

**Madison FUMC Discernment Team**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**

**GENERAL BACKGROUND + HISTORY**

**1. What is “discernment”?**

Definition for discernment (in Christian context): Perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance from God and understanding the issues at hand

For our church, discernment means seeking God’s will for Madison FUMC towards the best way forward for our church family to continue its historical mission of loving people and leading them to Christ:

- To remain in the United Methodist Church denomination,
- or to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church denomination

The United Methodist Church defines a specific process for how churches can explore disaffiliation. Discernment is the initial step.

**2. Who made the decision for Madison FUMC to begin the process of discernment regarding our future with the United Methodist Church?**

Our senior pastor began briefing our church family on this topic back in 2019. With input from Lay Leadership, a proposal to form a Discernment Team was put before the Administrative Council and approved in the summer of 2022.

**3. What is the role and composition of the Administrative Council?**

The Administrative Council (also known as the Administrative Board or the Church Council) is responsible for providing for the administration of the church and shall function as the administrative agency of the Charge Conference. The Administrative Council is composed of the Chairs of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Trustees, and Lay Leadership Committee. It also includes the church Lay Leaders and delegates to the Annual Conference.

**4. Why did the Administrative Council make this decision?**

The United Methodist denomination is already experiencing the disaffiliation of some churches. The current process (explained later in this document) for Madison FUMC to disaffiliate expires December 31, 2023 based on changes made at the last General Conference in 2019. However, decisions need to be made by both Administrative Council and the professing members of Madison FUMC in order to inform the North Georgia Conference of our intentions to be included for official disaffiliation approval at the June 2023 Annual Conference, should the decision be made to disaffiliate.

**5. What is “disaffiliation” from the United Methodist Church (UMC)? Is the church splitting at this time?**

“Disaffiliation” is a process whereby a United Methodist Church can separate from the United Methodist Church Denomination while keeping its property and assets. Since Madison FUMC is a United Methodist Church, if we want to separate from the denomination, this process is required.

The term “split” applies when there is a negotiated agreement within the denomination to divide assets and resources. No such agreement has been made in The United Methodist Church.

The 2019 General Conference did create a limited-time agreement for churches to leave the denomination “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.” If the vast majority of members, for matters of conscience, no longer wish to be United Methodist, this is a moment in time when there is a specific path to disaffiliate.

Annual Conference Boards of Trustees, in alignment with that Book of Discipline paragraph, are facilitating this process. At the same time, some former United Methodist leaders have created a new denomination. The leaders of that denomination are encouraging traditionalist clergy and United Methodist congregations to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join their denomination. Some churches that disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church in this season will join that new denomination, others have indicated that they will be independent churches, and some will join other pan-Methodist denominations.

**6. Has Madison FUMC or its leadership decided to separate or disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church (UMC)?**

No. The decision to disaffiliate from the UMC is a congregational one and requires a vote by professing members of the congregation who are present and have taken a ballot at a specially called in-person church conference. We have decided to begin a period of discernment, or a process of discernment, with the congregation to determine our future course of action for Madison FUMC.

**7. What is the stance of our pastor on this issue?**

From Pastor Grady: I have chosen not to publicly speak of my stance so the work of the Discernment Team would more accurately grasp the thoughts and direction of the members of Madison First UMC. I welcome anyone who wishes to speak to me personally. I will say this: I am a Christian by the grace of God and the blood of Jesus Christ. Until the day I die, I choose to be and identify as "Methodist." The adjective (united, world, free,...) is not what affects the faith with which I identify, but rather Wesleyan theology and doctrine.

**8. Would anything change at Madison FUMC because of disaffiliation from the UMC?**

While it is impossible to know the full impact that leaving the UMC would have on our congregation, we can speculate based on the anatomy of our church today. Worship would remain much the same (but with no United Methodist hymnals and other UMC-specific articles, etc.). All persons would continue to be welcome to join the community of faith at the “new” church. Once the disaffiliation process has been completed, our property and assets would be under the complete control of our local church body and not the North Georgia Conference. We would no longer be able to use the “Cross and Flame” symbol. It would be necessary to drop “United Methodist” from our church name. The “new church” will be completely disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church and all of its connections.

