



# **Bethany UMC**

## **Path Forward Committee Presentation**

**Summer 2023**



# Path Forward Committee

## *Our Purpose*

- **Provide balanced, fair, and transparent information**
- **Provide a high-level overview of the topics, understanding there remain many unknowns**
- **Listen to your questions and concerns and provide answers and address your concerns where possible**



# Path Forward Committee

**This is a very contentious time within the church (UMC) at large and our church (Bethany) specifically. With this in mind, we ask that .....**

- a spirit of love, kindness, and respect govern everyone's behavior**
- each of you be in prayer for each other and our church**
- the Holy Spirit guide each of us in this time of discord**

# Topics

## **1. Basic church organization**

Understanding basic organization is key to understanding some of the issues/concerns as well as path forward

## **2. Schism Timeline**

How did we get here?

## **3. What are the issues & concerns driving the schism**

There are more than one

## **4. What are potential paths forward and options for Bethany**

Potential paths and options are varied and they each come with benefits/risks



# UMC Organization

**The United Methodist Church is set up and governed much like the United States. It has three distinct entities:**

- **Council of Bishops (Executive Branch)**
- **Judicial Council (Judicial Branch)**
- **General Conference (Congressional Branch)**

# UMC Organization

## ➤ Council of Bishops (Executive Branch)

- Bishops give general oversight to the worldly and spiritual interests of the church.
- A bishop serves as a general superintendent for the church, assigned to a geographical area (episcopacy).
- Bishops have the responsibility to see that the rules and regulations developed by General Conference (Book of Discipline) are carried out.
- Bishops set all clergy and district superintendent appointments in the episcopacy they serve.

# UMC Organization

## ➤ **Judicial Council (Judicial Branch)**

- The Judicial Council is made up of nine members who are elected during regular sessions of General Conference.
- Four clergy and four laity always serve on the Judicial Council, with the ninth seat alternating between clergy and laity every 8 years.
- **Authority to review and make decisions on points of law made by Bishops as well as review actions taken at General Conference for constitutionality**
- An affirmative vote of at least 6 members shall be necessary to declare any act of the General Conference unconstitutional.

# UMC Organization

## ➤ General Conference (Congressional Branch)

- General Conference is the highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church.
- It meets once every four years to **revise/create church law**, adopt resolutions, and pass plans and budgets.
- It sets the denomination's official positions on a variety of issues and cultural challenges.
- It is the only body authorized to speak for The United Methodist Church.



# UMC Organization

## *United States*

### Jurisdictions (5)

#### 1. **Northeastern**

10 Annual Conferences

#### 2. **North Central**

10 Annual Conferences

#### 3. **Western**

7 Annual Conferences

#### 4. **South Central**

12 Annual Conferences

#### 5. **Southeastern**

14 Annual Conferences

## *International*

### Central Conferences (7)

1. **Africa** (10 Annual Conferences)

2. **West Africa** (6 Annual Conferences)

3. **Congo** (14 Annual Conferences)

4. **Germany** (3 Annual Conferences)

5. **Central and Southern Europe** (7 Annual Conferences)

6. **Northern Europe** (10 Annual Conferences)

7. **Philippines** (24 Annual Conferences)

*Jurisdictional and Central Conferences are responsible for the **election of new bishops and assigning bishops to their episcopacy***

# UMC Organization

## Southeastern Jurisdiction Annual Conferences (14)

- Alabama/West Florida
- North Alabama
- Central Appalachian Missionary
- Holston
- Florida
- Kentucky
- Mississippi
- Tennessee – Western Kentucky
- North Georgia
- South Georgia
- Virginia
- Western North Carolina
- North Carolina
- **South Carolina** (*Bishop L. Jonathan Holston*)



