

That We May Be One

Overview & Resource Packet

OUR PURPOSE

To provide information and conversation among clergy and laity who want to **work together for the future of the United Methodist Church**—holding together various backgrounds and theological positions to offer the strongest possible witness to the love of Jesus Christ.

OUR STORY

That We May Be One (TWMB0) began in 2016 with a calling to bring United Methodist Christians within the Texas Annual Conference to one table to learn from one another.

Polarization is seeping into every part of our life, and we believe when that enters into the body of Christ, it's deeply troubling and deeply un-Methodist.

John Wesley is famous for saying that regardless of differences in opinions, **“If your heart is as my heart, then give me your hand.”**

There's no human whose experience and perspective was as different from the rest of humanity as Jesus Christ. And yet, he bridged the divide, entered into our experience, and brought the human life into connection with the divine life.

We seek to mirror this witness in our own lives. We desire to keep one another close, even in our differences of perspective and calling. Jesus' prayer the night before he died (John 17) is a critical biblical teaching: our unity as the body of Christ will be a channel of blessing in the world and cause non-believers to come to know Christ.



The world needs the **compassion of Christ** maybe now more than ever...

Instead of a “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18), we have shown the world a ministry of estrangement as the only way to deal with each other.

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We see divisions within the church as hurting the witness of the biblical unity of the church that Jesus asked for and expected from us. This is why **we are deeply committed to being a church that is diverse in thought and united in mission.**

[Jesus prayed] **“And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one...”**

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” JOHN 17:11, 20-21

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do we have to decide which denomination our church will belong to in the next three months?

A: No, nothing has to be decided now. There is some concern because ¶2553 on disaffiliation, expires at the end of 2023, but the General Conference will meet in 2024 and will re-establish methods for disaffiliation.

Q: Will the UMC become more progressive?

A: Nothing has changed in the UMC in the past few months and cannot change until 2024, at the earliest. Also, the General Conference of the UMC will remain a diverse decision-making body with many perspectives—traditionalist, centrist, and progressive—influencing any changes.

Q: Is the Global Methodist Church established?

A: Yes and no. The GMC officially founded as an organization on May 1, 2022 but currently has no churches. At the moment, they are operating under provisional rules, and their official Book of Doctrines and Discipline will not be in place for another 12–18 months, when they have their convening conference.

Q: If we join the GMC, will we have a pastor?

A: The GMC has stated that for the first 18 months, you would continue to have the same pastor you have now. After that, things are unknown as they have not finalized their appointment process, but given that they are ending guaranteed appointment, how small churches receive pastors is currently up in the air.

Q: What is different between the Global Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church as we know it today?

A: Both churches currently have the same understanding of Christian marriage. The GMC and UMC differ on some key Wesleyan theology, particularly around grace. The UMC sees itself deliberately as a “big tent” where diversity is valued, whereas the GMC places a higher value on doctrinal conformity with greater enforcement mechanisms around doctrine, denominational rules, and the payment of apportionments.

Q: Who will belong to the Texas Annual Conference in 2023?

A: The Texas Annual Conference and the broader United Methodist Church will remain home to traditionalists, centrists, and progressives. All of these perspectives will be at the table together in 2023 at our Annual Conference and in 2024 at the General Conference.

Q: Is the Global Methodist Church the only denomination you can affiliate with if you disaffiliate from the UMC?

A: No. Former United Methodist churches have disaffiliated to join the Free Methodist Church or the United Church of Christ. Others have gone independent. For our African American churches, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church—Zion, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church remain historic and vibrant expression of Wesleyan Christianity.

Q: Are the Central Conferences of Africa joining the GMC?

A: While not all Central Conferences have made a decision, many have publicly stated that they will remain with the UMC at least until the 2024 General Conference.

Q: In the midst of conflict are there still ministries in the UMC that are building the kingdom of God?

A: Together as United Methodists, we have fought malaria, sent missionaries around the world, worked to rebuild communities after natural disasters, founded and maintained universities, hospital systems and children’s homes, and made disciples for the transformation of the world. That work is ongoing and has not stopped—no matter what other conflicts or conversations have been going on.

Why the rush to disaffiliate churches from the Texas Annual Conference (TAC)?

