

# Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation

**Information sessions**

# What I hope to cover:

- **How we got here (to the brink of schism)**
  - **The organizational polity of our denomination**
  - **How decisions that affect us are made**
  - **History of the issue in the UMC**
- **The Trust Clause**
- **Defining the positions**
- **The essential details of the Protocol**
- **The options we will have**
- **The time table for making a decision**
- **Your questions**

***How did we get here?***

**Why are we having to deal with this issue at Faith Harbor anyway? We are doing just fine the way things are; why can't we just keep on doing what we have been doing?**

# ***The organizational polity of our denomination:***

From *the United Methodist Book of Discipline*  
¶101: We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline and mission through our connectional covenant. The *Book of Discipline* expresses that unity.”

The UMC is set up in many ways like the government of the United States.

***Book of Discipline  $\cong$  U.S. Constitution***

***Judicial Council  $\cong$  U.S. Supreme Court***

***Elected Representatives (delegates) vote at Conferences***

# Conference structure:

**Charge conference** (local church) – Faith Harbor

**Annual conference** (regional) - NC conference (2 in NC)

Each annual conference is presided over by a bishop who among other things makes pastoral appointments within the annual conference.

**Jurisdictional Conference** – Southeast Jurisdiction (meets every four years)

The primary function of the jurisdictional conference is the election and appointment of bishops within that jurisdictional conference.

**General Conference** – global gathering every four years.

The General conference is the only body that can make decisions about the content of the *Discipline*. A new *Book of Discipline* is published every four years after General conference meets.

# ***How decisions that affect us are made:***

- **Delegates: each charge (local church) sends an equal number of clergy and lay delegates to annual conference. Delegates vote on matters that come before the annual conference.**
- **Our lay delegate for 2020 (nominated by our lay nominations committee and approved by our charge conference) is Greg (Stacie) Holmes, who is replacing Doug (Sherry) Mewborn.**

## ***History of the issue in the UMC:***

***1972: while all persons are individuals of sacred worth, the church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers such practice incompatible with Christian teaching.***



# ***History of the issue in the UMC:***

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

## ***History of the issue in the UMC:***

**"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. Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals\* are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church."**

In every general conference since 1972, the church's position on these matters has been upheld by vote of every General Conference, 13 times in a row.

United Methodist clergy have opposed the will of the General Conference and defied the *Discipline* by conducting same-sex ceremonies, and Boards of Ordained ministry have opposed the will of the General Conference and violated the *Discipline* by putting forward candidates for ordination who were self-avowed practicing homosexuals.

**How could this be?**

The *Discipline* did not define any consequences or penalties for such violations.

Proposals submitted at General Conference 2016 to add mandatory penalties to such violations.

Motion made to table any votes on matters related to human sexuality until a special called General Conference.

The bishops formed a Commission on a Way Forward.

Special called General Conference in St. Louis in February of 2019.

***One Church plan:*** would have removed the language restricting same-sex marriage and the ordination of practicing homosexuals, making those things optional;

***Traditional Plan:*** retained the restrictive language and added mandatory penalties for violations.

# ***The Trust Clause:***

**The trust clause legally establishes that all buildings and properties do not belong to the local congregation, but to the United Methodist denomination itself (specifically, the annual conference).**



# ***Wesley's reason for Trust Clause:***

**To protect and preserve sound Christian teaching in the church.**

**Only authentic Methodist doctrine should be preached in Methodist pulpits.**

**The purpose of the trust clause was to protect churches from false doctrine.**

## ***The Trust Clause:***

**No longer applies to churches who wish to leave the denomination.**

**Churches that want to leave can keep their property.**

## ***Defining the positions:***

**“Whereas; the United Methodist Church and its members—after careful reflection, discussion and prayer—have fundamental differences regarding their understanding and interpretation of Scripture, theology and practice.”**

## ***Defining the positions:***

**Progressive position: Progressives view the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons to be a matter of social justice. They believe that to deny marriage and ordination to same-sex oriented persons is discriminatory. While many who hold these views would affirm a high regard for Scripture, they regard the scriptural teaching on homosexuality to be no longer relevant to our times, in much the same way that we no longer regard the biblical teachings on dietary laws to be relevant to our time.**

## ***Defining the positions:***

**Traditional position: Traditionalists also affirm a high regard for Scripture, but they believe that the Bible is clear in its condemnation of homosexual practice.**

**They believe that these biblical teachings are timeless and thus still applicable today. Most traditionalists love same-sex oriented people and welcome them in the church, but they believe that Christian marriage is between one man and one woman, and that same-sex oriented persons who are not willing to be celibate should not be ordained.**

## ***The impasse:***

- **Progressives are not willing to compromise on what they see as a matter of social justice.**
- **Traditionalists are not willing to compromise on what they see as the clear teachings of Scripture on marriage and human sexuality.**

## ***The essential details of the protocol:***

**The protocol proposes “restructuring the United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences, allowing each part of the church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality integrity and respect of every person....”**

## ***The options we will have:***

- **The formation of a new Traditionalist Methodist denomination.**
- **The immediate removal in the continuing UMC of prohibitions in the *Discipline* against same-sex marriage and ordination of practicing homosexuals.**



## ***The options we will have:***

**We will not have the option of staying as we are. We will either remain in the continuing (post-separation) UMC with major changes in our doctrinal positions on marriage and sexuality, or we will maintain our teachings on those issues with a new denominational affiliation.**

# ***The time table for making a decision:***

**Annual Conference in June 2020, one month after General Conference.**

**Our position depends on the vote of the Annual Conference.**

**A.C. needs 57 percent to unaffiliate with the UMC.**

## ***The time table for making a decision:***

- Annual conferences in the U.S. have until June 30, 2021, to take a vote. Otherwise, they will remain in the post-separation United Methodist Church.**
- It is likely we will know the decision of our annual conference by the end of summer.**

## ***The time table for making a decision:***

**Any church desiring to affiliate with a denomination other than the one selected by the Annual Conference may conduct a vote. If the church does not vote, it remains a part of the denomination selected by the Annual Conference.**

## ***The time table for making a decision:***

**If such a vote occurs, the church council (leadership team) will determine whether the voting threshold will be a simple majority or two-thirds of those church members present and voting at a called church conference presided by the district superintendent.**

## ***The time table for making a decision:***

- **Local churches can begin voting on alignment by late summer of this year. They do not have to wait until their Annual Conference has voted.**
- **A decision must be made by December 31, 2024.**
- **Local churches may join a new Methodist denomination on January 1, 2021.**