**9. Why is Madison FUMC evaluating the process of disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church?**

It is no secret that the United Methodist Denomination has been involved in an ongoing and intensifying conflict. This conflict intensified after the 2019 General Conference. A theologically diverse group developed a proposal to allow amicable separation to occur known as the “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation.” This legislation was to be voted on at the 2020 General Conference. The 2020 General Conference was postponed several times, and most recently has been postponed/canceled until 2024. The result is a continuing escalation of

conflict within the denomination. Several churches have already disaffiliated.

#### **10. Why is Madison FUMC acting now?**

As stated at the June 2-4, 2022 North Georgia Annual Conference Session, the process to disaffiliate requires that a request to disaffiliate be submitted to the District Superintendent between January 1, 2023 and February 28, 2023 for disaffiliation to be approved by the Annual Conference in June 2023. Prior to submitting such a request, a local United Methodist church must have gone through a period of discernment with the congregation to determine if that is the correct course of action for that congregation. We want to be sure we have ample time for Godly discernment and prayer within our congregation.

#### **11. What happens next in the process of discernment regarding disaffiliation?**

In late August, our Administrative Council voted to officially begin the process of discernment regarding disaffiliation. We are following a process in accordance to [Paragraph 2553 of the UMC Book of Discipline](#) as implemented by the North Georgia Annual Conference. If the Church Council discerns this fall (2022) that having such a vote is the will of the congregation, we will have a congregational vote regarding disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church during a called Church Conference for all professing members of Madison FUMC in either March or April 2023.

#### **12. What happens following the Church Conference?**

If the Church Council decides to hold a Church Conference to vote on disaffiliation, a two-thirds majority of those present and voting professing members is required to approve of disaffiliation. In the case that a two-thirds vote is achieved, the Madison FUMC Trustees will enter into an “agreement” with the Conference Board of Trustees of the North Georgia Conference of the UMC.

This agreement will spell out the details and legalities of moving forward. The agreement will involve a financial cost to leave the denomination. The cost includes Madison FUMC’s share of the North Georgia Conference’s unfunded pension liability for clergy, currently retired and active. Per the terms of the disaffiliation legislation passed by the 2019 General Conference, it also includes two years of the apportionments we pay annually to the North Georgia Conference. These payments honor a system that Madison FUMC has been a part of for a long time. Madison FUMC has funds available to cover these costs without compromising any of our current activities.

Following this process, Madison FUMC would then become an independent church, not connected to a denomination, with the possible option of joining another denomination at a later date. This is a second decision that cannot be made unless and until a decision to disaffiliate has been voted and approved by the Annual Conference.

#### **13. Why are we spending so much time and resources on this topic?**

The leadership of our church feels that for us to remain a healthy body of Christ, we should openly and honestly address and answer questions surrounding this topic to the best of our ability in order to stay committed and focused on the mission of our many great ministries.

### **HUMAN SEXUALITY AND THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

#### **1. Has the Book of Discipline changed regarding LGBTQ inclusion?**

No. The policies of The United Methodist Church are set by the General Conference. The General

Conference is the only body that can change them.

**2. What is our stance on same-sex marriage and the ordination of self-avowed and practicing homosexuals?**

The Book of Discipline has been the same on this matter since 1972.

Paragraph 304.3 of The Discipline says, “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.”

Madison FUMC firmly believes in the authority of scripture and will continue to follow the Book of Discipline in adherence to the authority of Scripture regarding marriage (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-5) and sexual practices outside of marriage (Romans 1:26-27, Leviticus 18:22).

**3. Does Madison FUMC welcome homosexual persons at our church?**

Yes. Madison FUMC views all people as individuals of sacred worth. Therefore, everyone is invited to participate in worship as lay congregants or in ministry programs as lay participants. We extend welcome, grace and respect to all who call Madison FUMC their church home.

