

Fishers UMC

Understanding the issues of our denominational divide

-Defining the Tension

A digital version of this presentation is available on our website: <https://fishersumc.org/umc>

A.1. OUR COVENANT AS A FISHERS UMC FAMILY OF FAITH

We will treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ throughout these discussions

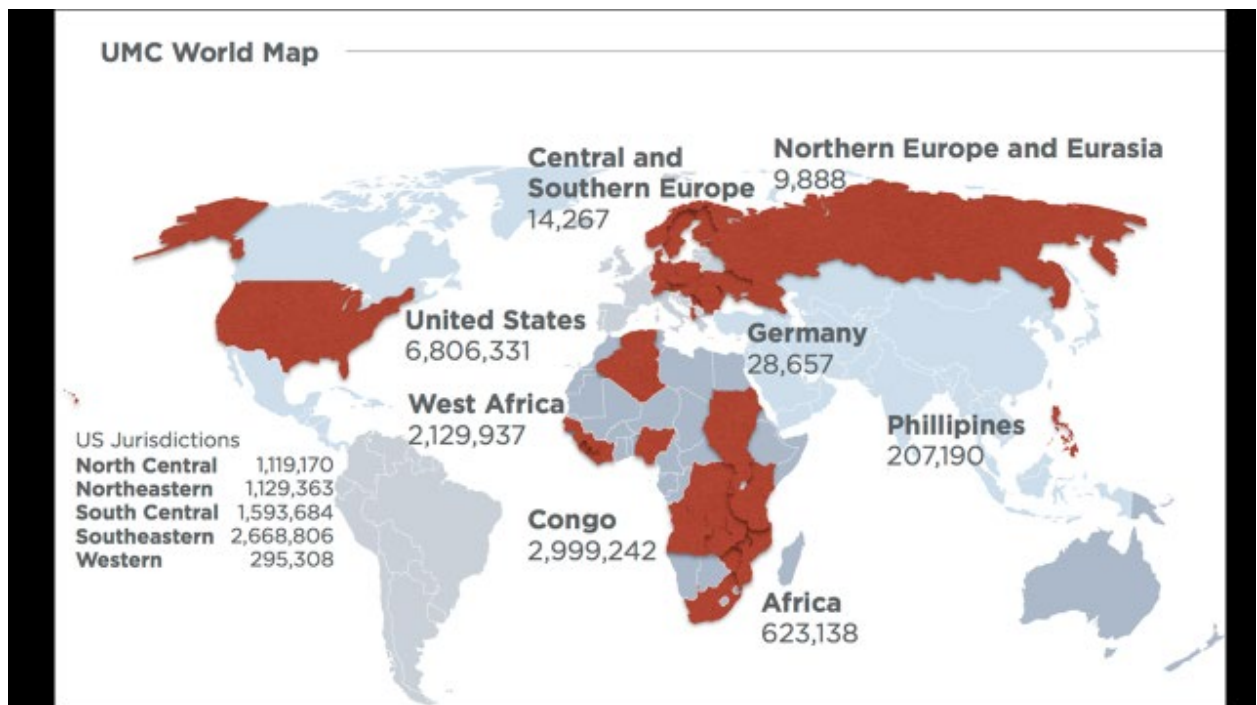
- We will pray for and with one another
- We will treat each other with respect
- We will listen to one another
- We will address this in house as a church family
- We will not air this on social media, broadcasting, or other forms of media.
- We will love one another, regardless of the end result

B. UMC CONFERENCES

The United Methodist Church is governed by various conference systems:

B. 1. General Conference:

- General Conference makes **global decisions** for the entire denomination
- The result of General Conference is the Book of Discipline
- The General Conference normally meets every four years
- General Conference is made up of over 800 delegates from around the world, based on the number of members of each Annual Conference.



