



# Belin Memorial UMC

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Denominational Education  
Team Presentation

January 14, 2024

# Denominational Education Team

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## Our Purpose

Provide

Provide balanced, fair, and transparent information about the state of the United Methodist Church

Context

For greater context, overview the main topics and events comprising the current state

Outline

Outline options for Belin Memorial UMC

Listen

Listen to members' questions and concerns, providing answers where possible

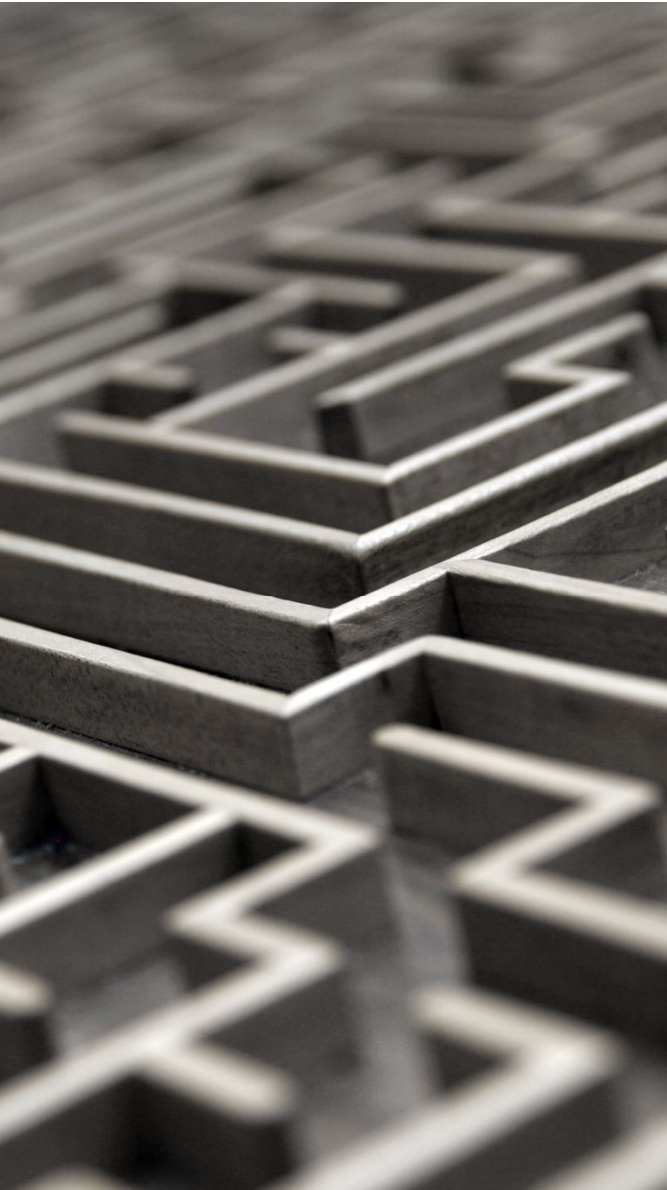
# A message from the Subcommittee



We recognize that the current times in the United Methodist Church are characterized by intense contention and difficulties. These challenges have caused significant division and tension within the denomination.

In response to these circumstances, we call for:

- 1. Patience, kindness, gentleness, and love:** Let us approach one another with understanding and compassion, recognizing that people may hold differing perspectives and experiences. It is crucial to engage in respectful dialogue and foster an environment of empathy, where our actions reflect the love of Christ.
- 2. Prayers for each other, the church, and our ministry:** In the face of discord, let us turn to prayer as a means of seeking solace, guidance, and unity. Through heartfelt intercession, we can lift up one another, our beloved church, and our collective mission, asking for divine intervention and wisdom.
- 3. Openness to divine guidance from the Holy Spirit:** As we navigate this discord, it is vital that we remain open to the Holy Spirit. Let us humbly seek God's will, individually and collectively, relying on spiritual discernment and guidance to guide us through these turbulent times.