# UMC Organization

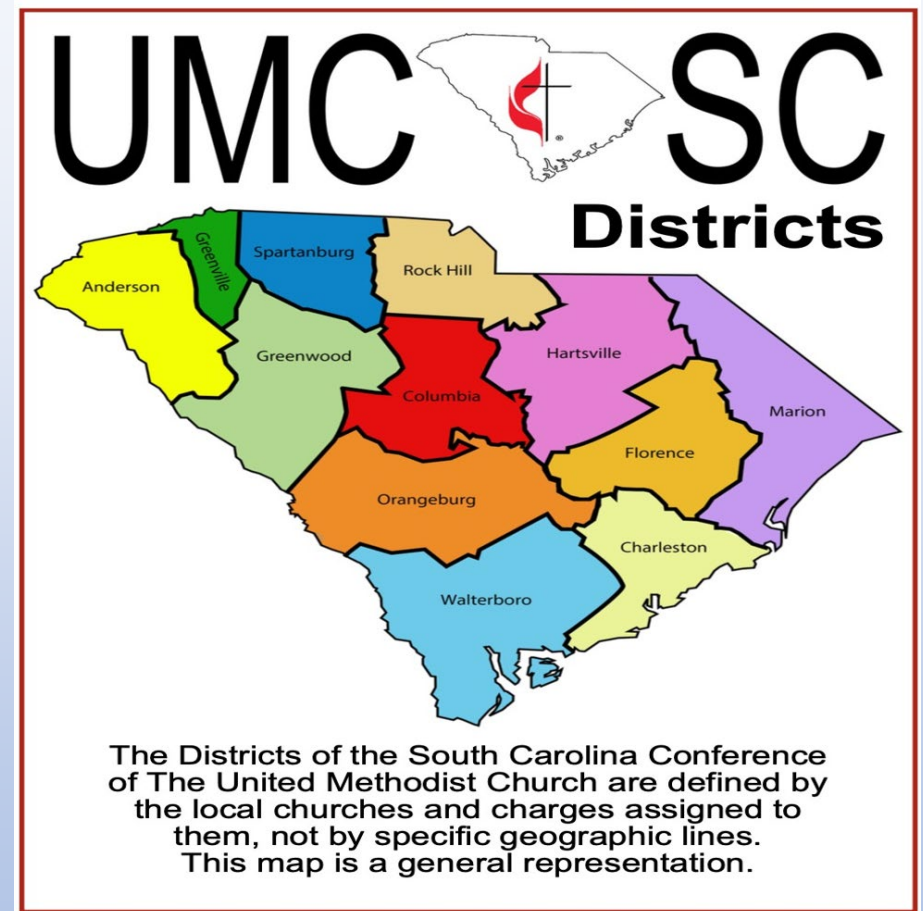
## South Carolina Annual Conference Districts (12)

- Anderson
- Columbia
- Florence
- Greenville
- Greenwood
- Hartsville
- Marion
- Orangeburg
- Rock Hill
- Spartanburg
- Walterboro
- **Charleston** (*District Superintendent: Rev. Dr. Sandra Stevens Poirel*)

*Annual Conferences are responsible for the **selection and ordination of clergy, setting local church apportionments, and election of delegates\* to Jurisdictional and General Conference***

### Local Churches

Bethany United Methodist Church



**\* GC and JC delegates are not “representatives” – they vote their conscience**

# UMC Organization

At the local church level .....

**Charge Conference** is held annually to:

- Review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, **elect local church leaders**, and adopt objectives and budgets recommended by the church council
- The voting members of the charge conference are:
  - members of the church council
  - retired ordained clergy who elect to hold their membership in said charge conference



# UMC Organization

At the local church level .....

## **Church Conference:**

- Church Conferences are normally held for special decisions requiring the vote of the total church membership
- All members of the local church present at such meetings are eligible to vote
- The church conference shall be authorized by the district superintendent
- It may be called at the discretion of the district superintendent or following a written request to the district superintendent by one of the following:
  - The pastor
  - The church council
  - 10 percent of the professing membership of the local church



# Bethany Organization

There are five main entities that lead Bethany UMC (outside of the clergy):

➤ **Church Council**

Responsible for setting church goals/objectives and approving church budget

➤ **Board of Trustees**

Responsible for care, management, and use of all Bethany property

➤ **Staff Parish Relations Committee**

Responsible for staffing the necessary positions at Bethany as well as consulting with Bishop on clergy appointments

➤ **Nominations Committee**

Recommends to the charge conference the names of people to serve as leaders of the church

➤ **Finance Committee**

Manages church money and recommends annual budget to Church Council

# Doctrinal Standards

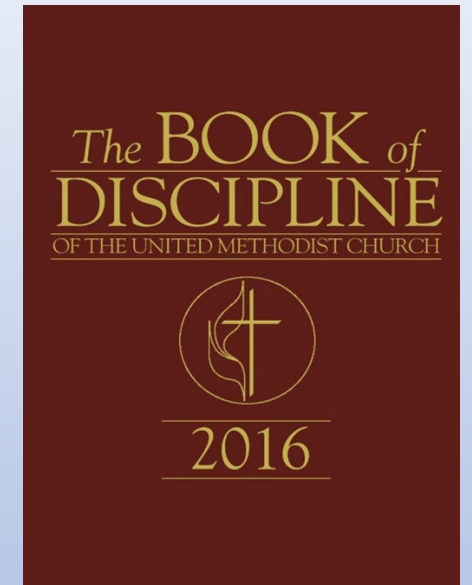
**In addition to the *Holy Bible*, The United Methodist Church is built on four doctrinal standards contained in the **Book of Discipline**.**