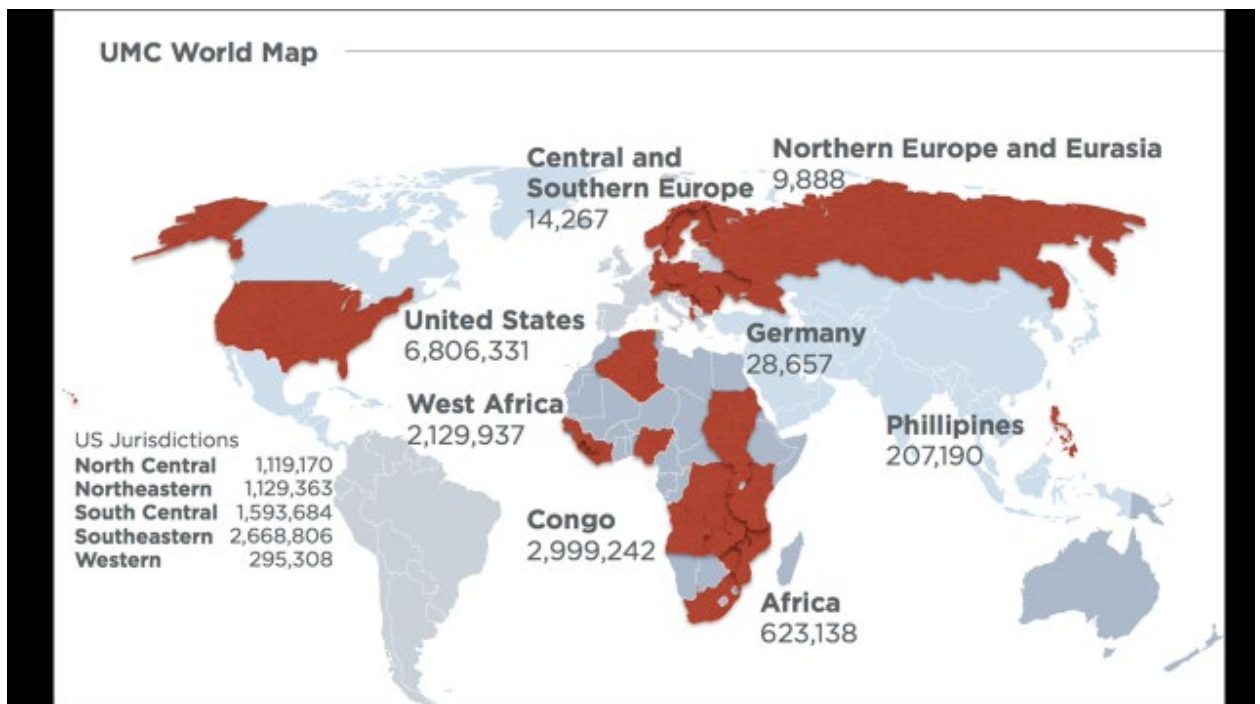
B. 2. Jurisdictional Conference:

- Jurisdictional Conference **elects & assigns bishops**
- Bishops are elected for life, and serve until retirement
- The elected bishops are assigned to various Annual Conferences in that Jurisdiction
- Fishers UMC is in the North Central Jurisdiction
- There are five Jurisdictions in the United States, including the Northeastern, North Central, Southeastern, South Central, and Western Jurisdictions



B. 3. Central Conference:

- Central Conferences function much like Jurisdictional Conferences (see above)
- These are for Churches & Annual Conferences **outside the United States**
- There are seven Central Conferences (three in Africa, three in Europe, one in the Philippines)
- In Africa there are the Congo, West Africa, and West Africa Central Conferences
- In Europe there are the Central & Southern Europe, Germany, and Northern Europe & Eurasia Central Conferences
- In the Philippines there is the Philippines Central Conference



B. 4. Annual Conference:

- The Annual Conference is both a designation for a large region (ours is the entire state of Indiana with over 1000 churches) and for the annual meeting made of clergy and an equal number of laity from each church.
- The Annual Conference meeting makes decisions for the Annual Conference and its churches, subject to the Book of Discipline
- Fishers UMC is in the Indiana Annual Conference.
- Each Annual Conference is led by a bishop. We are led by Bishop Julius Trimble.
- Our Indiana Conference is made up of ten Districts, each led by a superintendent.
- The bishop and the superintendents form the Cabinet, which manages the Annual Conference system, churches and clergy

B. 5. District Conference:

- There are ten districts in the Indiana Annual Conference
- Fishers UMC in the North Central District of the Indiana Conference, which has 108 nearby churches all together.
- Our Superintendent of the North Central District is Saneta Maiko
- A District Conference makes decisions for the district and the churches of that district



B. 6. Church Conference:

- An official called meeting by the Conference Superintendent (District Superintendent), whereby **official church members** vote on major issues, such as constructing new buildings, relocating to a new site, disaffiliating from the denomination, etc.