# Context | A Review of the Topics and Events

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**1. Basic church organization**

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

**2. Schism timeline**

*Historical timeline that sheds light on how the UMC got to this point.*

**3. Issues and concerns driving the schism**

*Human sexuality, perceived doctrinal disagreements, and presumptions of where things are headed top the list.*



# Preview | UMC Org Structure

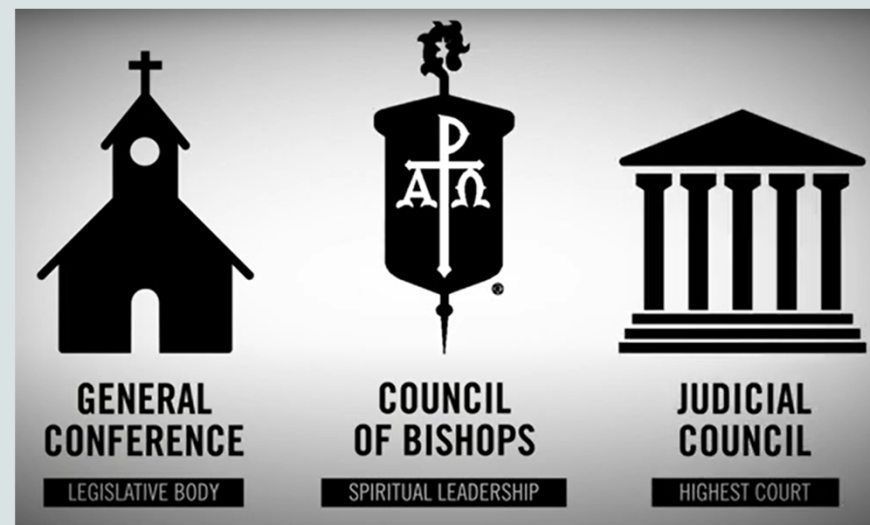
The United Methodist Church does not have a central headquarters or a single executive leader.

Duties are divided among bodies that include:

**The General Conference:** *Legislative Body that sets the official policy and speaks for the denomination; meets every four years and consists of clergy and lay delegates.*

**The Council of Bishops:** *Executive Body that provides spiritual leadership; not “ordained” as bishops, but clergy elected to the office of bishop.*

**The Judicial Council:** *Judicial Body, or “court” comprised of nine members made up of laity and clergy elected by the General Conference to serve.*





# GENERAL CONFERENCE

LEGISLATIVE BODY

## Legislative Authority | General Conference

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- 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.

## Executive Authority | Council of Bishops

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- 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.



**COUNCIL  
OF BISHOPS**

**SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**



## Judicial Authority | Judicial Council

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- 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.

