

Frequently Asked Questions

Asbury Church's October vote and details around disaffiliation

This document comes from the Lead Staff and Leadership Board and seeks to address frequently asked questions that have been asked by Asbury Church members concerning the October 16 church conference vote on disaffiliation of Asbury from the United Methodist Church. Please know that this document seeks to be complete but does not cover the entirety of the issues at hand. This document is not meant to stand on its own, but instead to compliment and prepare you for one of the in person information sessions. Please plan to attend one of the sessions to get a fuller picture of the matters facing the Methodist Church. Information Sessions are open to all and will be led by Rev. Gil Wise on September 25 at 2pm and October 5th at 6:30pm with a time for questions and answers, and a replay of the presentation (without Q&A) will be available online and played on campus on October 9th at 4pm. Please know your Leadership Board is available to continue discussions and answer questions. You can reach out to John Griffin and Roy Bruce at leadershipboard@asburyleigh.org

What can I expect on the day of the vote – October 16 at 2 pm?

The vote on October 16th is run by conference officials, not Asbury Church. Unlike what you may experience on a national election day, this is not a pop in/pop out to vote. This is a "Called Church Conference" with processes given to us by the United Methodist Church. Asbury must follow the process and cannot change or adjust the order of the day or how ballots are distributed or collected. Only professing members are permitted to enter the North Building to vote. Membership will be checked at the door prior to admission and in order to receive a ballot. Please plan to arrive early. Check-in will begin at 1:30pm and doors will close promptly at 2:10pm. We cannot allow late entry. Childcare will be provided. Please plan to be on campus at least an hour for the voting process.

How does the vote work?

The NC Conference will provide an official to help oversee the churchwide vote. The vote requires 2/3 or more of the votes cast on October 16 to affirm disaffiliation. Ballots will be tabulated immediately onstage by selected church and conference representatives and results will be announced in the room. We cannot adjust membership status on the day of the vote.

How do I know if I'm a professing member?

Those who joined Asbury via transfer, profession of faith, or confirmation are considered professing members. We cannot adjust membership status on the day of the vote, so please confirm with the church office (wendy@asburyleigh.org or 919-847-2818) if you are unsure.

What exactly are we voting on?

At least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference of the Local Church must vote, via [required motion \(Church Conference\)](#) and written ballot, to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church (UMC) *"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."*

Does every church have to vote on disaffiliation?

No. The default for all congregations is to remain UMC. Only churches who are considering disaffiliation need to vote at this time. Many members of other local churches are unaware that disaffiliation or voting is occurring unless they are connected to larger church communications, a pastor, or friends who have let them know about the process. The Asbury Leadership Board chose to let this decision be in the hands of the congregation, not just the leadership.

Why is Asbury voting now to disaffiliate from the UMC?

Our current Bishop, Leonard Fairley, is allowing churches from now until December 31, 2023 a gracious exit to disaffiliate from the UMC and retain their property if guidelines are met (2/3 majority vote and compliance with the Disaffiliation Agreement, including financial requirements). The NC Conference has promised that neither the process nor the cost will change when we receive a new Bishop on January 1, 2023; however, new bishops have the ability to change these types of agreements.

What are the opinions of our staff and clergy?

There is diversity amongst the staff and we encourage you to have conversations with those staff members who feel comfortable sharing, to learn where they stand and why they believe what they believe.

Can a church disagree with their pastor on this matter?

Yes. Many churches and pastors have differing opinions. The UMC and the newly formed Global Methodist Church (GMC) are both prepared to assist churches and clergy in assigning new appointments as disaffiliations of churches and clergy occur.

Is the UMC going to become more progressive (change its stance on abortion, theology, homosexuality, etc)? How does this happen?