**4. How can we, as one denomination, disagree on matters of human sexuality?**

Rev. Dr. Dan Johnson, a retired pastor and former chair of the board of trustees of Asbury Seminary wrote a reflection to Trinity UMC in Gainesville, Florida following the 2016 General Conference. His reflection offers good insight into this question. You may read it [here](#). It’s important to know that you do not have to change your mind on this matter to be a United Methodist.

**5. Will the UMC drop all prohibitions related to human sexuality?**

The 2020 General Conference has been twice delayed and is now set for May 2024. Hundreds of pieces of legislation on all topics relevant to the church and our world are before the United Methodist General Conference for consideration.

There were legislative submissions in 2020 from both traditionalist and progressive members which would have altered the Book of Discipline on issues of human sexuality. A range of legislation on this topic will also be before the 2024 General Conference. It is hard to speculate on whether the Book of Discipline will change, and if so, how it will change.

**6. Will the General Conference require clergy and clergy candidates to agree to offer same-sex weddings as a condition of candidacy, status, or appointment?**

There are no proposals before the next General Conference to do so, nor have there ever been such proposals. The United Methodist Church only has two sacraments: baptism and communion. No clergy person is compelled or required to perform any wedding and local church trustees oversee the wedding policy of the local church.

**7. Do the Bishop and Cabinet uphold the Book of Discipline?**

Yes. We are currently operating under the 2016/2019 Book of Discipline and will until another session of the General Conference when possible changes may be made. However, the Book of Discipline’s position on this matter has been disregarded by some progressive clergy and congregations across the denomination with no accountability or enforcement.

**8. I have heard/read a series of allegations that the United Methodist Church no longer upholds historically and traditionally affirmed theological and doctrinal beliefs. Is this true?**

No. Though there are outliers in every denominational system, the UMC holds fast to the historic and traditional doctrines of the Christian church.

**9. Is the UMC going to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or salvation through Christ alone?**

No. All these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church. If you have heard that this doctrine is changing, it is a red flag that your information may not be coming from a trustworthy source.

Here is what the Articles and Confessions say on these matters and will continue to say:

- **Virgin Birth and Divinity of Jesus (Articles of Religion, Article II):** “The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)
- **Confession of Faith (Article II):** “We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)
- **Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Articles of Religion, Article III):** “Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he returns to judge all men at the last day.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)
- **Confession of Faith (Article II):** “Jesus Christ... was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)
- **Salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ (Articles of Religion, Article IX):** “We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 66, ¶104)
- **Confession of Faith (Article IX):** “We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2016 Book of Discipline, page 73, ¶104)

## **PASTORS + STAFF**

**1. Where do our pastors stand on this issue?**

Appointed UMC clergy will use their own discernment process to determine their own personal decisions. Our senior pastor and staff join with the congregation in the current period of discernment – they, too, are in careful consideration and study of the options.

**2. How will the church staff be impacted?**

Employment for non-clergy staff will not be impacted.

**3. If Madison FUMC disaffiliates from the UMC, how will it be appointed a pastor?**

There are 70 churches in North Georgia that disaffiliated from the UMC at the 2022 North Georgia Annual Conference session. It is anticipated that there will be additional churches that will follow since the postponement of the General Conference until 2024. These churches are putting

together pools of potential pastoral candidates. If Madison FUMC chooses to affiliate with one of the new denominations, they will also have candidates available. If the church chooses to disaffiliate, Madison FUMC will select its own senior pastor.

## **VOTING**

**1. If the Administrative Council at Madison FUMC decides to call for a Called Church Conference to consider disaffiliation, who can vote? Who is considered a “professing member”?**

Only “professing members” of Madison FUMC can vote. Professing members are those who have officially joined Madison FUMC and include students who have gone through Confirmation and taken the vows of membership. The final decision to disaffiliate from the UMC or remain UMC is determined by a 2/3 vote of all professing members attending the in-person Called Church Conference who have taken a ballot. Any ballot taken and returned without a clearly defined vote will be considered a “No” vote to disaffiliate, which translates that this ballot is considered as a vote to remain in the UMC.

**2. Does each church have to vote?**

No. No church is required to vote or required to consider voting to disaffiliate.

**3. If I’m a member, do I have to be present in person to vote?**

Yes.