# Five (5) US-based Jurisdictions

## 1. Northeastern

- 10 Annual Conferences

## 2. North Central

- 10 Annual Conferences

## 3. Western

- 7 Annual Conferences

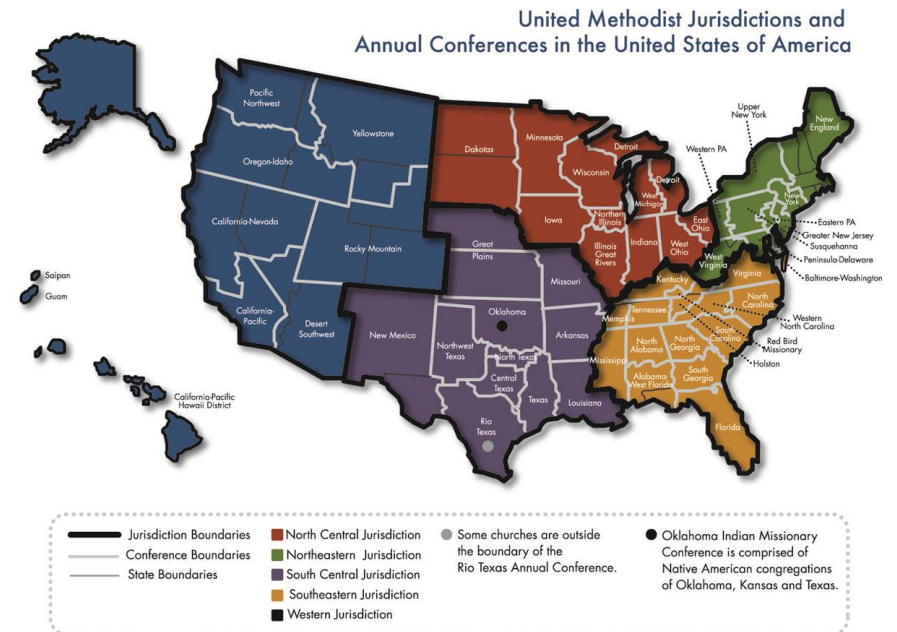
## 4. South Central

- 12 Annual Conferences

## 5. Southeastern

- 14 Annual Conferences

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)**

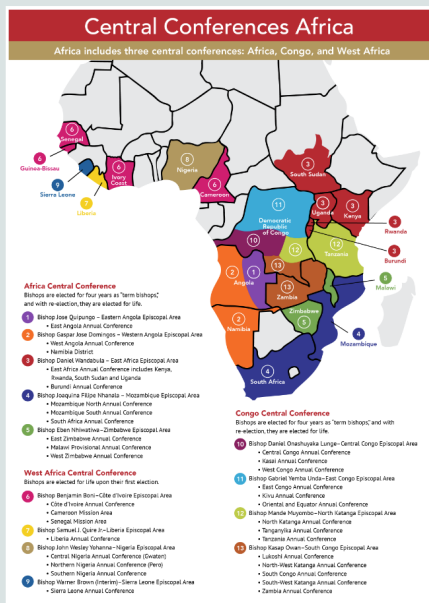


Map courtesy of United Methodist Communications.

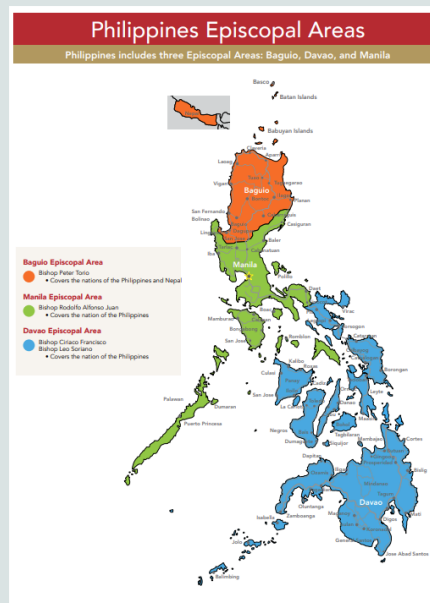


# Seven (7) Central Jurisdictions Located Internationally

**Note:** Jurisdictional and Central Conferences are responsible for the **election of new bishops and assigning bishops to their episcopacy**. These conferences meet every four years, alternating with the General Conference. The process includes forming a committee on episcopacy within each jurisdiction for receiving Episcopal Nominations from individuals, local churches, and annual conferences.



**Africa:** Contains five episcopal areas, 10 annual conferences and ministry in 11 countries;  
**Congo:** Contains four episcopal areas, 14 annual conferences, and ministry in nine countries;  
**West Africa:** Contains four episcopal areas, six annual conferences, and ministry in six countries



**The Philippines** constitutes one central conference, which has three episcopal areas, 24 annual conferences, and ministry in one country.



**Central and Southern Europe:** Contains one episcopal area, seven annual conferences, and ministry in 15 countries;  
**Germany:** Contains one episcopal area, three annual conferences, and ministry in one country;  
**Northern Europe and Eurasia:** Contains two episcopal areas, 10 annual conferences, and ministry in 14 countries.