B. 7. Charge Conference:

- An official called meeting by the Conference Superintendent (District Superintendent), whereby **Church Council members** vote on major operational issues, such as enacting a new endowment policy, etc.

B. 8. Church Council:

- The **official leadership board** of Fishers UMC.
- This group meets regularly to make decisions for ongoing operational issues
- The Church Council chairperson for Fishers UMC is Dan Henke.

B. 9. Judicial Council:

- The church's **highest judicial body** has been compared to the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Made up of nine members elected by General Conference
- Decide whether actions of church bodies adhere to the Discipline & constitution.

Church Council Local Church Leadership



Judicial Council UMC's "Supreme Court"



C. The United Methodist Book of Discipline

The Book of Discipline is the manual governing the official doctrines and policies of the UMC. It can only be changed by the General Conference, which generally meets every four years.

C.1. 2022 Indiana Annual Conference Resolutions

At this year's annual conference 5 resolutions were presented, of the five, two were ruled out of order, one was withdrawn, and two were voted on. Of the two voted on, one was narrowly voted down, the other passed:

Resolution 1 "BUILDING BeLOVED COMMUNITY NOW"

- This resolution holds every Indiana United Methodist church, pastor, and ministry accountable to upholding the "Building Beloved Community Now" statement of the North Central Jurisdiction, which among other things, promotes LGBTQIA+ clergy being ordained and appointed to United Methodist Churches, and removes restrictions so that United Methodist pastors can officiate and churches can host weddings and unions for LGBTQIA+ persons.
- Click here to read this resolution and the related statement by the North Central Jurisdiction (of which the Indiana Annual Conference is a part).
[R-1-Beloved-Community-Schubert-Nowling-FINAL.pdf \(inumc.org\)](#)
- **This resolution was defeated: 402 votes FOR, 410 votes AGAINST**

Resolution 5 "A COMMITMENT TO GRACE IN THE INDIANA CONFERENCE"

- This resolution allows that LGBTQIA+ persons can be ordained and appointed as pastors of Indiana United Methodist Churches, and that Indiana United Methodist pastors can officiate and churches can host weddings and unions for LGBTQIA+ persons.
- NOTE: this is against church law, until the Book of Discipline is changed at a future General Conference. While the language of this resolution doesn't read as aspirational, it was deemed aspirational based upon the current language on human sexuality within the Book of Discipline.
- Click here to read this resolution.
[R5-A-Committment-to-Grace-in-the-Indiana-Conference-Dicken.pdf \(inumc.org\)](#)
- **This resolution passed: 380 votes FOR, 332 votes AGAINST.**

Note: On July 21, 2022, the Governing Board of St. Luke's UMC in Indianapolis unanimously passed the following motion: *"We will support St. Luke's pastors who choose to perform same sex marriages and the utilization of St. Luke's facilities for such marriages."*

Click here to read this decision."

<https://stlukesumc.com/Content/Documents/St. Luke%27s Governing Board Statement Regarding Same Sex Marriage July 2022 .pdf>

Passages from the current Book of Discipline on the issue of human sexuality:

C.2. The United Methodist Church states: “sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.”

¶161.F “We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.”

“We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.”

“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self.

The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

C.3. The United Methodist Church is: “committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.”

¶162.J “Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting the rightful claims where people have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.

C.4. The United Methodist Church believes: “The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church.”

¶304.3 “While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals¹ are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church.”

¹ “*Self-avowed practicing homosexual*” is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual.

C.5. The United Methodist Church states: “Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.”

¶341.6 “Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.”

C.6. The United Methodist Church prohibits any United Methodist entity from using funds: “to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of the UMC ‘not to reject or condemn lesbian or gay members and friends.’”

¶613.20; ¶ 806.9 “...no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of the UMC ‘not to reject or condemn lesbian or gay members and friends’ (¶161.F).

C.7. The United Methodist Church states that United Methodist bishops, clergy or local pastors: “may be tried when charged” with misconduct in violation to the Book of Discipline.