**4. If I’m not a member, can I vote? How do I find out if I’m a member?**

No. Send inquiries to [office@madisonfumc.com](mailto:office@madisonfumc.com).

**5. Can I get more information before the vote?**

Yes. The Madison FUMC Discernment Team will be holding small group meetings and at least one other church-wide “Town Hall” meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Additional information regarding this process can be found on our [website](http://madisonfumc.com/discern) (madisonfumc.com/discern).

**6. How can my voice be heard?**

- Participate in the survey we will be putting out in the weeks to come.
- Email the Discernment Team at [discern@madisonfumc.com](mailto:discern@madisonfumc.com).
- Host and participate in a small group session about this topic.
- Visit our website at <https://madisonfumc.com/discern>.

**7. What happens if Madison FUMC does not disaffiliate or does not vote?**

If Madison FUMC chooses not to disaffiliate, it will remain a United Methodist Church. All property and assets will be in trust with the North Georgia Conference.

**8. Could we wait and disaffiliate after knowing how the 2024 conference and vote go?**

Yes, however, the current pathway for disaffiliation will no longer be valid. It is unknown if there will be an extension to paragraph 2553 or what new pathway will be put in place.

## **FINANCE, PROPERTY, + LEGAL**

**1. If we choose to disaffiliate, how will Madison FUMC remain financially viable, both now and in the future?**

Madison FUMC will remain financially viable through God’s continued grace and your continued generosity. The financial obligations associated with disaffiliation in the North Georgia

Conference require:

- (1) payment in full of the current year plus one additional year of apportionments (the 2023 payment will be \$77,059), and
- (2) payment in full of the unfunded pension liability (this figure is calculated quarterly).

These costs are easily manageable and are funded through the current operating budget and reserves from the RISE initiative. Madison FUMC does not receive any funding from the North Georgia Conference and will continue to pay apportionments to the North Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church until such time as Madison FUMC formally disaffiliates, should such a determination be made. If Madison FUMC disaffiliates, apportionments would no longer be paid.

## **2. What does it mean to hold property “in trust”?**

The trust clause is a historic, universal claim made by the UMC and written into the church’s articles of incorporation in an effort to retain ownership rights of local church properties. Holding property in trust for The United Methodist Church means the “holder” (Madison FUMC) is required to use the property exclusively for the purposes of and to benefit The United Methodist Church. It also means that if at any point, it becomes clear the holder can no longer or chooses to no longer function as part of The United Methodist Church, it forfeits all rights to continue to hold the property, and the property itself and all other assets transfer to the denomination (the North Georgia Conference Board of Trustees).

Simply put, the North Georgia Conference actually owns all property and assets currently being used by Madison FUMC. Madison FUMC does not own its own property or assets. Should Madison FUMC vote to disaffiliate from the UMC under Paragraph 2553, Madison FUMC will be released from the trust clause and will own all property and assets.

## **3. Could the Conference close Madison FUMC?**

Yes, this is a possibility. Several churches smaller in size than Madison FUMC have already been closed. When a church is closed, the assets of the local church automatically transfer to the Annual Conference Board of Trustees.

## **4. What is the legal risk of leaving the denomination?**

There is no risk or liability associated with disaffiliation by following the prescribed steps for completing the process. The risk of litigation increases in cases where churches take steps to disaffiliate outside the prescribed process. Madison FUMC is following the steps outlined by the Board of Trustees of the North Georgia Conference.

## **5. What can I do to support Madison FUMC’s future?**

The first thing to do is to pray – pray for Madison FUMC, other churches that choose to disaffiliate, and those that will remain in the UMC. Additionally, be informed and be prepared to vote at the appropriate time. Finally, continue to support Madison FUMC with your presence and your gifts.

## **ETC.**

### **1. What is the argument for disaffiliating now instead of waiting for the outcome of the 2024 General Conference?**

Right now, we have a gracious and clear exit clause in 2553, which means we will be asked to do the following to keep our properties:

- Pay our year’s apportionments

- Pay our unmet pension liability
- The cost to disaffiliate now is estimated between \$100,000 and \$200,000

There is uncertainty in waiting. Here are the unknowns if the language change:

- We do not know if there will be an exit clause in 2024.
- If there is an exit clause addendum or extension, we don't know if the separation protocols will be evenly and fairly implemented. We also don't know what our financial obligation will be at that time.
- We don't know who will be in leadership in 2024.