**The doctrinal standards are:**

- **Articles of Religion**
- **Confession of Faith (Evangelical United Brethren - 1968)**
- **John Wesley's "Standard Sermons"**
- **John Wesley's "Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament"**

# Book of Discipline

- The Book of Discipline is the **guiding document** of the United Methodist Church. It contains our church history, **constitution**, doctrinal standards, **church laws**, organizational structure, processes/procedures, and social principles.
- Originally published in 1784 and has been published every 4 years thereafter following the meeting of the General Conference.
- Changes were made at the special called General Conference in 2019 but the last printed edition is 2016.







# Schism Timeline

## 1972 General Conference

- a. The decades-long church debate on homosexuality begins
- b. The newly adopted United Methodist **Social Principles** includes the first statement on homosexuality
- c. Language is added to the **Book of Discipline**:
  - i. "We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider it incompatible with Christian teaching," is added to the phrase, "Persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth."
  - ii. Added the first reference to homosexual unions: "We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex."

# Schism Timeline

## 1976 General Conference

- i. Added language to the **Book of Discipline** to prohibit the General Council on Finance and Administration UMC funds from being used to promote homosexuality:
  1. *It shall be responsible for ensuring that no 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 United Methodist Church “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends”. The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. (From 2016 Book of Discipline Paragraph 806.9)*
  2. Appealed to the Judicial Council in 1998 but upheld by Judicial Council on April 22, 1999 (Judicial Council Decision #491)

# Schism Timeline

## 1980 General Conference

- i. The General Conference fails to add the phrase "no self-avowed, practicing homosexual therefore shall be ordained or appointed in The United Methodist Church" to the Discipline.
- ii. The conference notes the denomination "has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless."

## 1984 General Conference

- i. Reverses its 1980 decision and adds to the Book of Discipline a statement declaring that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" are prohibited from serving as clergy (BOD Paragraph 304.3)
- ii. The conference also inserts the phrase "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness" regarding qualifications for ordination.



# Schism Timeline

## **1988 General Conference**

- i. Approves a study of homosexuality to report to the 1992 General Conference

## **1996 General Conference**

- i. Added three significant points to Book of Discipline on the church's position on homosexuality:
  1. A footnote defining "self-avowed practicing homosexual"
  2. A declaration that ceremonies to celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist clergy or in United Methodist churches (BOD Paragraph 341.6)
  3. A call for the U.S. military not to exclude people from service "solely on the basis of sexual orientation."

# Schism Timeline

## 2000 General Conference

- i. Votes to add to the Social Principles the language, "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends."

## 2004 General Conference

- i. Delegates endorse "A Resolution on Church Unity."
  1. On a 869-41 vote, the church's quadrennial general conference approved an impromptu resolution "to remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement."
  2. The vote came a day after a prominent conservative pastor and national president of an unofficial Methodist renewal group called for "a just and amicable" split of the church because of "irreconcilable differences" over homosexuality.



# Schism Timeline

## **2016 General Conference**

- i. General Conference authorizes the Council of Bishops to create a commission to study how the church can find unity amid growing divisions over homosexuality.

## **2016 Western Jurisdictional Conference**

- i. The Western Jurisdiction elects Rev. Karen Oliveto as the denomination's first gay bishop

**2016** - The South Central Jurisdictional Conference files petition with Judicial Council regarding election of Rev. Oliveto to bishop

# Schism Timeline

## 2017

- i. The Council of Bishops announces a call to a special General Conference Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis to act on their report based on recommendations from the Commission on a Way Forward.
- ii. Judicial Council Ruling on Bishop Oliveta (Judicial Council Decision #1341)
  1. The Judicial Council ruled that election to Bishop of Karen Oliveta violated the Book of Discipline prohibiting ordination of self-avowed homosexuals. The Judicial Council decision stated that “Under the long-standing principle of legality, no individual member or entity may violate, ignore, or negate Church law. It is not lawful for the college of bishops of any jurisdictional or central conference to consecrate a self-avowed practicing homosexual bishop.”
  2. The Judicial Council decision stated that “self-avowal does not nullify the consecration and cause removal from episcopal office but is a sufficient declaration to subject the bishop's ministerial office to review.”
  3. The Judicial Council decision stated that the “bishop's constitutional right to fair and due process must be protected and until the completion of the administrative and/or judicial process, the bishop remains in good standing.”