Every four years, since Methodism began hundreds of years ago, the General Conference revises the Book of Discipline and the Social Principles (a non-binding teaching document). The General Conference is the only body that speaks for the United Methodist Church and has changed its views over time on a variety of subjects and procedures. At the NC Annual Conference 2022, the delegation passed a [resolution](#), which resolved that “the UMC shall continue to open the doors of inclusion to all God’s children, including LGBTQIA+ persons”.

So the answer? We cannot be sure either way. The [Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation](#) going before the UMC General Conference 2024 allows for a gracious exit and startup funds for at least two breakaway denominations to withdraw from the main body of the UMC (post-separation UMC and Global Methodist Church). The Protocol assumes the post-separation UMC will then remove the controversial language regarding human sexuality from the Book of Discipline, leaving room for contextualized ministry and diversity of thought so that each congregation could have a stance that fits their viewpoints. However, any assumption regarding the beliefs of the UMC on nature and mission of the church, theology, church governance, and other social issues is simply conjecture based on profiles of the delegation.

Some examples of the concerns around accountability to the UMC Book of Discipline and its enforcement is that there are LGBTQ+ clergy ([and bishops](#)) and same-sex marriages in the UMC ([Duke Memorial in Durham](#)), and many American Bishops have not enforced the Book of Discipline on these matters. There are also differences in church governance, theology, and social practices. The table attached below provides greater details.

Why not just wait for the Protocol at General Conference 2024?

Many leaders will assume passage of the Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, though [many of its creators have pulled their support after the Global Methodist Church \(GMC\) was launched](#), however a [few Bishops involved shared a statement of continued support](#). It's possible that this legislation may not make it out of committee, could be ruled unconstitutional, or could be altered on the floor of General Conference. Any number of possibilities could emerge from General Conference, Judicial Council rulings or other developments. The [current agreement for disaffiliation from the NC Conference of the UMC](#) is in effect until the end of December 2023.

What is a "trust clause"?

The [trust clause is a part of the UMC Book of Discipline](#) and exists to promote the connectional nature of the local church to the district, conference, jurisdiction and global agencies. As UMC resources help to plant churches, the property that results from them is held "in trust" by the denomination. If a church closes, the denomination retains use of the property to sell or to create a new congregation.

Will we be able to keep our facilities, land, and stay in our sanctuary if we disaffiliate?

Yes. Asbury will own its property free and clear. The "trust clause" mentioned above will no longer be in effect if the terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement are met. Under the Disaffiliation Agreement, Asbury's total cost to leave the UMC is around \$353,000 which would be paid prior to the disaffiliation date. This payment represents apportionments for 2022 and 2023 as well as Asbury's pro rata share of pension liability as calculated by the Conference.

Asbury would retain its property ownership going forward regardless of any denominational affiliation.

How many churches are in the UMC? How many will disaffiliate? How many will join the GMC?

There are currently around 31,000 UMC churches in the United States. The [Wesley Covenant Association \(WCA\) estimates 3000-5000 churches](#) will join the GMC denomination in its first years. Within the first two months, over 300 churches voted to join the GMC. In the eastern North Carolina area, a called Annual Conference will take place on November 19, 2022 to consider church disaffiliations where churches will come before that body for disaffiliations pending local church outcomes.

Do we have to affirm same-sex marriages or LGBTQ+ to stay UMC?

No, but you must be willing to accept that others may hold different views. The UMC's current stance is that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, which may change in 2024. All weddings performed at a church are always at the discretion of the pastor.

What does scripture say about LGBTQ+?

Both "sides" of the human sexuality debate identify as passionate about scripture and the teachings of Jesus, and both would likely critique the way in which the other does just that.

Scriptures leaned on by those against homosexuality: Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Matthew 19:3-6, Mark 7:21-23, Acts 15:24-29, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1, Jude 6-7

Scriptures leaned on by those who are more affirming for LGBTQ+: Psalm 139:13-14, Philippians 2:4, Matthew 5:12, Mark 12:31, Acts 8:27, Hebrews 8:13, Galatians 6:1-16, John 8:7, 2 Corinthians 5:19

Can women serve in ministry in both the UMC and GMC?