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| <p>You may have heard... If you are progressive, remain UMC. If you are traditionalist, join the GMC.</p> | <p>You should know... The UMC will continue to be a denomination with traditionalists, centrists, and progressives. Its position on human sexuality remains under the traditionalist plan passed at General Conference 2019 and cannot be modified until GC 2024. Even then, it is unclear what our policies will allow. Diversity of theological perspective remains a thriving aspect of our life together as United Methodists.</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... The UMC will abandon its doctrine.</p> | <p>You should know... Our Articles of Religion and our Doctrinal Standards that have been in place since Methodism began will remain unchanged in the United Methodist Church. The UMC can never revoke or alter its Articles of Religion or Confession of Faith. You can find these in the Book of Discipline, along with our Doctrinal History and Standards, in paragraphs 102–105. If anyone infers that these aspects of our church will change, they are incorrect.</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... It will be easier for churches in our conference to disaffiliate before Bishop Jones retires.</p> | <p>You should know... TAC disaffiliation policy is set by the conference's Board of Trustees, not by the bishop. A new bishop would not have the unilateral ability to change the terms of disaffiliation.</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... This will settle it. Churches are weary of uncertainty and ready to move on.</p> | <p>You should know... Some amount of uncertainty and waiting will be inevitable as the Global Methodist Church (GMC) takes shape. Having launched May 1, 2022, the GMC does not have a final book of rules and structure. The existing documents represent a "transitional period of 12 to 18 months until its convening conference" (globalmethodist.org).</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... Churches seeking to disaffiliate must pay an "exit fee" to leave the denomination.</p> | <p>You should know... Standard financial responsibilities must be met by a disaffiliating church according to ¶2553 and conference policy. As part of the connectional system of the UMC, every church is responsible for its share of apportionments and ensuring clergy pensions are funded. Active elders and deacons withdrawing from the UMC per ¶360 will have their CRSP Defined Benefit (life annuity) converted to an account balance and moved to UMPIP. Wespath provides more financial considerations and details in their disaffiliation FAQs: wespath.org</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... Local churches can disaffiliate from the UMC using ¶2548.2, requiring a 50% + 1 vote.</p> | <p>You should know... ¶2548.2 is not about disaffiliation. This paragraph sets guidelines for a defunct church to deed its unused property to a different denomination. The Judicial Council further clarified that ¶2548.2 cannot be used for church disaffiliations in Decision 1449 on August 22, 2022. The only lawful way for a church to disaffiliate is under the provisions of ¶2553. Any attempt by a local church to disaffiliate without a two-thirds majority of the congregation should be shared immediately with your District Superintendent and the Assistant to the Bishop.</p> |
| <p>You may have heard... Churches can't afford to take their time to enter a discernment process.</p> | <p>You should know... Each church's timing with an agreed-upon process should be honored. A false urgency to decide quickly is guided by fear and will only cause disruption and division at the local church level.</p> |

Conversation Starters

For Laity Whose Churches Are in the Discernment Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Don't disparage the Global Methodist Church (GMC) or anyone who wants to join it.
- Start by giving them the floor, asking them their opinions. Really listen.
- Share a reason you're feeling called to remain in the UMC.
- Share a question you have about the GMC.
- Ask them what wonderings they have.
- Tell them you'll be praying for God's Holy Spirit to lead the church, as you're sure they are.

Possible Reasons for Not Going into the GMC

You made a covenant to serve God in the UMC. One could argue: yes, but others have broken the covenant. In response: two wrongs don't make a right.

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The UMC is your spiritual home and has many good qualities you're not ready to give up.

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The UMC is already a global church, collaboratively working around the world in missions, disaster relief, education, and much more.

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You're concerned about the church's ability to bring new folks to Christ if you become a part of a church perceived to be purposefully exclusionary.

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You're concerned about how many church members may leave.

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You value being a part of a church where all perspectives are welcome.

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Missions like UM ARMY and UMCOR are important to you.

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You are affirming of LGBTQ people and their families.

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You are not sure you're affirming of LGBTQ people, but you're more comfortable erring on the side of grace than judgment.

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The GMC has not had its convening conference yet, so you don't know what you'll be getting.

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There are too many unanswered questions.

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You don't know what it would mean for church finances.

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You don't know what it would mean for how your church would appoint future pastors.

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Disobedience to the *Book of Discipline* in other states/ annual conferences does not greatly affect your local church's ministry or calling.

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Possible Questions About the GMC

How do you think our approach to the gospel will change in a new denomination? In preaching? In Sunday School resources?

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Do you believe this is an issue worth dividing the church over?

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Will everyone in my family or friend circles feel welcome in a GMC church?

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Do we believe we're going to reach more people for Christ by moving into the GMC?

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How will differences of opinion be handled?

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If we no longer have UM ARMY or UMCOR, what alternatives will we create?

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If the child of a same-sex couple comes forward for baptism or confirmation, will they be able to get baptized or confirmed in the GMC?

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Do you think we'll be more faithful Christians as members of the GMC?

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Why would we go into the GMC before we know what its doctrine, structure, finances, congregational support, or size will be?

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Who will be in charge of the GMC?

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Since in the GMC, a church can be removed for not paying apportionments after 1 year, are we confident we'll always be able to pay apportionments in full?

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Is my pastor okay losing 7% of his or her pension to leave the UMC pension plan?