# Schism Timeline

## 2019 Special Called Session of General Conference

1. Called to specifically address issues related to homosexuality within the UMC
2. Three Proposals
  - a. One Church Plan
    - i. Endorsed by Council of Bishops
    - ii. Remove prohibitions of homosexual ordination and same-sex marriage from Book of Discipline
    - iii. Allow individual local churches option to not perform same sex marriages and/or accept homosexual clergy
  - b. Connectional Conference Plan
    - i. Replaces the existing Jurisdictional Conferences with three “connectional conferences”:  
Progressive, Traditional, and Unity
    - ii. Each connectional conference would have their own Book of Discipline
  - c. Traditional Plan
    - i. Basically keeps the Book of Discipline as is in regards to homosexual ordination and performing same sex marriage
    - ii. **Approved by General Conference by a 438 - 384 vote (53%)**



# Schism Timeline

## 2019 Special Called Session of General Conference

3. Passage of Traditional Plan revised 2016 Book of Discipline language. This included:
  - Regarding BOD 304.6, Qualifications for Ordination: “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” was changed to “living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual” are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church.”
  - Minimum penalties for clergy convicted at trial of performing a same-sex wedding. Those penalties include one year's suspension without pay for the first offense and loss of credentials for the second.
  - Prohibits Bishops from consecrating, commissioning, or ordaining people who are self-avowed homosexuals.
  - **Added Paragraph 2553 to BOD for churches who wanted to disaffiliate if they were unhappy with the newly passed Traditional Plan.**

# Schism Timeline

**2020**

- i. The **Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation** is developed
  1. A mediated/mutually agreed-upon framework that proposed a special, time-limited pathway for churches wishing to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church
  2. To be officially reviewed and adopted at 2020 General Conference
  3. **Abeyance** (Article V, Item 1):
    - a. “As one expression of reconciliation and grace through separation, the undersigned agree that all administrative or judicial processes addressing restrictions in the Book of Discipline related to self-avowed practicing homosexuals or same-sex weddings shall be held in abeyance beginning January 1, 2020 through the adjournment of the first conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church. Clergy shall continue to remain in good standing while such complaints are held in abeyance.”
- ii. 2020 General Conference Postponed to 2021 due to COVID pandemic

# Schism Timeline

## 2022

1. General Conference postponed to 2022 is again postponed to 2024
2. The Judicial Council ruled (Decision #1451) to designate the event scheduled for 2024 as **postponed** 2020 General Conference. This decision means the delegates elected in 2019 for the 2020 GC will be eligible to attend the General Conference being held in 2024. Any delegates who have disaffiliated from The United Methodist Church will be replaced by the elected alternates.
3. **Bishop Holston announces “Local Church Discernment Process” which allows churches in the SC Annual Conference to disaffiliate under Paragraph 2549 of the 2016 Book of Discipline**
4. Global United Methodist Church officially formed
5. Several parties announce they no longer support the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation
6. Rev. Cedric Bridgeforth becomes the second openly gay clergy elected to Bishop by the Western Jurisdiction

# Schism Timeline

## 2023

1. South Carolina Annual Conference held (June 4-7)
  - a. 113 SC Annual Conference Churches are approved for disaffiliation (roughly 12% of total churches in SC Annual Conference)
  - b. 5 of churches leaving were top givers (apportionments) including the top two churches (Mt Horeb and Buncombe St)
  - c. SC Annual Conference recommended budget for 2024 is 2.6 million less than the approved 2023 budget – this was done in large part to account for the apportionments lost from disaffiliating churches

## 2024

1. 2024 General Conference to be held (April 23 - May 3)
2. Bishop Holston retires (September) - SC Annual Conference to receive a new Bishop

# Issues & Concerns

**The issues and concerns (real or perceived) that are driving the schism within the UMC can be placed in several buckets:**

- **Biblical Theology Relating to Sexuality**
- **Adherence to Book of Discipline**
- **Connectional vs. Congregational**
- **Potential Doctrinal Changes**

# Issues & Concerns

## Biblical Theology Relating to Sexuality

- The most significant and contentious of the issues revolves around the Bible and human sexuality.
- One group (generally referred to as Progressives) believes that the Bible **does not prohibit** ordination of homosexual persons or performing same sex marriages
- One group (generally referred to as Traditionalists) believes that the Bible **does prohibit** ordination of homosexual persons or performing same sex marriages