## 2. **Why would a church not consider disaffiliation and remain in the UMC denomination?**

There are many reasons a church would not consider disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church. Among them are:

- The United Methodist Church and her predecessors have been home since the beginning of most every local congregation. There are deep and trusted ties of The United Methodist connection. For example, when disaster struck a North Georgia community, GEMA reached out to the North Georgia Conference. Twenty-five teams from the North Georgia Conference responded. An active layperson sat on the recovery board. Three area UM churches became centers of the response. This is just one example of how the United Methodist connection shines.
- The United Methodist Church makes a difference locally, regionally, and globally. Together we do more than we could do alone. From how we practice stewardship to camp ministry to communion, the connection is at the core of what it means to be the United Methodist Church.
- The United Methodist Church is a force for global health, the education and welfare of children, care of the environment, and disaster relief. Because of our long commitment to missions, and because of the collaborative partnerships we have nurtured over decades, we are able to provide services that impact lives on just about every continent.
- The United Methodist Church provides diversity of understandings that is needed for true Christian maturity. No church needs to be comprised of persons who all agree and think alike. We are stretched, challenged, and given opportunities for sanctification through differences in understandings and thoughts.
- The Cross and Flame are recognizable all over the world as the sign of a people and partners who offer the love and compassion of Christ through tangible ministries.
- A decision to disaffiliate from one's denomination is of such magnitude that it should not be made without extreme cause, in haste, under pressure, or out of fear of an unknown future. There has always been and will always be a way to leave the denomination for those who wish to do so.
- In this season, churches are concentrating their prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness on mission and ministry. Taking a vote and then following through on the disaffiliation would be a distraction for some from "the main thing."
- The United Methodist Church provides resources, camps, college outreach organizations, missions, oversight, training for leadership, and appointments of pastors.
- The wording in the Book of Discipline has not changed and cannot be changed until a vote at the 2024 General Conference.
- The wording has been challenged 8 times in the last 50 years; however, the Traditionalist language has always prevailed.
- According to a 2018 poll of 40,000 lay people, 44% are Traditionalists; we still have many Traditional clergies represented at General Conference as well. There is a chance that the Traditional language will remain.
- Many are concerned about the future of the ministries of the worldwide United



Methodist Church without the support of the churches that will disaffiliate.

- Many worry that the division will do more harm than good and that many believers will leave the UMC because of it.

### 3. What are “sides” of the debate?

- Traditionalists: those who welcome LGBTQ persons but who wish to prohibit marriage and ordination of persons in same-sex relationships.
- Progressives: those who advocate for full inclusion, including marriage and ordination of persons in same-sex relationships.
- Centrists: those who allow for differences of opinion.

### 4. Why do the Traditionalists want to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church?

There are multiple reasons, one is the potential changing of the language in the Book of Discipline. Traditionalists believe:

- The Bible is the inerrant Word of God revealed by the Holy Spirit to human writers; therefore, it is eternal and the authority for their Christian living. It is not subject to change because of cultural shifts or societal mores.
- The Bible speaks clearly and unequivocally on the issues of human sexuality, gender, marriage, homosexuality, and the qualifications for a spiritual leader in the body of Christ and changing the wording of the Book of Discipline to allow for same-sex union in the church and for the ordination of clergy who actively participate in same-sex unions would be contrary to God’s Word.
- The leadership of the United Methodist Church (Council of Bishops) has broken trust with the UMC lay persons in disregarding the 2016 Book of Discipline under which our church currently operates by not enforcing adherence to it and/or not censuring or forcing the surrender of credentials of those who violate it. There is a lack of accountability for ecclesial defiance.
- The recurrence of this issue (eight times in the last 50 years, recurring at almost every General Conference since 1972) underlies a bigger problem/tension in a shift in convictions and understanding of the mission and ministry of the United Methodist Church from “making disciples to transform the world” to a ministry for social justice and the primacy of the authority of Scripture replaced with the primacy of reason and experience.
- In the United Methodist Church, its mission and ministries and connectivity, and they love their local United Methodist Churches. Even though the Traditionalist stance has repeatedly won the vote at General Conference and the wording in the Book of Discipline has stood, they are weary of fighting a battle that may never end until the wording is finally changed, and they see this ongoing battle as a waste of time, energy, and ministry that should be invested on reaching people for Christ.