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There will be no guaranteed appointments in the GMC and it is unclear that a bishop will be able to tell a pastor where to serve. How will our church attract a pastor? What will our plan be if we can't find one?

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I CORINTHIANS 1:10

Now I encourage you,
brothers and sisters,
in the name of
our Lord Jesus Christ:
Agree with each other and
don't be divided into rival groups.
Instead, **be restored with
the same mind and
the same purpose.**

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Tips for Laity in Local Churches

- 1. Be a calming presence.** There is too much anxiety and confusion among us. Gently point out when a speaker is speaking in a spirit of fear. Witness to the peace of Christ and refuse to spread fear or sow discord and division. We are not enemies! We are co-laborers in the kingdom of God.
- 2. Earnestly pray and advocate for unity.** Offer to facilitate a Bible study or a devotional series at your church, in your home or as part of committee meetings. TWMBO has developed several spiritual resources intended for small groups (twmbo.org). In your conversations, model a genuine and grace-filled attitude. In disagreement, do not disparage or attack. Share helpful resources by presenting information and educating others on what is going on. TWMBO will continue to publish resources on the website and send emails to keep you in the know.
- 3. Express your concerns and ask questions of those in positions of authority.** Talk to members of your church's committees (Church Council, Trustees, lay leader, etc). Communicate with your pastor and district superintendent. If things don't make sense, be persistent in getting the answers you seek. Need help? Email thatwemaybeoneTAC@gmail.com
- 4. Promote a lay-led discernment process.** If your pastor is encouraging your church to enter the discernment process to disaffiliate, request at the next Church Council meeting to establish a lay-led team to guide the church through its discernment process. Pastors come and go. Ask for a strong layperson to chair the team.
- 5. Advocate for fair representation.** Seek voices of different theological perspectives on human sexuality and the future of the denomination. If the conference's Future Discernment Task Force presents materials, use them. These materials have been developed in an effort to offer unbiased resources prepared by people who represent a wide range of perspectives.
- 6. Practice patience.** Call out the false urgency to join the Global Methodist Church (GMC). It's a brand new denomination that won't officially set up its doctrine, missions, pastor appointment system, etc. for at least another year. The GMC is not officially recognized by the World Methodist Council. Its book of rules and structure is transitional and offers a set of intentions rather than official church law. To be viable as a new denomination, the GMC is dependent upon local churches disaffiliating and quickly. Nothing has changed in the UMC and won't until 2024, at the earliest. It's okay to wait and see. A rushed discernment process clouded in fear is not helpful to the vitality of a local church.

Video Resources

Check out: twmbo.org/tips-tools

- **4-Week Bible Study on Unity** | With videos to watch, scriptures to read, and questions to reflect on, this study will enrich your understanding of the kind of unity made possible through Jesus Christ.
- **TWMBO Livestream Q&A Video** (June 14, 2022)
- **"A Future With Hope for the UMC" with Rev. Adam Hamilton and panel discussion with TAC leaders** (July 31, 2022)
- **TWMBO Interviewed by Rev. Adam Hamilton on "Pod Have Mercy"** (August 3, 2022)




Get Involved

Scan this QR code to receive email and text messages from TWMBO, or go directly to the contact form at bit.ly/twmbo22

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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UMC Mythbusting



1) Is it true the UMC will no longer believe in the Trinity, the Resurrection, the Lordship of Jesus, or the authority of the Bible? No, this is not true. The core of this splintering is about human sexuality and the systems of accountability in the UMC. Differences of opinion and interpretation regarding sexuality is not a convincing enough reason for many folks, so as emotions have risen, so has the rhetoric. Some stories have been circulating about a few Methodist pastors— out of over 50,000 around the world— who don't believe in the Virgin Birth or the physical resurrection of Jesus. These stories are misleading. It is zeroing in on less than 1% of the church, and saying that's 100% of what will be left. The heart of our doctrine, which is not changing, can be found in the Articles of Religion and Confessions of Faith. **TIP:** Find and print the Articles of Religion and Confessions of Faith of the UMC online, and hand them to every member of the church who shows up for an informational meeting or disaffiliation vote. It's a lot of paper, but it really gets the point across.

2) Is it true that if we're going to disaffiliate, we need to do it in Fall 2022? No. The disaffiliation paragraph found in the Book of Discipline, Paragraph 2553, does not expire until December 31, 2023. TWMB0 is looking into whether we as an annual conference could vote on a resolution to extend it even longer to give churches more time to make such an important decision. Additionally, there are conversations happenings amongst General Conference delegates around the world about extending that timeline at the next General Conference in 2024. Any attempt to use Paragraph 2548.2 to disaffiliate should be abandoned immediately; the UMC Judicial Council is currently considering whether it is legal, and it would be disruptive to a church to begin one process and have to switch to another. Most churches would find it helpful to wait until the GMC holds its Convening Conference in the Fall of 2023, when they will set their doctrines, church structure, and leadership, before making a decision. There is speculation among some about an incoming bishop making disaffiliation harder in 2023; please note, it is not the bishop that sets our disaffiliation policy, but our conference Board of Trustees, which will have the same membership in 2023 that it has had in 2021-2022.