Yes. Both groups affirm women in ministry. United Methodists have been ordaining women since 1956 and the Global Methodist Church [highlights their plans for affirming women in this brochure.](#)

When else has the Methodist Church split or joined?

- 1784 - Methodist Episcopal Church in America was started with the first (General) Christmas Conference
- 1830 - Split into Methodist Protestant and Methodist Episcopal (issue: laity's role and voice)
- 1844 - Split into Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal South (issue: slavery and the power and role of bishops)
- 1939 - Merging of Methodist Protestant, Methodist Episcopal, and Methodist Episcopal South to create The Methodist Church
- 1968 - Merging of Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church to form the UMC

What will change at Asbury if the church votes to disaffiliate from the UMC and then votes to become a part of the Global Methodist Church?

If the church votes to transfer to the Global Methodist Church, we would seek to build God's Kingdom in a similar way that we are doing now. In this scenario, the ministries of Asbury will continue to build upon the foundation put in place by past and present Asbury Leadership, lead pastor, and staff who choose to stay.

Staff, individuals, and families who desire to continue to be a part of the United Methodist Church would be free to remove their membership from Asbury and relocate to other local churches.

What will change at Asbury if the church does not vote to disaffiliate from the UMC?

If the church votes to remain in the United Methodist Church, we would seek to build God's Kingdom in a similar way that we are doing now. In this scenario, the ministries of Asbury will continue and Asbury would be led by a new lead pastor, staff who choose to stay, and its 2023 leadership board to determine their next steps and direction.

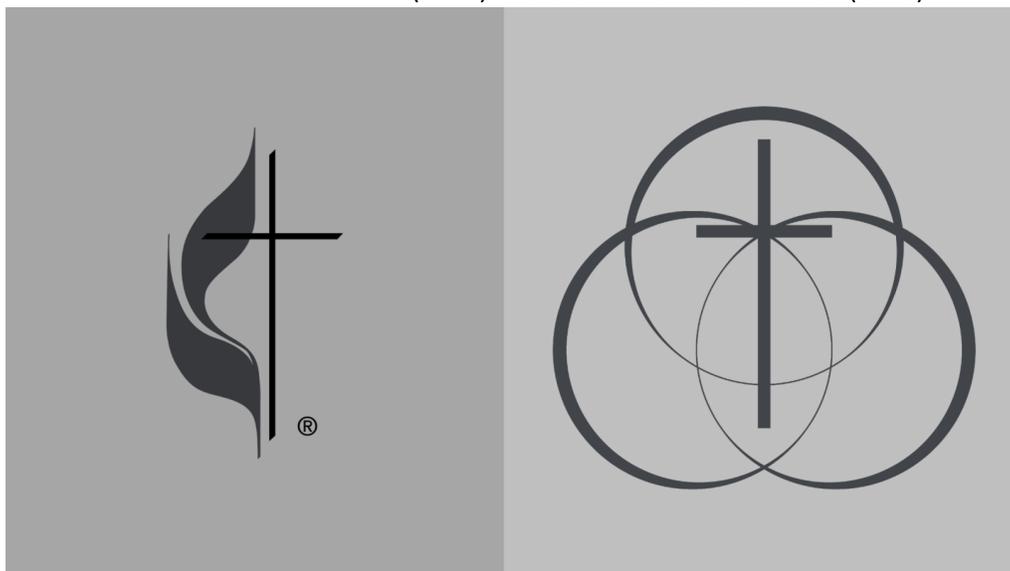
Staff, individuals and families who desire to be a part of the Global Methodist Church would be free to remove their membership from Asbury and relocate to other local churches.

What if I have a question not answered here?

