

REMARKS FROM 5/10 EMAIL

As you may know, since the General Conference, normally held every four years, was postponed until 2024, we still operate out of our 2016 Book of Discipline because the 2020 Conference has been postponed several times due to the pandemic. The General Conference normally meets every four years to amend, if necessary, the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work, and procedures as outlined in The Book of Discipline.

For many years there have been conversations in our denomination about the language in our Book of Discipline regarding Human Sexuality that says: "*We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.*" The paragraph goes on to say, "*The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.*" ¶161.G This **is the language that guides us now and will guide us through 2024 when the General Conference meets again.**

However, this language has been hurtful to some who believe it is incompatible with what *Jesus* taught so there has been a movement to *amend* that language to be more inclusive. Since **no change will be made until 2024**, we have no idea what changes may come or what language might change. But, *anticipating* that change may come two years from now, some United Methodist churches have chosen to leave our denomination and be part of a *new* denomination called the Global Methodist Church which launched this month.

On April 23rd our Bishop, Mike McKee invited us *all* to have a conversation about this topic and I have attached my notes from Bishop McKee's remarks on the attached, as well as the handout from the meeting. He made it clear that the United Methodist Church has had "lovers' quarrels" in the past over allowing women in the pulpit, or allowing African Americans to worship in our sanctuaries, but our formidable love for Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit helped us work through those differences. His *hope* is that we can work together, and stay together, out of that very love for Jesus but also, our love for each other in spite of things we don't always agree on.

We have not been talking about this very much because we won't know what the options are until 2024. However, as there has been for years, our Book of Discipline *does* have a protocol for churches who no longer want to be Methodists and who *do* want to disaffiliate from the denomination. But the procedures are costly, take 9-12 months of discernment, and will likely cause harm by separating members. Our Church Council believes waiting to see what the 2024 changes will be is more prudent, but we want to know what *your* questions and thoughts are. Please plan to join us ***after church on Sunday, June 5th***, and we'll do our best to address any questions you might have.

Please [contact me](#) if you have any questions or thoughts ... or contact our Church Chair/Lay Leader [Ted Haynes](#).

Pastor Debbie

NOTES FROM BISHOP MIKE McKEE'S DIRECT REMARKS

East District Meeting 4/23/22

To get the honest news, *not* from a PR perspective, on either side but as *straight* news ...

<https://www.umnews.org>

While the new Global Methodist Church announced they will be launching on May 1st, churches considering a move should ask the question ... what are they moving toward? Yes, they claim to be "leaner" than the UMC (which, by the way, intends to cut 20% out of international agencies once general conference is held), but what does this mean? The GMC claims that the existing Methodist Church does not believe in biblical authority, when in fact we have direct clarity about our Biblical understanding but we have differences in the certainty of some things based on interpretations and translations of the Bible.

As Methodists we move toward perfection, and while that may be difficult to accomplish in our lifetimes we TRY. We can disagree in love, as we have in the past in issues such as women in the pulpit, and African Americans allowed in our churches, but these are like "lovers' quarrels" because we have a common bond of love for Jesus Christ. Just because we all have varying opinions, not based on biblical Authority but based on translations, doesn't mean we can't all worship the same God and love one another.

Misconceptions

1. Bishops are not collaborating to drive decisions on when the general conferences are to be held, they are deeply concerned, yes, but the decisions are made by the Commission on General Conference. The Commission felt the inability of delegates to get visas in time to attend an earlier conference than 2024 would be difficult.
2. There are no churches in our conference committed to leaving yet, but of the 300 churches, 6-7 have expressed a desire to consider going through a discernment process to see *if* they want to leave.
3. A common fear is: "If General Conference approves gay ordination, gay people might be appointed to our churches." Sadly, the bishop affirmed that there are still churches who refuse to have a woman, or a person of color as a pastor and that is a much bigger problem. The cabinet works through holy conferencing to do no harm to their pastors who go through a very vigorous process of preparation, or to churches who would be opposed to having a gay clergy.
4. Methodist churches are not wedding chapels: pastors today determine who they will marry and who they will not. If gay marriage is approved by the UMC that choice will remain.
5. The bishop made clear that we are not splitting – some churches are choosing to disaffiliate. As the book of discipline has always allowed, paragraph 2553, there is a process for disaffiliation. It is not a political process, not a reaction to fear, it is a discernment process conducted in partnership with conference leadership over 9-12 months.

Any disaffiliation resolution must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at a church conference, then submitted to their Annual Conference (held in June). But make no mistake, this is much more than a change of a name on a building, this is a very big deal and will cause a great deal of pain for people on both sides of the issue.

Currently basic terms for disaffiliation would include:

1. Local church payments to the North Texas conference for two years of apportionments
2. Payment of the local churches share of unfunded pension liability

3. Repayment of any grants received from the north Texas conference in the past 10 years
All above payments wouldn't be made in cash, up front, before disaffiliation can take place.
4. Payment for the costs of any legal work required

Bishop McKee said: "The church is a hospital for sinners and we are all patients!" and he also said "Let us be the church and not worry about fixing the church."