# Issues & Concerns

## Biblical Theology Relating to Sexuality

- **As noted in the Timeline, this issue has been brewing since 1972 and has only gotten more contentious through the years.**
- **At the heart of the matter is whether the Book of Discipline should be changed to allow for ordination of homosexual persons and allow clergy to perform same-sex marriages**
  - ❖ **There is almost 100% certainty that this issue will be revisited at the 2024 General Conference**

# Issues & Concerns

## Adherence to Book of Discipline

- This issue is perhaps the 2<sup>nd</sup> most significant and contentious issue
- Revolves around **lack of adherence to and enforcement of the Book of Discipline by the Council of Bishops** as it relates to homosexual ordination and same sex marriage
- Gay ordinations and same sex marriages within the UMC are not rampant as some groups would contend but, they have/are occurring



# Issues & Concerns

## Adherence to Book of Discipline

- **The poster child for this issue is the election of a gay minister (Rev. Karen Oliveto) to Bishop by the Western Jurisdiction in 2016.**
  - **This election was challenged by the South Central Jurisdiction**
  - **The Judicial Council ruled in 2017 that this election violated the Book of Discipline but left Bishop Oliveto in “good standing” pending further due process/review**
  - **6 years later, Bishop Oliveto is still in “good standing” and performing duties as the Bishop of the Mountain Sky Episcopal area**
  - **Her bio on the UMC Council of Bishops webpage includes: “*Bishop Oliveto has the distinction of being the first openly lesbian bishop in The United Methodist Church.*”**

# Issues & Concerns

## Connectional (Centralized) vs. Congregational (Local)

- **This concern is often cited as a secondary reason for considering disaffiliation and has 3 separate items: Clergy, Apportionments, Property**
  - **Clergy: some churches do not like the itinerant nature of clergy appointments within the UMC and want more control**
  - **Apportionments: some churches want to keep more (or all) of these \$\$\$ for local church use**
  - **Property: All UMC property is held “in trust” which means the UMC owns local church property. Some churches want to gain full ownership of their property**

# Issues & Concerns

## Potential Doctrinal Changes

- This is the most nebulous of all the concerns often stated by churches as a reason for disaffiliation
- The concern is that some believe there is a shift underway within the UMC to eliminate or change some of the basic tenets of our faith such as the virgin birth or bodily resurrection of Jesus
- While there have been isolated examples of this thinking, it is not widespread
- Our doctrinal standards/tenets are laid out in the *Articles of Religion* and *Confessions of Faith* – the process to eliminate or modify either of these foundations of our UMC beliefs makes **changes extremely unlikely**



