and it doesn't happen, your church is likely to have an immediate leadership problem on its hands.

Some progressives have made comments like, "Big decisions require big voting thresholds." This comment is disingenuous. The Protocol for Separation will be voted on by the General Conference with a simple majority. The 2016-2020 General Church budget of \$604 million was voted



on by a simple majority. A 2/3 voting threshold seems to be a ploy to attempt to keep churches in the post separation-UMC.

**7. South Georgia is blessed to have a diverse population and currently our Annual Conference has African American, Latino, and Korean churches. Will they be welcome in the new denomination?**

Yes! Yes! Yes! We are tremendously blessed by our sisters and brothers from multiple cultures, and we desperately want their witness to be added to the numbers of the new church. Jesus commanded us to go into all the world to make disciples for Him, and we are better when the church has a similar makeup to God's global kingdom. The Transitional Leadership Council of the Global Methodist Church is extremely diverse including African Americans, a Russian, Africans, Filipinos, a Latino, and a Korean.

**8. I've heard that the Global Methodist Church will have an appointment system that will allow churches to have a veto over who their pastor is. I'm afraid that will keep women and persons of color from ever getting appointed. Is that true?**

No! This was one of the important decisions reached at the Atlanta meeting between WCA leaders and non-WCA traditionalists that led to the drafting of the Global Methodist Church's *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. The appointment system in the Global Methodist Church will be similar to the current system. The new system, however, does give churches and clergy guaranteed and enhanced consultation in the process with the right to request reconsideration. The GMC will have a strong commitment to female clergy and clergy of color.

**9. Will bishops continue to be elected for life in the Global Methodist Church? Will the GMC have district superintendents?**

Bishops will be elected for a set term of years. At the end of their term, bishops will either return to the local church or elect senior status (retirement). Former bishops may retain the title "bishop emeritus" and be addressed as "bishop." The Global Methodist Church will have district superintendents called *presiding elders*, but they will have similar duties to current District Superintendents.

**10. If the South Georgia Annual Conference should decide to remain in the post-separation UMC, what will happen to the churches that do not want to align with the progressive denomination? To what Annual Conference will they belong?**

We believe it is unlikely that the South Georgia Conference will vote to remain with the post-separation UMC. However, if that occurs, the Protocol allows churches who disagree with the vote of their Annual Conference to choose to join the traditional denomination - Global Methodist Church without penalty or payment. Those churches may retain their property as well.

**11. I've heard that the Global Methodist Church will not have a status for licensed local pastors. Is that true?**

We have wonderful news for local pastors! Local pastors, depending on their educational level (Course of Study, Bachelor's or Master's Degrees), will transition into the Global Methodist Church as either ordained deacons or elders. For local pastors who transition in as deacons, once they complete the educational requirements, they will be ordained as elders. For a complete list of the education requirements for ordination, we encourage you to go to [www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org) and click on the link to read the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline. Scroll down to paragraph 407.

**12. If the Transitional Leadership Conference will lead the Global Methodist Church until a Convening Conference, what will be the role of the WCA?**

The WCA will continue to play a strong role in the launching of the new denomination. In one sense it will be the **midwife** that will help give birth to the new expression. It will also propose legislation for the Convening Conference as a permanent Book of Doctrines and Discipline is developed. After the Global Methodist Church is up and running, the WCA will have fulfilled its purpose.

**13. If our church leans towards being traditionalists, but our pastor leans towards being a progressive, what should we do?**

The decision to align with the Global Methodist Church ultimately lies with

the church members – not the pastor. If your pastor chooses to remain with the post-separation UMC, she or he will be appointed to a new church.

We encourage you to treat your pastor with love, grace, and respect. We also encourage you to follow Jesus' teaching from the Sermon on the Mount to be clear and forthright with your clergy. (Matthew 5:33-37) If your clergy person insists on lobbying the church to remain with the post-separation UMC, respectfully request equal time to share the advantages of joining the GMC. We will be happy to share information and answer questions for your church.