### 5. Why do progressives want to change the wording of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church?

Check out the UMCNext [website](#) for more information.

- Progressives long to be “passionate followers of Jesus Christ, committed to a Wesleyan vision of Christianity, anchored in scripture and informed by tradition, experience, and reason as they live a life of personal piety and social holiness.”
- They have committed themselves to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in all forms and toward all people and build a church which affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.”
- They “reject the Traditional Plan approved at General Conference 2019 as inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and will resist its implementation.”

- They will “work to eliminate discriminatory language and the restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons, celebrate their gifts, and commit to being in ministry together.”

#### 6. Where do Traditionalists and Progressives agree?

- Love for The United Methodist Church
- Belief in the Wesleyan ideals
- Love for people and a call to serve the least, the last, and the lost
- Understanding of the core beliefs of our Christian faith
- Unity in the desire to follow Jesus Christ
- Appreciation for the organization of our Church
- The power of the connectedness we share as United Methodists
- The transformational opportunities the ministries of the UMC afford us: Wesley Foundations, Wesley Woods, UMCOR, Education, etc.

#### 7. I heard these terms mentioned in our Town Hall meeting on 9/18/22. What are the following?

- Global United Methodist Church
  - Check out the Global Methodist Church [website](https://globalmethodist.org) at globalmethodist.org.
  - See the comparison of the UMC and Global Methodist Church
    - [From Wesleyan Covenant Group](#)
    - [From Texas Annual Conference](#)
  - “The Global Methodist Church is intended to serve as a resource for all who wish to join in a ‘methodical,’ practical, and warm-hearted pursuit of loving God and serving others as Jesus’ disciples in the world.”
  - Core beliefs are detailed on the website but follow the Wesleyan
    - Christian precepts and are very similar to those held by the United Methodist Church
- Wesleyan Church
  - Check out the Wesleyan Church’s [website](#)
    - 12 Stone Church based in Lawrenceville, GA, is a Wesleyan Church
  - Core Beliefs
    - One God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Savior of all who put their faith in Him alone for eternal life.
    - The Bible is God’s holy Word, uniquely and infallibly revealing God’s plan for His people and how to live out that plan individually and corporately.
    - Jesus Christ is the defining feature of God’s will and relationship with all humankind. In Christ is found both newness of life and the highest and clearest example for godliness.
    - Making disciples is a clear mandate from Christ and requires a strong missional focus on evangelism and training in spiritual growth and holy living.
    - The denomination exists to help local congregations to grow and multiply, be healthier, and more authentically reflect God’s plan.
    - There is intrinsic value in every person. Finding unity and mutual love in Christ eliminates devaluation and deprivation of life to one another.
- Free Methodist Church
  - Check out the Free Methodist Church USA [website](#)
  - Their core beliefs are:
    - There is One Living God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
    - The Scriptures are the authority of God’s Word over our lives.
    - Humankind is created in the image of God as free moral persons.
    - New Life in Christ free from the guilt and penalty of sin is given to all who believe.

- The Church is the people of God, who exist to fulfill the purposes of God.
- They believe in the kingdom of God established now in the hearts of believers, the return of Christ at a time chosen by the Father, and in the hope in the resurrection and eternal glory.

#### 8. **What does the United Methodist Church believe about the Bible? (Found on UMC.org)**

Article IV of the Confession of Faith – The Holy Bible “We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice.”

*According to UMC.org taken from the Book of Discipline (2016):*

United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine. Through Scripture the living Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace. We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst whom we trust in life and death. The biblical authors, illumined by the Holy Spirit, bear witness that in Christ the world is reconciled to God. The Bible bears authentic testimony to God’s self-disclosure in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as in God’s work of creation, in the pilgrimage of Israel, and in the Holy Spirit’s ongoing activity in human history.