¶2702.1 “A bishop, clergy member...(or) local pastor...may be tried when charged with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or nor faithful in heterosexual marriage; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;

(c) crime; (d) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (e) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (f) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (g) child abuse; (h) sexual abuse; (i) sexual misconduct including the use or possession of pornography, (j) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; (k) racial or gender discrimination; or (l) fiscal malfeasance.

D. Various “Groupings” Within the UMC

To understand the tension in the denomination, it is helpful to have a broad grasp on the various “groupings” within the UMC. Of course, not everyone fits neatly into one of these three categories, but they are helpful in understanding the current situation.

D.1. Progressives:

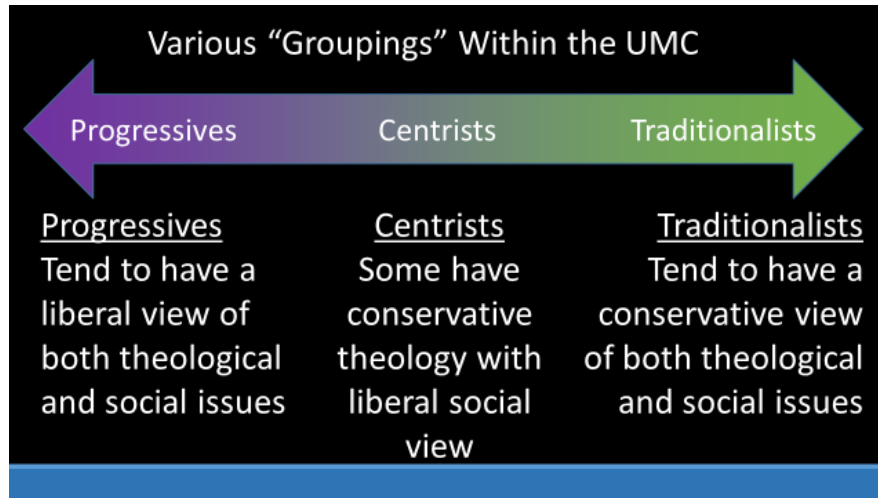
- Progressives **tend to have a liberal view of theological issues**. Some raise questions about the virgin birth and physical resurrection of Jesus. Some have a theology of universalism, saying that all humans will go to heaven and there is no hell. Some do not hold to a high view of the authority of Scripture for daily living.
- Progressives **tend to have a liberal view of social issues**. Most would rewrite the language of the passages from the Book of Discipline (see above), making it church law that LBGTQIA+ persons can be ordained and appointed as pastors of United Methodist Churches, and that United Methodist pastors can officiate and churches can host weddings and unions for LBGTQIA+ persons.

D.2. Traditionalists:

- Traditionalists **tend to have a conservative view of theological issues**. Most hold to the historic, orthodox teachings of the Bible regarding God the Father, Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church. Most believe that Jesus died on the cross to be the only means of salvation for sinful humans. Most have a high view of the authority of Scripture for daily living.
- Traditionalists **tend to have a conservative view of social issues**. Most would retain the language of the passages from the Book of Discipline (see above), making it church law that LBGTQIA+ persons cannot be ordained and appointed as pastors of United Methodist Churches, and that United Methodist pastors cannot officiate and churches cannot host weddings and unions for LBGTQIA+ persons.

D.3. Centrists:

- Centrists hold the middle ground. Some Centrists tend to have a somewhat conservative, and others a somewhat liberal view of theological issues.
- Some Centrists tend to have a somewhat liberal view of social issues. Many have sided with the Progressives, and would rewrite the language of the passages from the Book of Discipline (see above), making it church law that LGBTQIA+ persons can be ordained and appointed as pastors of United Methodist Churches, and that United Methodist pastors can officiate and churches can host weddings and unions for LGBTQIA+ persons.

**E. What the UMC Denomination is Facing**

The United Methodist was formed in 1968, as a merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

The first General Conference to reshape the Book of Discipline took place four years later.

At every General Conference from then until today, the Traditional language regarding human sexuality was upheld:

What the UMC is Facing

Past: The Traditional language regarding ordination of and weddings for LGBTQIA+ persons was upheld by all General Conferences 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2019

Present: The 2020 General Conference is delayed until 2024. The Global Methodist Church launched on May 1, 2022.