## Regional Bodies known as Annual Conferences



*Annual Conferences are responsible for the selection and ordination of clergy and election of delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conference. Delegates are NOT representatives; they vote their conscience.*

An Annual Conference is a regional body for a specific geographic area that provides an intermediate level of governance between local churches and the general or global structures of the UMC.

- **Geographic Scope:** Size varies significantly, ranging from a few churches in a small area to a large number of churches in a larger region.
- **Membership:** Made up of clergy serving the conference and a group of elected lay members representing local churches within the conference.
- **Leadership:** Led by a resident bishop appointed to oversee the region and provide spiritual leadership. The bishop is supported by a team of district superintendents who provide administrative guidance to the churches within their districts.
- **Decision-Making:** Annual meetings held where clergy and lay members come together to make decisions related to the governance and mission of the conference.
- **Administrative Functions:** Can include appointing and assigning clergy to local churches, providing pastoral support and guidance, overseeing clergy ordination processes, and managing conference resources and finances.
- **Connectional Relationships:** Provides for collaboration, mutual support, and shared decision-making among local churches and clergy within its boundaries and fosters connections with other Annual Conferences and the broader global structures of the UMC.

# UMC SC Districts



The Districts of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church are defined by the local churches and charges assigned to them, not by specific geographic lines. This map is a general representation.

## Districts of the SC Annual Conference

- Anderson
- Columbia
- Florence
- Greenville
- Greenwood
- Hartsville
- **Marion**
- Orangeburg
- Rock hill
- Spartanburg
- Walterboro
- Charleston

**Belin Memorial UMC is in the Marion District.**

# Local Church Governance

**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

**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:
  - Pastor
  - Church Council
  - 10 percent of the professing membership of the local church

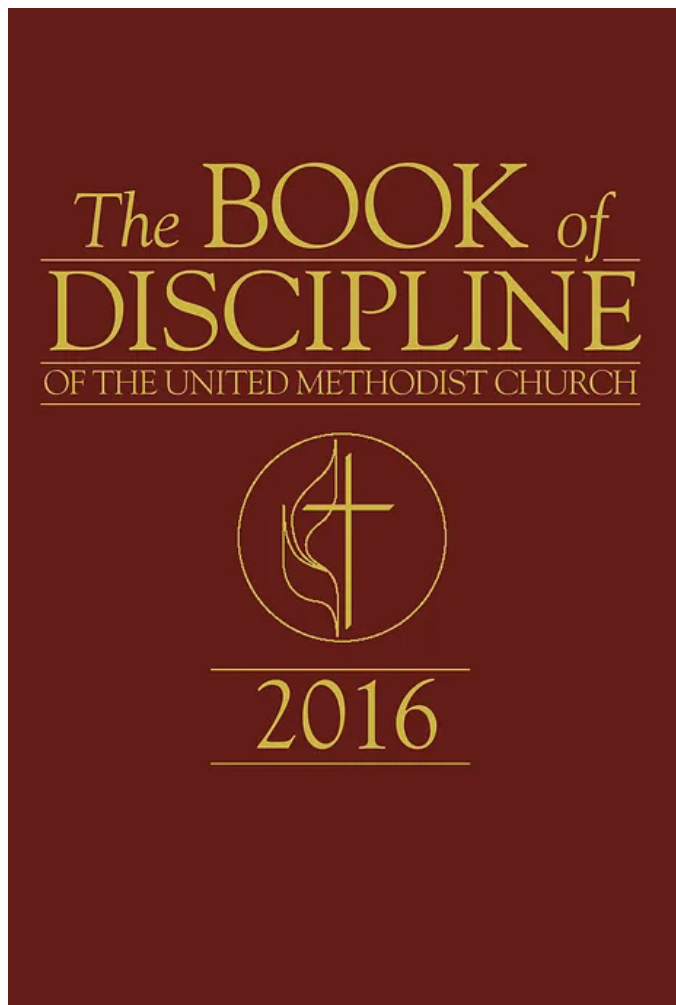
# Belin Memorial UMC | Our Structure

Five main entities lead Belin:

- **Church Council**  
Responsible for setting church goals/objectives and approving church budget
- **Board of Trustees**  
Responsible for care, management, and use of all Belin property
- **Staff Parish Relations Committee**  
Responsible for staffing the necessary positions at Belin 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







## The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church

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- 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.

