

All Methodist Churches will decide their path forward. It is the goal of The PUMC Path Forward Committee to provide members information that will bring more clarity to all sides of the issue. Additionally, we will provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the cost of disaffiliation and alternative strategies going forward. We ask that you read all the information and attend all called meetings. This is a critical time for our church. We pray that everyone will be engaged. More information concerning all issues will be available in the coming weeks.

Pendleton United Methodist Church  
Path Forward Committee

### **HOW DID WE GET HERE? Review**

**1972** Homosexuality was first openly debated at General Conference in 1972, four years after the formation of The United Methodist Church. That debate resulted in the first official statement on homosexuality. It affirmed the belief that “persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth who need the ministry and guidance of the church.” The statement added that the church “does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

**1980-1990** During the ten-year period various proposals were made to allow Bishop’s the authority to appoint openly gay Pastors and to allow them to perform same-sex marriages. Despite the debates and disagreements, the church maintained the Discipline guidelines that Pastors could not be "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals and may not conduct ceremonies that celebrate same-sex weddings or unions. Such ceremonies also may not be held on church property." Advocacy continued over the period for the church to remove existing barriers for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people to participate in all phases of ministry. At every General Conference since 1972, global delegates have wrestled with differing views as they made decisions about whether or how to include LGBTQ+ people in the church. The PUMC Path Forward Committee will share more detailed information concerning the disagreements in the weeks to come.

*NOTE:* The acronym LGBTQ+ ends with a + (Plus). The plus is used to signify all other gender identities and sexual orientations that are not covered by the other five initials. The full acronym is LGBTQIP2SAA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit (2S), androgynous, and asexual).

**2016** The General Conference of 2016 contained some of the most heated debates yet concerning LGBTQ+ issues. The delegates voted by 428-405 to accept the recommendation of the Council of Bishops to delay a debate on homosexuality at this gathering of the denomination's top legislative assembly and let a proposed commission study church regulations. The debate was to "completely examine and possibly recommend revisions of every paragraph in the Book of Discipline related to human sexuality". The bishops also suggested they might call a special General Conference in 2019 to deal with such proposals. (See the link for further details.)

[GC2016 puts hold on sexuality debate \(umnews.org\)](https://umnews.org/gc2016-puts-hold-on-sexuality-debate)

**2019 CALLED GENERAL CONFERENCE** The Traditional Plan was passed. That meant all current statements about homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and ordination of LGBTQ+ persons have not changed. The Traditional plan received 438 votes (53%) and 384 no votes (47%). Approved of new wording in the Traditional Plan that requires stricter enforcement for violations of church law. (See link for further details.)

[What happened at General Conference? \(umc.org\)](https://umc.org/what-happened-at-general-conference)

*NOTE:* Traditionalist, Centrist and Progressive is terminology used by Methodist writers to describe (in order) Conservatives, Moderates and Liberals in the political world.

**2020** The regularly scheduled General Conference was postponed due to Covid.

**2022** Below are two resolutions that were passed at the November 2022 *Southeastern Jurisdiction* (SEJ) of the United Methodist Church Conference. PUMC is in the SEJ.

[Southeastern Jurisdiction of The UMC \(sejumc.org\)](http://sejumc.org)

- **Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People**

“Queer Delegates’ Call to Center Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People in the UMC,” was submitted by nine queer delegates in the SEJ. This passed with one amendment changing a word in the resolution from “commit” to “aspire” to make the resolution more aspirational for the SEJ and, therefore, legal.

The resolution urges: the SEJ to support LGBTQIA+ people, affirm a moratorium on lawsuits and complaints surrounding sexual orientation, not pursue (or resolve in a non-punitive and just manner) complaints against bishops around their sexual orientation or who officiate LGBTQIA+ weddings, and support elections of bishops who uphold this.

- **Leading with Integrity**

“Leading with Integrity,” submitted by Tennessee lay delegate Jim Allen and newly elected Bishop Robin Dease, South Carolina, passed without amendment.

The resolution urges those who intend to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church to recuse themselves from leadership roles in the UMC to move forward in fairness and integrity. It also encourages annual conference boards to develop codes of conduct to manage conflicts of interest.

[SEJ passes three resolutions in Thursday evening session | North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church \(nccumc.org\)](https://www.nccumc.org/news/2022/11/22/sej-passes-three-resolutions-in-thursday-evening-session-north-carolina-conference-of-the-united-methodist-church)

**PRESENT** The General Conference of 2019 approved a new church law, [Paragraph 2553](#) of the Book of Discipline, offering UMC churches a path out of the United Methodist Church with their church buildings and property. It would require church approval from two-thirds of their congregation, sign-off from their regional governing body, and pay their share of clergy pension liabilities and two years of “[apportionments](#)” for the larger denomination. That temporary exit strategy expires at the end of 2023. A group of UMC leaders [crafted a more enduring plan](#) for an amicable divorce — a “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation” — in January 2020. It was to be approved at the General Conference assembly later that year. Due to COVID the convention was postponed to 2024. The delays and deep-rooted public disagreements have driven a schism in the United Methodist Church. The Council of Bishops agree that a split is imminent.

[United Methodist bishops acknowledge breakup is imminent | AP News](#)

How many churches leave will not be known until the end of 2023. But between 2019 and December 2022, [just over 2,000 Methodist churches](#) successfully disaffiliated from the UMC, mostly in the South. The approved departures represented about 6.6 percent of America's United Methodist churches in 2019. More church withdrawals from the denomination are expected before the disaffiliation provision expires at the end of 2023.

[Taking stock after a season of disaffiliations \(umnews.org\)](https://www.umnews.org/2022/12/22/taking-stock-after-a-season-of-disaffiliations)

**2024** Next scheduled General Conference