Please plan to attend one of the live information sessions with Rev. Gil Wise on Sept. 25 or Oct. 5. This document addresses frequently asked questions that have been asked by Asbury Church members concerning the October 16 church conference vote on possible disaffiliation of Asbury from the United Methodist Church but does not cover the entirety of the issues at hand. This document is not meant to stand on its own, but instead to compliment and prepare you for one of the in person information sessions.

COMPARISON FACT SHEET

United Methodist Church (UMC) and Global Methodist Church (GMC)



	UMC	GMC
Formation	1968 through merger	2022 – new denomination
Mission Statement	Make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.	Make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.
Denominational Guidance and Governance	Book of Discipline 2016 as amended in 2019	Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline 2022
Next General Conference	2020 General Conference currently postponed to 2024	Convening General Conference to be scheduled
Connectional Church Structure	General Conference Jurisdictional Conference Annual Conference District Conference Charge/Church Conference	General Conference Regional Conference Annual Conference District Conference Charge/Church Conference
Local Church Structure	Church/Administrative Council Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Finance Committee Board of Trustees Nominations – Lay Leadership	Church/Administrative Council Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Finance Committee Board of Trustees Nominations – Lay Leadership
Bishops	Elected by the Jurisdictional Conference Lifetime election with autonomy for decisions and enforcement of BOD Salaries and benefits set by the general conference Funded by general conference apportionment	Elected by the Regional Conference Elected with a term limit Salaries and benefits set by the general church Funded through the annual conference budget

	UMC	GMC
District Leadership	District Superintendents oversee the pastors and churches in the District Appointed by Bishop (6-year term and 12-year limit)	Presiding Elders oversee the pastors and churches in the District Appointed by Bishop (term of office to be determined)
Pastor Appointment	Bishop and Cabinet appoints pastors to a local church in consultation with District Superintendents, clergy, and profile prepared by local church SPRC	Bishop appoints pastors to a local church in consultation with Presiding Elder, clergy, and the local church SPRC
Pastor Educational Requirements	Seminary degree required to be ordained as an elder or deacon	Seminary degree not required but required course completion list to be ordained as an elder or deacon
Orders of Ministry	Ordained deacon a separate order from ordained elder – all deacons permanent	Order of deacon contains both permanent deacons and those going on to elder's orders (nested orders: laity—deacons—elders)
Ordination of Pastors	Candidacy, Commissioning, Ordination (Deacon or Elder) and Full Connection or course of study to be a licensed local pastor	Candidacy, Ordination as a Deacon, and Ordination as an Elder – no local pastors (transitioned to ordained Deacons)
Pastor Appointment	Elders are guaranteed an appointment	Appointment not guaranteed (written rationale provided)
Clergy Retirement	Mandatory at age 72	No mandatory age
Certified Laity in Ministry	Certified lay servants, certified lay speakers, certified lay ministers, deaconesses, home missionaries, lay missionaries	Combines all into one category called certified lay ministers – can specialize to serve in any of the previous areas
Clergy Accountability	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform clergy duties Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to annual conference clergy	Administrative Process – for incompetence, ineffectiveness, or unwillingness or inability to perform clergy duties Judicial Process – for chargeable offenses Accountable to annual conference clergy
Local Church Property	Local church owns and maintains the property that is held in trust for the UMC denomination (trust clause)	Local church has full ownership and control of their property (no trust clause) – pension liabilities are secured by a lien on the property
Denomination Structure	Established and sizable	Developing and small
Apportionment System	No cap – annual conference and general conference payment is calculated by formula based on a three-year average of local church operating expenses – generally 10-15% of local budget	Capped at 1.5% for general church ministry and 5% for annual conference ministry based on prior year local church operating income
Apportionment Accountability	Requires apportionment payments but does not have a clear accountability process	Requires regular apportionment payments and has an accountability mechanism