UMC Book of Discipline  
*Current Language*

## BOD Current Language:

### ¶ 4 Article IV. Inclusiveness of the Church

**Inclusiveness of the Church:** The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection.

Note: For entire verbiage, refer to Book of Discipline

# BOD Current Language: Social Principles

THE NURTURING COMMUNITY ¶ 161 (G): We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

Note: For entire verbiage, refer to Book of Discipline

# BOD Current Language: The Ministry of the Ordained

## Qualifications for Ordination: ¶ 304 (J)

Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and Discipline and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers.

## Qualifications for Ordination: ¶ 304.3:

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.

Qualifications for Ordination: ¶ 341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

Note: For entire verbiage, refer to Book of Discipline



# 1. Human Sexuality, the Most Pervasive Issue

The current position of the UMC on Human Sexuality can be summed up in six statements, all from the 2016 Book of Discipline, the last printed version:

- **All people are of sacred worth. (¶161G)**
- **All people deserve equal rights. (¶162J)**
- **The practice of homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teaching. (¶161F, 161G, 304.3)**
- **United Methodist pastors cannot officiate same-sex weddings and local churches cannot host such ceremonies (¶341.6)**
- **The UMC will not ordain self-avowed, practicing homosexuals (¶304.3)**
- **Church agencies will not fund "homosexual causes" (pro- or anti-) (¶613.19, 806.9)**

## 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: 2016 General Conference and Following

## 2016 General Conference

- 2016 General Conference deferred all votes on human sexuality and referred entire subject to special Commission named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in the Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality.

## 2016 Western Jurisdictional Conference

- 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 repudiating the 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 General Conference

- I. Called to specifically address issues related to homosexuality within the UMC there were Three Proposals:

## One Church Plan

- Endorsed by Council of Bishops
- Remove prohibitions of homosexual ordination and same-sex marriage from Book of Discipline
- Allow individual local churches option to not perform same sex marriages and/or accept homosexual clergy

## Connectional Conference Plan

- Replaces the existing Jurisdictional Conferences with three “connectional conferences”:
- Progressive, Traditional, and Unity
- Each connectional conference would have their own Book of Discipline

## Traditional Plan

- Basically keeps the Book of Discipline as is in regards to homosexual ordination and performing same sex marriage

Approved by General Conference by a 438 - 384 vote (53%)

# Schism Timeline: 2019 Special Called General Conference

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: 2020-2022

- General Conference Postponed in 2020, 2021,2022 and then rescheduled for 2024

- 2020: Abeyance (Article V, Item 1):

“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.”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.

2022:

- 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
- Global Methodist Church officially formed
- Several parties announce they no longer support the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation
- Rev. Cedric Bridgeforth becomes the second openly gay clergy elected to Bishop by the Western Jurisdiction



# Schism Timeline: 2023-2024

2023 South Carolina Annual Conference held (June 4-7)

- 113 SC Annual Conference Churches are approved for disaffiliation (roughly 12% of total churches in SC Annual Conference)
- 5 of churches leaving were top givers (apportionments) including the top two churches (Mt Horeb and Buncombe St)
- 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 is eligible to retire (September, 2024) - SC Annual Conference could receive a new Bishop that is less sympathetic to churches who want to disaffiliate.