Future: Current Disaffiliations and the upcoming 2024 General Conference to consider the Protocol (or not)

F. The Protocol

F.1. Protocol Origination

- The Protocol is short for “The Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation”
- The Protocol was proposed to the 2020 General Conference. Due to the Covid Pandemic, the 2020 General Conference was delayed until 2021, then to 2022, then to 2024.

F.2. Protocol Support

- The Protocol was a proposal by representatives of the progressives, centrists, and traditionalists to allow for a peaceful separation to form new Methodist denominations.
- The Protocol has recently lost support among some who were in favor of it, see below link: [5 UMC leaders withdraw support for separation protocol | Church & Ministries News \(christianpost.com\)](https://www.christianpost.com/news/5-umc-leaders-withdraw-support-for-separation-protocol/)

The Protocol – Key sections

F.3. Protocol – Fundamental Differences

“After careful reflection, discussion, and prayer, The United Methodist Church and its members acknowledge fundamental differences regarding our understanding and interpretation of Scripture, our theology, and our practice.”

[see Protocol, 1. Background, a)Preamble, ¶ 1].

F.4. Protocol – Two or more Separate Denominations

“proposed restructuring and separation as the best means to resolve our differences, making provisions for The United Methodist Church to move forward as two or more separate entities, each of which remains true to its theological understanding while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person”

[see Protocol, 1. Background, a)Preamble, ¶ 3].

F.5. Protocol – Amicable Separation

“We envision an amicable separation in The United Methodist Church that would provide a pathway to new denominations of the Methodist movement and a restructuring of The United Methodist Church”... And, “As any separation occurs, we will release one another through the terms of this Protocol to joyful obedience to Christ’s call on our lives”

[see Protocol, 1. Background, a)Preamble, ¶ 7]

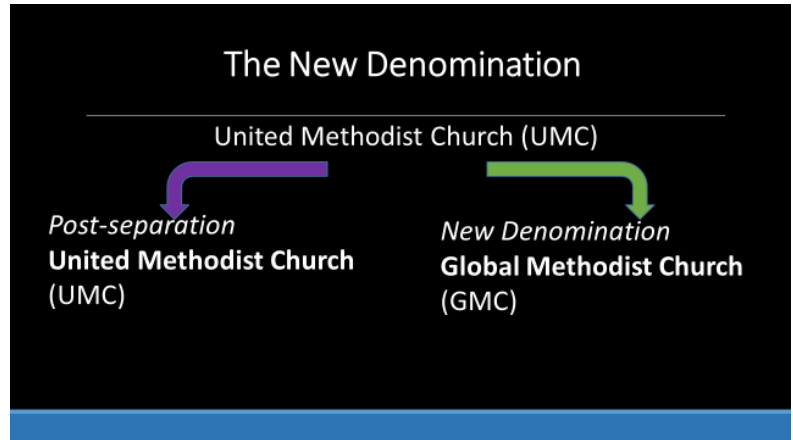
Link to Protocol Summary and Full Text:

[FAQ's - Legislation — Reconciliation and grace through separation](#)

G.1. The New Denomination

The UMC (United Methodist Church) is separating into two denominations:

- 1.The UMC (post-separation UMC)
- 2.The GMC (Global Methodist Church)
 - Launched May 1, 2022



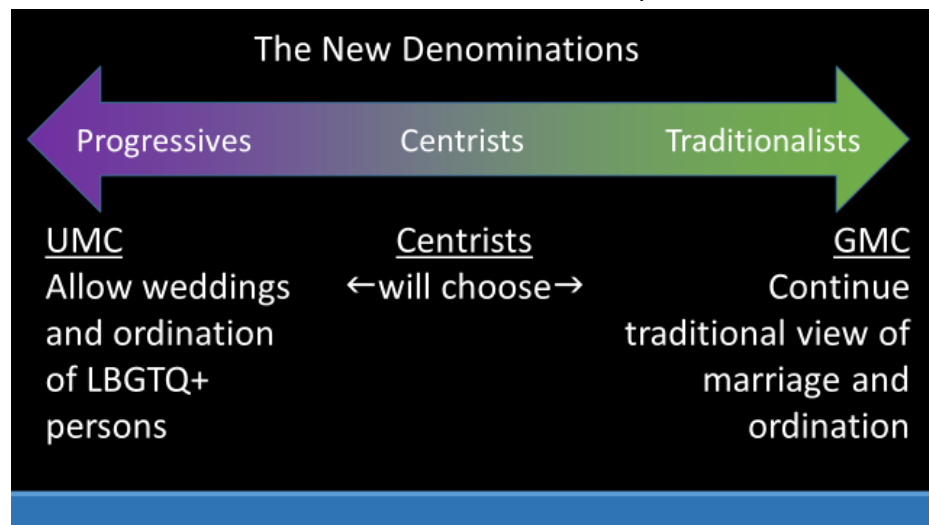
How the two denominations plan to address human sexuality