	UMC	GMC
Apportionment Amount	Asbury has been roughly \$100,000 per year, adjusted based on calculations.	Asbury at cap would be about \$70,000 per year
Financial Cost to Asbury	Nothing to stay in UMC except continued annual apportionment payments	To become GMC: Payment to UMC for 2022 and 2023 apportionments and a portion of unfunded clergy pension liability at a total net cost of about \$353,000. Annual GMC apportionment payments when started plus legal fees related to church property transfer.
Future Direction	Somewhat unknown as denomination membership changes because of exiting churches and clergy – likely will become more progressive – church polity is established/changed every four years by the General Conference	Somewhat unknown as denomination forms and adjusts as needed and as desired – likely to remain traditional – church polity is established/changed every four years by the General Conference
Baptism	Traditional Wesleyan understanding of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion of infants, children, youth, and adults – no rebaptism	Traditional Wesleyan understanding of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion of infants, children, youth, and adults – no rebaptism
Confirmation	Important process for educating children about making a profession of faith	Important process for educating children about making a profession of faith
Social Stances & Accountability for members	Social Principles – not church law and <u>not binding</u> but instructive guidance for clergy and local churches	Social Witness – clergy and local church members are <u>bound</u> by, support, and practice church doctrine
Abortion	Balances sanctity of unborn life with life and well-being of mother and child; rejects abortion as means of birth control or gender selection	Believing in the sacredness of all life, resists the practice of abortion except in the cases of tragic conflicts of life against life. Do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection. All members should help support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources
Human Sexuality	God's gift to all persons; affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.	Human sexuality is a gift of God, affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman
Homosexuality	Affirms sacred worth of all, God's grace available to all. Does not condone practice of homosexuality; considers the practice incompatible with Christian teaching. <i>**Currently some Bishops do not enforce this</i>	No explicit reference to homosexuality or LGBTQ+; rejects pornography, polygamy and promiscuity; commits church to be a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for all experiencing sexual brokenness

	UMC	GMC
Marriage	Affirms marriage covenant expressed in love, support, commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman <i>**Currently some Bishops do not enforce this</i>	Defined as a legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous relationship between one man and one woman
Theological Beliefs	Broad tent perspective as it relates to clergy and local church beliefs so that pastors and churches can preach and teach views that fall from one end of the theological spectrum to the other, from very traditional to very progressive	Clergy and churches are to teach and preach traditional biblical and Wesleyan doctrines
Authority of Scripture	Scripture is divinely inspired Scripture is of primacy and is interpreted based on traditions, reason, and experience Primary source and criterion for Christine doctrine	Scripture is divinely inspired Scripture is of primacy and is interpreted based mostly on traditions of the historical church along with reason and experience Authority for faith, morals, and service
Accountability to the Book of Discipline	Clergy are held accountable and can be brought on charges for violations. <i>**Currently, Some Bishops, annual conferences, and local churches have taken actions which are contrary to the Book of Discipline and have not been held accountable for their actions</i>	Accountability is emphasized in the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline with ramifications for lack of adherence
Links for further reading	www.umnews.org www.gracethroughseparation.org www.umcnext.com www.mainstreamumc.com www.thelmx.org https://unitingmethodists.com/	www.globalmethodist.org www.wesleyan covenant.org www.confessioningumc.org www.goodnewsmag.org www.firebrandmag.com

Links -

General

- Texas AC Comparison Chart
<https://www.txcumc.org/files/navigating+the+waters/fdtf/umc-gmc+comparison+chart.pdf>
- WCA Comparison Chart
<https://wesleyan covenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/A-Comprehensive-Comparison-Chart.pdf>
- Wespath Pastor Retirement FAQs <https://www.wespath.org/assets/1/7/5857.pdf>
- NCCUMC Document [What Does This Mean For My Church?](#)

What is the history of UMC and homosexuality?

The journey of the issue of homosexuality in The United Methodist Church began with the reworking of part of our Social Principles*.

