

The UMC & Human Sexuality - August 21, 2022
TIMELINE
[prepared by Pastor Sam Royappa]

1703-1791	John Wesley
1707-1788	Charles Wesley
1760-1816	Beginnings in America
1817-1843	Revival and Growth
1844-1860	Division over race and slavery May 1845 - The Methodist Episcopal Church
1844-1860	Expansion to overseas
1945-1968	Quest for Unity
1968	The United Methodist Church (UMC) The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church
1968	The United Methodist Church as a World Church/Global Church
1972	The language of Human Sexuality in the Book of Discipline #341.6
1972-2016	Every General Conference (GC) discussed the issue but in vain.
2016	GC authorize the Council of Bishops to create <i>The Commission on A Way Forward</i> to study how the church can find unity amid growing divisions over homosexuality.
2016	The Western Jurisdiction elected the first female bishop, married to a woman.
Feb 2019	A Special General Conference was called to resolve ONE ISSUE
July 2019	"Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation" to be approved by the 2020 GC and The Protocol was mediated by Kenneth R. Feinberg, a leading expert in mediation & dispute resolution.
2020	Regular General Conference did not happen
March 2020	Coronavirus
May 2020	GC - Postponed to May 2021
May 2021	GC - Postponed to August 2022
May 2022	GC - Postponed to May 2024
May 2022	<i>The Global Methodist Church</i> was launched
June 2022	WI Annual Conference approved the resolution on Disaffiliation of Local Churches
July 2022	Waldo: Trinity UMC, WI was officially disaffiliated from The UMC
August 2022	FUMCWA - Listening Session

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Related to UMC & Human Sexuality
August 21, 2022 - Listening Session

The following Frequently Asked Questions and Answers will hopefully provide a clearer understanding of the issue. In each case where the BOD is referenced the actual paragraph is listed. This will allow individuals to review the entire section if they so choose. Some of the answers have been edited without changing the context of the answer or only part of the paragraph is referenced. A free online copy of the BOD can be found on the Cokesbury Web Site.

Note – it may also be helpful to have the timeline sheet handy when reading the FAQ.

What is the current Issue?

The current issue has existed since 1972 when the language of Human Sexuality was included in the Book of Discipline (BOD). This language was strengthened and clarified at the 1996 General Conference.

Specifically, the language and issues deal with:

1. Ordination of homosexual persons
2. Performance of ceremonies of homosexual unions/marriages
3. The use of church building for same-sex marriages

Discussions since 1972 have not resolved the issues. Individual pastors, churches, and conferences that disagree with the BOD as it is written and have made decisions that are in conflict with the current BOD.

The group of churches who wish to disaffiliate from the UMC do not agree with those decisions and feel the BOD should be followed.

Originally, the issue was to be resolved at the 2020 General Conference. However, it was postponed because of Covid. The next General Conference will be in 2024.

The churches that wish to disaffiliate have decided they do not want to wait until 2024.

What is the current Issue Not About?

The current issue is **NOT** about the right of homosexual individuals to worship in the United Methodist Church. The BOD specifically includes all people

What does the UMC Book of Discipline say about the “inclusiveness of the church?”

¶ 4. *Article IV. Inclusiveness of the Church*—The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be

structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition.

Section VI. Called to Inclusiveness

¶ 140. We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons.

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons.

In The United Methodist Church, inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place.

What does the UMC Book of Discipline say about Homosexuality

¶ 161. II. THE NURTURING COMMUNITY The community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage the development of the fullest potential in individuals. Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important—because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance. We also encourage all individuals to be sensitive to others by using appropriate language when referring to all persons. Language of a derogatory nature (with regard to race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, and physical differences) does not reflect value for one another and contradicts the gospel of Jesus Christ.

C. *Marriage*—We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

G. *Human Sexuality*—We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

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 the 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.

¶ 162. III. THE SOCIAL COMMUNITY

A) *Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation*—Certain basic human rights and civil liberties

are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regard less of sexual orientation. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.

¶ 304. *Qualifications for Ordination*—1. Those whom the Church ordains shall be conscious of God’s call to ordained ministry, and their call shall be acknowledged and authenticated by the Church.

2. ... the Church expects those who seek ordination to make a complete dedication of themselves to the highest ideals of the Christian life. “To this end, they agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to ... fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, ...”

3. 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. **Note-** added at 1996 General Conference.

¶ 341. *Unauthorized Conduct* – 6 Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches. **Note-** added at 1996 General

What was the 32 members “Commission On A Way Forward”, created by the Council of Bishops, and authorized by the 2016 General Conference?