# Paths Forward & Options

**Where is the UMC now and what is Bethany's path forward/options?**

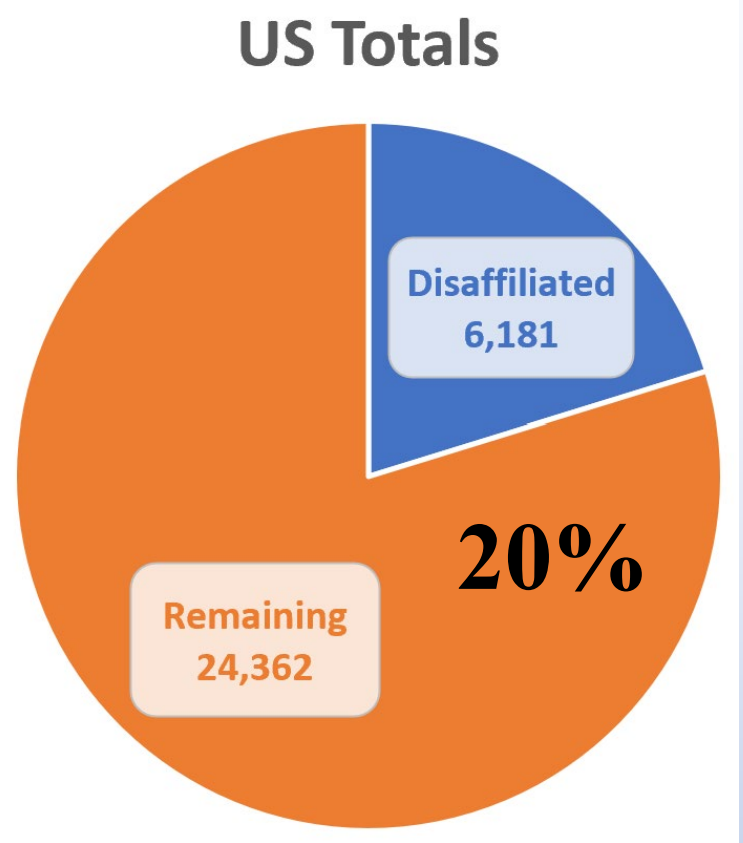
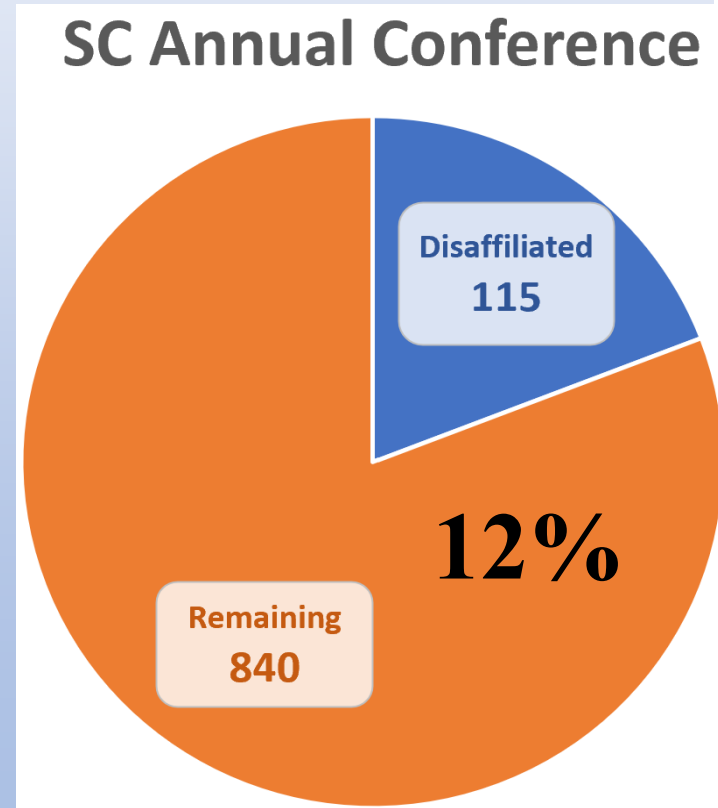
## **UMC Current Status**

- **UMC churches (primarily “traditionalist”) have been disaffiliating for a couple of years now**
- **The number of churches disaffiliating has not been the tidal wave that some predicted but the numbers are not insignificant and continue to grow**

	United States	SC Annual Conference
<b>Total Churches (2019)</b>	<b>30,543</b>	<b>955</b>
<b>Disaffiliated - 2019</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disaffiliated - 2020</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disaffiliated - 2021</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Disaffiliated - 2022</b>	<b>1,826</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Disaffiliated - 2023</b>	<b>4,172</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Total Disaffiliated</b>	<b>6,181</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Remaining (as of 7/7/23)</b>	<b>24,362</b>	<b>840</b>

Data from:

[www.umnews.org/en/news/disaffiliations-approved-by-annual-conferences](http://www.umnews.org/en/news/disaffiliations-approved-by-annual-conferences)  
[www.umc.org/en/content/united-methodists-at-a-glance](http://www.umc.org/en/content/united-methodists-at-a-glance)



# Paths Forward & Options

## Bethany Path Forward

**Bethany has 3 options at this point**

- **Do nothing with intent to remain a part of the UMC**
- **Do nothing now and wait and see what happens in the future**
  - **2024 General Conference**
  - **Unforeseen future event**
- **Begin discernment process – this process may or may not lead to disaffiliation**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Bethany Path Forward

- **Do nothing with intent to remain a part of the UMC**
  - **Actions necessary now: None**
  - **Benefits/Risks: “Status Quo”**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Bethany Path Forward

- **Do nothing now and wait and see what happens in the future**
  - **Actions necessary now: **None****
  - **Benefits/Risks:**
    - **Benefits**
      - **More clarity after 2024 GC**
      - **Potentially better options/less cost for disaffiliation**
    - **Risks**
      - **Potentially worse options/more cost for disaffiliation**



# Paths Forward & Options

## Bethany Path Forward

- **Begin discernment process**
  - **Actions necessary now: Requires simple majority vote of Bethany Church Council to be begin discernment process**
  - **Benefits/Risks:**
    - **Benefits**
      - **Allows Bethany members to have their say (yea or nay)**
    - **Risks**
      - **Potentially better options/less cost for disaffiliation after 2024 GC**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Disaffiliation Process (Paragraph 2553)