# The 4 Issues in the Debate Over Disaffiliation

1. Human Sexuality – The Primary Question Driving the Debate
2. Adherence to the Book of Discipline
3. Connectional vs. Congregational Governance
4. Fear of Changes to Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules

# Human Sexuality | Primary Question Driving the Debate

**Whether or not the church should fully include and affirm LGBTQ+ individuals in all aspects of its life and ministry.**

*Question revolves around the understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity within the context of Christian faith and the interpretation of Scripture.*

- **Traditionalists emphasize the preservation of the church's historical teachings**

*Maintain that certain sexual practices, particularly same-sex relationships, are incompatible with Christian teaching*

- **Progressives advocate for full inclusion and affirmation of LGBTQ+ individuals**

*Seeking to remove barriers to their participation in ministry and marriage within the church*



## 2. Adherence to the Book of Discipline

- **Lack of adherence to and enforcement of the Book of Discipline by the Council of Bishops in matters of homosexual ordination and gay marriages define this issue**
- **Gay ordinations and same sex marriages within the UMC are not rampant as some groups would contend, but they have occurred/are occurring**
- **The election of a gay minister, Rev. Karen Oliveto to Bishop by the Western Jurisdiction in 2016 is the poster child**

*South Central Jurisdiction challenged the election*

*Judicial Council ruled the election violated the Book of Discipline but left her in good standing pending further review/due process*

*Six years later, Oliveto still serves as Bishop of the Mountain Sky Episcopal area*

*Her bio reads, "Oliveto has the distinction of being the first openly lesbian bishop in the United Methodist Church."*





## 4. Fear of Changes to Our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules



Concerns over changing our fundamental beliefs as expressed in the Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith and General Rules exist

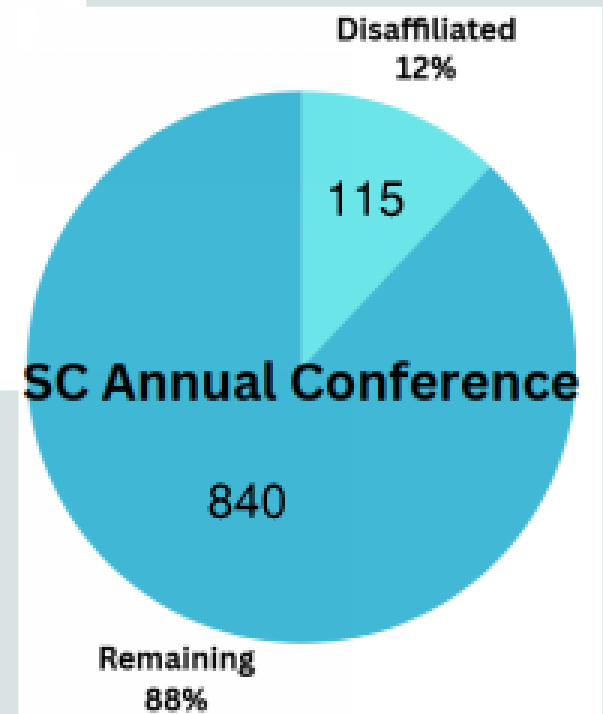
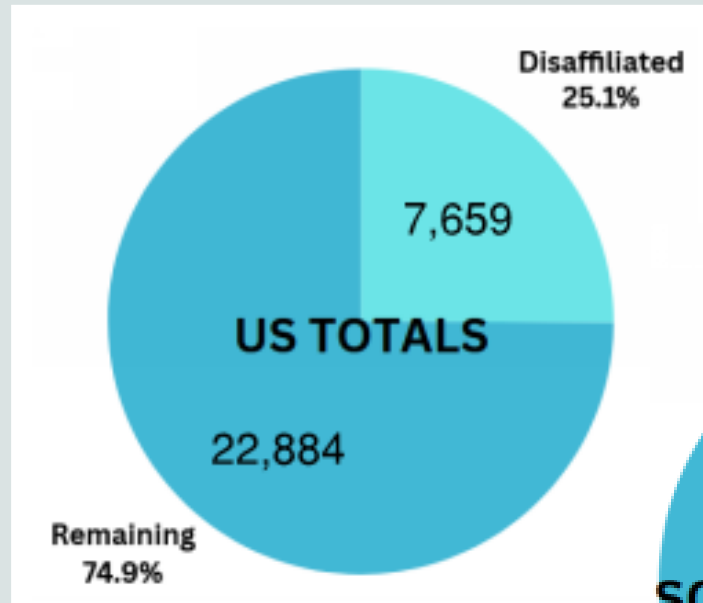
These doctrines have been constitutionally protected by restrictive rules requiring a **2/3 vote of the General Conference plus supermajorities of votes of all annual conferences worldwide**