The *Commission* met 9 times over a period of 17 months and recommended a Special GC to consider the following legislations:

The One Church Plan, [endorsed by the Council of Bishops](#), would allow but not require United Methodist clergy to perform same-gender weddings where legal, and allow but not require annual conferences to ordain LGBTQ pastors. "The One Church Plan is built on the belief that it is possible to live with more space while we focus on our common mission," the report states.

The Connectional Conference Plan would create "three values-based connectional conferences" in the U.S. and provide for central conferences to align with one of those connectional conferences or become one of their own. According to the report, the "Connectional Conference Plan addresses the reality of the UMC as it is now."

The Traditionalist Plan is mentioned in the report, but details are written by "a few members of the Council of Bishops" appear in appendix 3. "The Traditional Model maintains our global United Methodist teaching on human sexuality," the plan states.

What happened at the 2019 Special General Conference - February 2019

The General Conference [delegates passed](#) by a 438-384 vote the [Traditional Plan](#), which retains restrictions against "self-avowed practicing homosexual" clergy and officiating at or hosting same-sex marriage ceremonies and requires stricter enforcement for violations of church law.

The Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, in [Decision 1366](#) and [Decision 1377](#) has ruled parts of the plan constitutional and parts of the plan as violations of the denomination's constitution.

A disaffiliation plan, sometimes called an "exit plan," was also passed. This provides guidelines for congregations who wish to leave The United Methodist Church "for reasons of conscience" regarding issues of human sexuality. New Paragraph #2553 was added to the Book of Discipline - "Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality." **NOTE** – This process can only be used for disaffiliation because of issues related to human sexuality [A copy will be made available at the listening session.]

What was the outcome of *The Mediation Team* (traditionalists, progressives, centrists & bishops) led by Kenneth R. Feinberg?

"Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation" (formal, legislated, GC-approved, funded separation) was developed to be presented to the 2020 General Conference. The group met for three two-day sessions with the mediator and his assistants. Those meetings were held on October 17-18, November 11-12, and December 16-17 at the offices of Kirkland & Ellis LLP in Washington, D.C. Agreement on the Protocol was achieved on December 17.

The Protocol is a formal agreement signed by the persons involved in the mediated negotiation which records the terms of the resolution agreed to by the participants. The signatories to the Protocol have agreed to support the development and implementation of legislation necessary to implement the terms of the Protocol.

The Protocol was achieved as the result of intense negotiations and numerous compromises in order to reach a unanimous agreement. All participants made significant compromises. Strong, persuasive arguments were made by various participants as to why the voting threshold on affiliation votes should be either a simple majority or a two-thirds vote.

What happened at the 2022 Wisconsin Annual Conference?

At the 2022 WI Annual Conference in June, a resolution was passed, which indicated if a congregation believes it may want to disaffiliate, the limited window of possibility which exists until December 31, 2023, is the right time to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church under the criteria specified by the Book of Discipline's new Paragraph 2553. The recommendations in the report of the Disaffiliation Task Force to the 2022 Wisconsin Annual Conference include multiple steps involving the local church and the United Methodist-appointed pastoral leadership that shall be taken before your congregation votes on their future relationship to our denomination.

[Refer to Conference website for a full 10 steps process document. [A copy will be made available at the listening session.]

This resolution was made because we do not know what decisions will be made at the 2024 General Conference concerning disaffiliation over the issue of Human Sexuality.

Do we need to vote to disaffiliate from the UMC, even if we disagree with the decisions being made by other churches and conferences regarding the issue of Human Sexuality as written in the BOD?

No, several churches have already said they agree with the BOD position on human sexuality and disagree with the actions of other churches and conferences. They have indicated the connectional relationship of the UMC was more important to them.

What is the newly formed denomination called The Global Methodist Church? [launched in May 2022]

This is the first new denomination formed by several churches which have disaffiliated with the UMC. The church describes itself as *“It is a church committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. The Global Methodist Church is filled with warm-hearted, Jesus-loving, and Holy Spirit-inspired people. They are grounded in Scripture and the life-giving confessions of the Christian faith found in the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds*

We are a global church that recognizes and deploys the gifts and contributions of each part of the church, working as partners in the gospel with equal voice and leadership. Our witness to the world is marked by mutual love, concern, sharing, and a focus on those who are most vulnerable. We watch over one another in love and bear witness to the transforming power of the Good News as we humbly, but boldly, strive to serve others as ambassadors of Christ!”