**14. What should I do if I'm a traditionalist, but my church votes to remain with the post-separation UMC?**

In this case, you have a hard decision to make. You must decide if you can remain with your church or if you want to find a new one. We encourage you to pray to God for discernment. We are happy to help you figure out what Global Methodist Churches would be closest to you. Lastly, if there are enough traditionalist laity in your church that might be interested in starting a new church or merging with a like-minded group from another church in a similar situation, then please let us know! We will pass along that information to the interim leadership for South Georgia (once that is decided).

**15. If I have further questions, where can I go for answers?**

There are multiples places you can go.

- The website for the Global Methodist Church is [www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org).
- The website for the global WCA is [www.wesleyancovenant.org](http://www.wesleyancovenant.org).
- You can read the Protocol legislation at [www.gracethroughseparation.com](http://www.gracethroughseparation.com).

## Next Steps

### *What should we do now?*

#### Create a Transition Team

- Place leaders on the team who are spiritually mature and can be a non-anxious presence. This is not the place for people who gossip or raise the anxiety level of the church.
- Consider options available to your church under the Protocol and under the South Georgia Annual Conference Disaffiliation Policy. Each church must consider which path, if any, is best for their particular church.
- Create a prayer process to ensure prayer is the foundation for church making transition to new denomination.
- Create a communications plan that ensures intentional, regular communication is being shared with entire congregation.
- Consider producing a “welcome packet” to be shared with each member announcing your new name, logo and other relevant changes with a revival type excitement and tone to the packet. The packet could offer a “refrigerator magnet” type promotional piece with the new name and mission statement.
- Consider requesting lay & clergy members of Traditional Methodists of South Georgia to meet with your team either in person or by zoom to answer questions and help strategize.
- Create a timeline for tasks that need to be performed and assign each task to an individual with a deadline for accountability purposes. Be mindful of and account for the time limitations of the Disaffiliation Policy(s), if the church is considering Disaffiliation.

**APRIL 1** is the deadline to be considered for vote by the Annual Conference approving the request to disaffiliate. **DECEMBER 31, 2023** is the expiration date of the Disaffiliation Policy(s).

- Create a Financial Plan for ensuring that all connectional obligations are met in full through the date of transitioning to the Global Methodist Church. This includes all apportionments, insurance premiums, health insurance supplements, and clergy pension payments. This will impact whether your church is allowed to leave The UMC with the church's assets.

## Administrative Items to Consider

- Review deeds and titles to other assets (including church autos, busses, endowments, bank accounts, and brokerage accounts) to ensure that once transfer has taken place that release of trust clause from UMC is recorded.
- Ensure new name of church is on all deeds and titles.
- Propose leadership structure. The Global Methodist Church only requires a one-board leadership team of some kind, a lay leader who can serve as the chair of the leadership team, and a lay member to the annual conference. It is up to each church to decide how it wishes to organize itself from there.
- If the church has a loan with the Georgia United Methodist Foundation, have a conversation with your loan officer to make sure the terms of the loan will continue to be honored after aligning with the new church.
- Work with Global Methodist Church representatives to get insurance quotes for property and casualty insurance, workers compensation, and health insurance. Designate a small group to make necessary plans to implement insurance needs.

## Appointment Considerations

- If local church and pastor are both aligning with the Global Methodist Church, they will stay together unless one of the parties requests a new appointment.
- If the pastor is retiring or is not aligning with the Global Methodist Church, the leadership team will need to have a discussion with the presiding elder (district superintendent) to secure a pastoral appointment.

## Branding and Name

- Consider what the name of the church will be in the new denomination. You may elect to keep the same or similar name. Some churches, however, may consider a new name to achieve some differentiation from the post-separation UMC.
- Consider new branding for the church and whether it will include the new Global Methodist Church logo or one of your own choosing.

## Mission and Vision

- Consider using this as a new launching point and revisit your mission, vision, and core values. This may be a good time to begin a new strategic vision plan. This could be a fresh start for your faith community to be missional and externally focused.