As we open our minds and hearts to the Word of God through the words of human beings inspired by the Holy Spirit, faith is born and nourished, our understanding is deepened, and the possibilities for transforming the world become apparent to us.

The Bible is sacred canon for Christian people, formally acknowledged as such by historic ecumenical councils of the church. Our doctrinal standards identify as canonical thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Our standards affirm the Bible as the source of all that is “necessary” and “sufficient” unto salvation (Articles of Religion) and “is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice” (Confession of Faith).

We properly read Scripture within the believing community, informed by the tradition of that community.

We interpret individual texts in light of their place in the Bible as a whole.

We are aided by scholarly inquiry and personal insight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we work with each text, we take into account what we have been able to learn about the original context and intention of that text. In this understanding we draw upon the careful historical, literary, and textual studies of recent years, which have enriched our understanding of the Bible.

Through this faithful reading of Scripture, we may come to know the truth of the biblical message in its bearing on our own lives and the life of the world. Thus, the Bible serves both as a source of our faith and as the basic criterion by which the truth and fidelity of any interpretation of faith is measured.

While we acknowledge the primacy of Scripture in theological reflection, our attempts to grasp its meaning always involve tradition, experience, and reason. Like Scripture, these may become creative

vehicles of the Holy Spirit as they function within the Church. They quicken our faith, open our eyes to the wonder of God's love, and clarify our understanding.

The Wesleyan heritage, reflecting its origins in the catholic and reformed ethos of English Christianity, directs us to a self-conscious use of these three sources in interpreting Scripture and in formulating faith statements based on the biblical witness. These sources are, along with Scripture, indispensable to our theological task.

The close relationship of tradition, experience, and reason appears in the Bible itself. Scripture witnesses to a variety of diverse traditions, some of which reflect tensions in interpretation within the early Judeo-Christian heritage. However, these traditions are woven together in the Bible in a manner that expresses the fundamental unity of God's revelation as received and experienced by people in the diversity of their own lives.

The developing communities of faith judged them, therefore, to be an authoritative witness to that revelation. In recognizing the interrelationship and inseparability of the four basic resources for theological understanding, we are following a model that is present in the biblical text itself.

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#### **9. Where can I find scripture related to these topics?**

*Bible verses often quoted by Traditionalists that support their arguments to keep the language supporting the Biblical stance on homosexuality, marriage, and the qualifications of pastoral leaders:*

- Authority of Scripture
  - 2 Timothy 3:16
  - Hebrews 4:12
  - 2 Peter 1:21
- Marriage
  - Genesis 2:24
  - Malachi 2:14
  - Mark 10:2-9
  - Matthew 19:4-6
  - Romans 1:19
  - Ephesians 5:30-32
  - 1 Corinthians 7:10-14
- Homosexuality
  - Genesis 19:1-11
  - Leviticus 18:22
  - Leviticus 20:13
  - Judges 19:16-24
  - 1 Kings 14:24
  - 1 Kings 15:12
  - 2 Kings 23:7
  - Romans 1:18-32
  - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
  - 1 Timothy 1:8-10
  - Jude 1:7

- Gender
  - Genesis 5:2
  - Matthew 19:4
- Qualifications of a Spiritual Leader
  - Isaiah 66:2
  - Malachi 2:9
  - Matthew 20:24-28
  - Hebrews 13:7
  - 1 Timothy 3:1-7
  - Titus 1:5-9
  - 1 Peter 5:2-3

*Bible verses often quoted by Progressives to support their arguments to change the language to be more inclusive of people from all gender identities in the pastoral ministry and marriages:*

- Matthew 22:37
- Luke 10:27
- Deuteronomy 6:4-7
- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 7:1-3
- Luke 6:1-10
- Luke 6:37-41
- John 8:7
- Romans 2:1
- Romans 14:10-13
- 1 Corinthians 4:5
- 1 Peter 4:8
- Romans 3:22-24
- John 13:34-35