General Conference in 1972

The addition of the following words to the Social Principles:

"Homosexuals are no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationship with God, with others, and with self." (Book of Discipline, 1972, ¶172.C. Human Sexuality)

with an amendment to the proposal:

"Further we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured, though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." (Book of Discipline, 1972, ¶172.C. Human Sexuality)

General Conference of 1976

An addition to the Social Principles and regarding the use of church funds :

To the Social Principles: *"We do not recognize a relationship between two persons of the same sex as constituting marriage." (Book of Discipline, 1976, ¶171.C. Marriage)*

Regarding use of church funds: *"The council [on Finance and Administration] 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. The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures." (Book of Discipline, 1976, ¶906.13)*

General Conference of 1980

Following the debate whether to prohibit self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being ordained and appointed, the proposal was defeated, but the following was adopted regarding candidacy for ordained ministry:

"The General Conference affirms the wisdom of our heritage expressed in the Disciplinary provisions related to the character and commitment of ordained ministers. The United Methodist Church has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless. We affirm our trust in the covenant community and the process by which we ordain ministers." (Book of Discipline, 1980, Footnote, p. 185)

General Conference of 1984

Two standards for ordained clergy:

"(1) While such persons set apart by the Church for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Order are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards represented by the practice of fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness. (2) 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." (Book of Discipline, 1984, ¶402.2)

General Conference of 1988

A study process was formed for the 1988-1992 quadrennium on homosexuality.

Added to the Social Principles under The Nurturing Community/Human Sexuality:

"[Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching,] we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons." (Book of Discipline, 1988, ¶71.F.)

General Conference of 1992

The General Conference heard the report of the study on homosexuality but made no changes in the *Discipline* regarding the stance of the church by a vote of 710 for and 238 against.

However, a section was added to the Social Principles:

"Rights of Homosexual Persons - Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to support those rights and liberties for homosexual persons. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting their rightful claims where they have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships which involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against gays and lesbians." (Book of Discipline, 1992, ¶71.G)

General Conference of 1996

Added a ban for clergy from celebrating homosexual unions and banned these unions from taking place in United Methodist Churches.

"Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." (Book of Discipline, 1996, ¶165.C)

Definition was added for self-avowed practicing homosexual in a footnote:

"Self-avowed practicing homosexual' is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee on ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764." (Book of Discipline, 1996, Footnote, p 172.)

General Conference of 2000

2004, 2008, 2012

Affirmed the statement of previous General Conferences.

**"The Social Principles, while not to be considered church law, are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit. The Social Principles are a call to the members of The United Methodist Church to a prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice." (Book of Discipline, 2016, Part V Social Principles, Preface)*

2016 - General Conference

In 2016 the Commission on a Way Forward was created by the General Conference to develop plans to present to a Special Session of General Conference in February of 2019.

2019 - Called General Conference regarding The Way Forward

Three plans were brought forward:

- One Church Plan
 - Recognized diverse theological and scriptural understandings
 - Removed negative and restrictive language about homosexuality
 - No annual conference, bishop, congregation, or pastor must act contrary to their convictions
- Connectional Conference Plan
 - Creates three values-based connectional conferences: Traditional, Unity, and Progressive
 - Each has its own *Book of Discipline*
 - Conferences and churches decide which connectional conference to join
- Traditional Plan
 - Strengthened current language of the *Book of Discipline* concerning human sexuality
 - Increased sanctions and punishments
 - Provided process for those who cannot live within the *Book of Discipline* to leave

One additional plan was brought to the General Conference

- Simple Plan
 - Removed all negative or restrictive language regarding homosexuality from the *Book of Discipline* as the policy for everyone.

At this General Conference, the Traditional Plan passed 438 to 384. Here it is important to remember we are a global church. 2/3 of the delegates from the United States voted for the One Church Plan. There were enough delegates from the Central Conference, which is comprised of churches outside of the United States, who voted for the Traditional Plan and therefore the One Church Plan was defeated.

2020 - General Conference Postponed

The Global pandemic caused the General Conference to be postponed several times and is now planned for 2024.