**The Paragraph 2553 disaffiliation option passed at the special 2019 GC:**

- **Was initially intended for use by “progressive” churches unhappy with passage of the “traditional plan”**
- **“Traditionalist” churches began using this option after postponement of 2020 GC prevented approval of “Protocol of Reconciliation”**
- **Expires 12/31/23**
- **Not an option for churches in SC Annual Conference per ruling by Bishop Holston because: 1) BOD has not been changed, 2) SCAC has adhered to BOD**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Discernment Process

**If the discernment process is begun by Bethany .....**

- **We would use the *Local Church Discernment Process* that has been initiated by Bishop Holston for churches within the SC Annual Conference**
- **This process is based on Paragraph 2549 of the Book of Discipline**
- **Paragraph 2549 is normally used to close churches that have become too small to be functional**
- **Paragraph 2549 is being used to provide a disaffiliation option to SC Annual Conference churches since it was deemed SCAC churches did not qualify under the Paragraph 2553 option**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Local Church Discernment Process

- **Church Council must vote (by simple majority) to begin discernment process**
- **Church Council must request that the District Superintendent call a Church Conference**
- **Bethany must complete an intentional, 30-day (minimum) process of discernment to consider whether the congregation can continue to function as a United Methodist church**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Local Church Discernment Process

- **Certain financial obligations – as calculated by conference trustees – must be satisfied before Annual Conference will vote on disaffiliation**
  - **A tithe equal to 10 percent of the appraised value of all church property (land/bldgs) and liquid assets (cash).**
  - **All unpaid apportionment giving for the prior year, as well as for the year of closure up to the date of the Annual Conference vote to close the church.**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Local Church Discernment Process

- **Certain financial obligations – as calculated by conference trustees – must be satisfied before Annual Conference will vote on disaffiliation (continued)**
  - **An additional 12 months of apportionment giving.**
  - **All unpaid salary and benefits due to clergy appointed to the church.**
  - **A withdrawal liability equal to the church's proportional share of any unfunded pension obligations.**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Local Church Discernment Process

- Other financial considerations and **legal liabilities** of the local church – such as the disposition of any debts, loans, leases, endowments, foundations and cemeteries – must be satisfied or transferred to a new entity
- Disaffiliation vote held at Church Conference – requires a **2/3 majority vote** of members present at the Church Conference
  - Vote must be completed **prior to March 1** to be considered by SC Annual Conference

# Paths Forward & Options

## Local Church Discernment Process

- **Once all terms of separation are satisfied, the members of the Annual Conference must vote on a resolution to close the local church and transfer its assets to a new entity. A **simple majority vote** in favor of the resolution is the final step before the local church separates from The United Methodist Church, **maintaining its property.****
  - ❖ **“maintaining its property” means that Bethany keeps all property and assets after disaffiliation**



# Paths Forward & Options

**If a disaffiliation vote is held and **does not pass**, then there is nothing else to do until/if something precipitates our church revisiting possible disaffiliation in the future.**

**If a disaffiliation vote is held and **passed**, it comes with some costs, concerns, and potential benefits.**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Disaffiliation Costs/Concerns

- A formal appraisal of Bethany's property value has been performed using an appraisal firm from the list of appraisers recommended by the SC Annual Conference. Based on this appraisal and May 31, 2023 balances of the various Bethany funds to be included in the 10% tithe, Bethany's total **additional** disaffiliation cost is estimated to be \$765,000. However, the exact cost will be calculated based on fund balances on 12/31/23, so the fund balances will likely be different than the balances used for the above estimate. For this reason, the actual **additional** cost is likely to change but is expected to be in the **\$650,000** to **\$800,000** range.

# Paths Forward & Options

## Disaffiliation Costs/Concerns

- The funds necessary to meet these costs must be placed into an escrow type account prior to the SC Annual Conference vote
- **We would have to determine how best to raise the funds as the church doesn't have a spare \$650,000 to \$800,000 at our disposal**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Disaffiliation Costs/Concerns

- **We may or may not have to replace our Senior Pastor. It would be his decision as to whether to remain with Bethany or to remain with the UMC.**
- **Once disaffiliated, we would no longer have access to UMC **resources or clergy** - this could impact our decision as to whether to remain independent or join another Methodist related denomination**

# Paths Forward & Options

## Disaffiliation Benefits

**There are certainly costs and concerns associated with disaffiliation but there are also potential benefits.**

- **Total ownership of church property (no “in trust” clause)**
- **No or less apportionments (depending on future affiliation)**
  - **Bethany’s apportionment for 2023 is \$187,000 which is lower than usual (usual is in \$200K-\$220K range)**
- **Control over clergy (depending on future affiliation)**