G.2. Post-separation United Methodist Church

“We envision the post-separation United Methodist Church... will repeal the Traditional Plan and remove all other restrictive language related to LGBTQ persons”
 [see Protocol, 1. Background, a) Preamble, ¶ 7].

G.3. Global Methodist Church

“We believe that human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman”
 (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:3-9, Ephesians 5:22-33).
 [See Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline, ¶ 2, #7].



H. Current Actions within the United Methodist Church

H. 1. Disaffiliations – The most consequential happening at this year’s annual conference was the disaffiliation of 29 churches within the conference:

MOTION: Pursuant to the process outlined in the disaffiliation agreement and paragraph 2553, the Indiana Annual Conference is now called upon to ratify by simple majority the disaffiliation of the following congregations:

Central District

First UMC of Martinsville
Greenwood Honey Creek UMC
Mt. Comfort UMC

East District

Hartford City Pleasant Grove UMC
Lynn Union Chapel UMC
Muncie Union Chapel UMC
Normal City UMC
Rehoboth UMC
The Garden of Gethsemane

North Central District

Kokomo St. Luke’s UMC

Northeast District

Columbia City St. Matthew’s UMC
Etna UMC
Liberty Center UMC
West Point UMC

Northwest District

Dayton UMC
Fulton UMC
McGrawsville UMC
South Pleasant UMC

South District

DePauw UMC
Mt. Nebo UMC

Southwest District

Branchville First UMC
Dale UMC
Lynnville UMC
Nobles Chapel UMC
Spurgeon UMC
Wheatland UMC

West District

Barbour Ave. UMC
Brazil Bethel UMC
Brazil Union UMC

Paragraph 2553 in the Book of Discipline is being used in a wide variety of ways by the many Annual Conferences in the United Methodist Church. Some are allowing churches to disaffiliate with relatively low costs, while others are requiring very high costs. For an analysis of this, click on this link.

[Costs to disaffiliate vary among Annual Conferences](#)


H.2. Upcoming Options for Disaffiliating Churches

1. **November 19, 2022 by Zoom**
 - Must have records in by Oct. 15
2. **Next reg. Annual Conference is June 8-10, 2023**
 - Records will be due in spring 2023
3. **Paragraph 2553 expires Dec. 31, 2023**
 - being used for disaffiliating churches

H.3. What the 2024 General Conference could do...

1. Vote the Protocol up or down or change or ignore it
2. Let Paragraph 2553 expire or extend it
3. Continue the Traditional language or approve Progressive language regarding ordination of and weddings for LGBTQIA+ persons
4. Keep or modify other theological or social stances

I.1. Fishers UMC Procedural Plan - STEPS

1. **Spring-Summer 2022** – Discussion among Church Council
Decision by Church Council to hold congregational meetings for discernment
 2. **Fall-Winter 2022** – Discernment with whole congregation
A season of sharing information, prayer, and discernment
Please Submit Questions & Comments
at <https://fishersumc.org/umc>
Or Scan QR Code
- 
3. **2023 or 2024?** – Decision by congregation (if recommended by our Church Council)
If the Church Council discerns that a church vote regarding disaffiliation should be taken, a Church Conference vote will take place in or after January 2023

I.2. Fishers UMC Procedural Plan - VOTING RULES

These will be our voting rules if it is discerned that church vote on disaffiliation should be taken

1. Decision will be an official Church Conference
2. Only official members' votes will be counted toward official vote
3. Only members present and voting on official paper ballot will be counted toward official vote
4. Under present rules, a super majority (67% of members present at a duly called Church Conference) would be required if Fishers UMC decided to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and affiliate with the Global Methodist Church

I.3. Fishers UMC Procedural Plan - OUR COVENANT

- We will pray for and with one another
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