3) Is it true that if our church is set on leaving, the GMC is the best option for us? That can only be decided on a church-by-church basis. For context— out of 90 churches that just disaffiliated in the Georgia conferences, only 4 churches chose to go GMC. Some have chosen to join the Free Methodist Church, which has similar theological positions as the GMC, but 160 years of church leadership. **ONE TIP:** If your church votes to leave, and is about to vote on which church to affiliate with, it could be helpful to bring this as a viable option: <https://fmcusa.org/resources/affiliate>. AME Zion, CME, Wesleyan, Nazarene, are other good denominational options.

UMC Mythbusting

4) **If we stay in the UMC, will our congregation or pastor be forced into allowing weddings, performing weddings, or receiving queer clergy?** No. Church Trustees committees set wedding policies. Pastors always have the ability to choose which weddings they will officiate. Bishops have no desire to hurt a church or a pastor by appointing someone who would not be received well. This has been true for women clergy and clergy of color for decades.

5) **Will a liberal wave soon take over the UMC?** No. Setting aside an unhelpful political term that doesn't belong in the body of Christ, the deeper question is whether the UMC will abandon the core teachings of the faith and focus instead on being an issues-based church. The answer is no. Any church that takes Jesus away from the center, and places any social issue in Jesus' place, always declines. Are there outliers who are doing this? Yes. But they do not have strength or momentum.

6) **What about all these stories we're hearing?** A single person's off-the-cuff statements or actions do not speak for the church as a whole. Compare this to any business, school, organization, or family. This is a fear-mongering technique and needs to be kept in the context of the larger witness of the denomination, including what you know to be true at your local church.

7) **There is nothing that a congregation must do in response to denominational turmoil.** There is no mandate from our Bishop or from any District Superintendent to enter into discernment. The best and healthiest option for many local churches is to stay the course. Conservatives (both locally and nationally) are insisting that churches must act to disaffiliate now because we don't know who the next bishop will be or what General Conference will do in 2024. This is false urgency that aims at sowing fear among pastors and churches.

8) **The formal discernment process that churches can choose to enter is not a neutral process.** Discernment, as a general concept, is an important practice for Christians and for churches, and some have asked, "What's the harm in starting this formal discernment process?" Here's the answer: the "formal discernment process" is designed **not** for churches that want to learn about or discuss difficult issues but for churches (or pastors) that **already** want to leave the denomination. It's also designed to culminate in a yes/no vote that necessarily creates a division and undervalues the possibility of unity and common mission in a local church.

UMC Mythbusting

9) What practical steps can I take to influence my church's disaffiliation vote?

- When in a public forum, it could be helpful to read scripture, such as John 17:21, 1 John 4:18, if it becomes applicable 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Matthew 7:1-5, and remind people that there are many scriptures worth considering in this decision, not just a couple.
- Request that your church's leadership council host informational sessions with representatives from both positions. If this is denied, ask for the UMC video available at the link below to be shown, and host watch parties of UMC resources for church members.
- Do everything you can to get as many church members present to vote as possible. It should not be a small percentage of a congregation making such an important decision.
- Attend the annual conference's Future Discernment Task Force meeting in your district. Review the Supporting Documents available at www.txcumc.org/FDTF, especially the "Questions and Answers from District Meetings".
- **Make sure to speak up** in public meetings, Sunday school classes, discernment process gatherings, etc. It can be uncomfortable for some people to speak in public (especially if it's into a microphone), but the loudest voices are often on the extremes, and the worst thing is for the "silent majority" to stay silent. Prepare to have several folks speak up about different aspects of this, including: Scripture (such as Acts 10), local church family, losing members, finances, evangelism, erring on the side of grace and love, etc
- Remind people in private conversations that just because the realtor wants to sell the house, it doesn't mean it's the right house for you. Remind them that they walk through a house before buying it. Remind people that they're being asked to make a decision to go into something unknown, based on fear of something that is not present in your church.

UMC Mythbusting

10) If your church votes to leave the UMC, we encourage the following:

- Be confident in the Lord. Our God is a God of provision. Stay committed to the body of Christ, don't give up on church.
- Create a list of church members who want to remain UMC. Get a ballpark figure of how many people will be looking for a new church home.
- Contact your District Superintendent and ask which nearby UM churches he or she recommends. Please ask your DS how that recommendation will be shared with the whole church body.
- If there are none close by, contact Rev. Morris Matthis at the Conference Office to ask about church planting plans in your area.