# Paths Forward & Options

**If Bethany votes to disaffiliate from the UMC, there are several options available that would maintain Bethany's connection to John Wesley and our Methodist principles.**

**Bethany's options if disaffiliated would be:**

- **Remain an independent church**
  - **This could be long term or until we choose new denomination**
- **Join an independent "Methodist network"**
- **Join another Methodist centered denomination**



# Paths Forward & Options

## Remain an independent church

- Total control but we fend for ourselves

## Join an independent “Methodist network”

- We could join something like the Association of Independent Methodists

## Join another Methodist centered denomination

- Global Methodist Church
- Free Methodist Church
- Others: Wesleyan Church, Church of the Nazarene, Congregational Methodist Church

	UNITED METHODIST CHURCH	GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH	FREE METHODIST CHURCH	INDEPENDENT METHODIST/NETWORK
CHURCH DOCTRINE/THEOLOGY	Current book of discipline	Transitional book of doctrines & disciplines in effect until the conference of the global Methodist church occurs, at which time a book of discipline will be adopted	Free Methodist church has its own book of discipline based largely on UMC book of discipline	Based on same doctrine/theology currently followed; connectivity
CURRENT CHURCH STRUCTURE/ GOVERNANCE	Bishops supervise annual conferences. Bishops appointed for life.  <i>2016 book of discipline, sections 402-409</i>	Fewer bishops; no lifetime appointments. Presiding elders who pastor a local church and also serve as mentor/guide within conference.  <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, sections 501-503, 506-507, 510-511</i>	Three bishops in US who are elected every 4 years. Superintendents with responsibility for churches  <i>2019 book of discipline, sections 4110, 5120;</i> <i><a href="https://fmcusa.org/leaders/superintendents">https://fmcusa.org/leaders/superintendents</a></i>	Governed by existing church leadership
APPORTIONMENTS	Annual conference requests, but does not require, 10% of unrestricted receipts. Our amount is reported annually to the district superintendent.  <i><a href="https://www.umc.org/en/content/how-are-local-church-apportionments-figured">https://www.umc.org/en/content/how-are-local-church-apportionments-figured</a></i>	Requires 6.5% of operating income (5% to conference; 1.5% to global church).  <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 349</i>	Capped at \$180,000	None If in network, churches contribute to agreed-upon ministry objectives
CHURCH PROPERTY	Held in trust for the UMC  <i>2016 book of discipline, section 2501</i>	Belongs to local church  <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 902</i>	Belongs to local church during affiliation period. May continue to belong to local church when church officially joins FMC and receives approval from board of bishops  <i>2019 book of discipline, sections 6400, 6830, 6840.</i>	Belongs to local church
PASTORAL PLACEMENT	Decided by bishop with input from pastor and congregation  <i>2016 book of discipline, section 428</i>	Decided by bishop/presiding elder with input from congregation  <i>Transitional book of doctrines and discipline, section 510</i>	Decided by conference and local church	Local church



**It should be noted that the Global Methodist Church is still in transition and is working under a “Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline”. This book will not become final and official until the first GMC General Conference is held and no firm date for this conference is available as of 7/29/23. This means that **information** provided about the GMC prior to official adoption of a **BODD may change.****



**This is a very difficult time and a very tough decision for all of us who love Bethany and have been faithful members of the UMC.**

**Regardless of the outcome (vote/no vote, stay/disaffiliate), many of our Bethany brothers and sisters are going to be upset.**

**During such a time, it is critical that we continue to love one another in Christian fellowship and seek God's guidance through the Holy Spirit.**

**Questions?**

**Comments?**

**Concerns?**



# Bethany Path Forward Committee Members

**Meg Courtney - Chair Church Council**

**Tom Brown – Chair Board of Trustees**

**Laura Knotts**

**Toby Spahr**

**Chris Glaze**

**David Powell**

**Stan Petrohovich**

**Barbara Petrohovich**

**Rick Yochim**

**Lynda Gildea**

**Jason Russo**

**Rebecca Dunlap**

**Doug Hammond**

**Sam Brock**

**Rebecca Jackson**

**John Wilkinson**

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**Danny Wright**

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**Larry McKeehan**

**Sam Wood**

**David Stamps**

**Converse Chellis**

**Nancy Hartman**

**Sheryl Todd**

**Greg Cook**

**Chris Wimberly**