- **For the Articles of Religion and Confession, a 3/4 supermajority is required**
- **For the General Rules, a 2/3 supermajority is required**

***It is unlikely that such supermajorities will be achieved***

# State of the United Methodist Church Today

	United States	SC Annual Conference
Total Churches (2019)	30,543	955
Disaffiliated - 2019	10	0
Disaffiliated - 2020	57	0
Disaffiliated - 2021	123	1
Disaffiliated - 2022	1,827	1
Disaffiliated - 2023	5,642	113
<b>Total Disaffiliated</b>	<b>7,659</b>	<b>115</b>
Remaining as of December 2023	22,884	840





# SC Annual Conference

Local Church Discernment Process

# “A Faithful Step Forward”

To ensure congregations are equipped to make decisions that enable them to best live into their disciple-making mission, South Carolina Conference leaders have adopted a process through which a local church can discern whether it will continue in ministry within The United Methodist Church or separate from the denomination.

The Local Church Discernment Process is designed to help local churches determine whether they can function as a United Methodist church if they firmly believe that the denomination has not consistently upheld its stated doctrine on issues of human sexuality. It will provide an opportunity for church members to engage in dialogue, to allow every voice in the congregation an opportunity to be heard, and to discern the congregation’s sentiment regarding separation.

<https://www.umcsc.org/discern/>

## “Grounded in” the Book of Discipline: ¶ 2549. Disposition of Property of a Closed Local Church

¶ 2549.3, the district superintendent may, pursuant to this paragraph, recommend the closure of a local church, upon a finding that:

- a) The local church no longer serves the purpose for which it was organized or incorporated (¶¶ 201-204); or
- b) The local church property is no longer used, kept, or maintained by its membership as a place of divine worship of The United Methodist Church.

# Entering the Discernment Process

Church Council votes to enter process and designates a 30-day discernment period

Church Council requests and the District Superintendent sets a Church Conference Date

Church Council obtains a property appraisal and provides the Conference with value of real property and liquid assets

Annual Conference provides unfunded liability, unpaid direct bill and apportionments

All paperwork must be submitted to the SC Annual Conference no later than December 1st



# Disaffiliation Process

Church holds church-wide information sessions concerning separation and the finances involved

Church Conference must be held by March 1

District Superintendent Submits certification of local church vote

Local Church/Conference/New Entity enter into an agreement

Funds to be placed in escrow by 5/29

Annual Conference votes to accept in June Session

Transfer of all property to new entity prior to June 28

Local Church closes June 28

Local church provides list of remaining UMC members

# Upcoming Education Events:

**January 28, 2024, at 4 PM** – Presentation from Reverend Smoke Kanipe from Shandon United Methodist about why he has chosen to remain with the United Methodist Church

**February 4, 2024, at 4 PM** – Presentation from Reverend Jeff Kersey from Mt. Horeb Church about why he chose to leave the United Methodist Church

**February 11, 2024, at 3 PM** – How leaving or remaining United Methodist would affect Belin Memorial



QUESTIONS?



COMMENTS?



CONCERNS?