



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for being here this afternoon to hear from our District Superintendent, Reverend Edlen Cowley. We have had many good questions submitted, it is encouraging to see this level of engagement during our time of discernment.

Attached, you will find helpful information for our meeting today:

- ¶2553 added to the Book of Discipline in 2019 outlines the disaffiliation process
- North Texas Conference One Church Plan (referenced in above)
- NTC Fact vs. Fiction
- South Central Jurisdiction Conference Resolution 22-03
  - This resolution was passed November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 by a vote of 128/35. Texas is included in the South Central Jurisdiction
- Questions submitted for DS Reverend Cowley to be answered this afternoon

Information on our website has been the source for several of the questions, and we will continue to update the website with new information as it becomes available.

We are grateful for this church body of Christ and your faithfulness to engage in this time of prayer and discernment to determine God's will for LHUMC. While we may have different viewpoints among us, we are united in our love for Jesus and identity in Christ. Please continue praying for LHUMC, our pastors, staff and one another as we take this journey together.

*"Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*  
John 13:35 TLB

**God is unchanging. God is forever faithful. God is sovereign.**

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry King".

Terry King

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kori Haug".

Kori Haug

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¶ 2553. Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality—

1. *Basis*-- Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.

2. *Time Limits*--The choice by a local church to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church under this paragraph shall be made in sufficient time for the process for exiting the denomination to be complete prior to December 31, 2023. The provisions of ¶ 2553 expire on December 31, 2023 and shall not be used after that date.

3. *Decision Making Process*--The church conference shall be conducted in accordance with ¶ 248 and shall be held within one hundred twenty (120) days after the district superintendent calls for the church conference. In addition to the provisions of ¶ 246.8, special attention shall be made to give broad notice to the full professing membership of the local church regarding the time and place of a church conference called for this purpose and to use all means necessary, including electronic communication where possible, to communicate. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.

4. *Process Following Decision to Disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church*--If the church conference votes to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, the terms and conditions for that disaffiliation shall be established by the board of trustees of the applicable annual conference, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor. The terms and conditions, including the effective date of disaffiliation, shall be memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement between the annual conference and the trustees of the local church, acting on behalf of the members. That agreement must be consistent with the following provisions:

a) *Standard Terms of the Disaffiliation Agreement*. The General Council on Finance and Administration shall develop a standard form for Disaffiliation Agreements under this paragraph to protect The United Methodist Church as set forth in ¶ 807.9. The agreement shall include a recognition of the validity and applicability of ¶ 2501, notwithstanding the release of property therefrom. Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.

b) *Apportionments*. The local church shall pay any unpaid apportionments for the 12 months prior to disaffiliation, as well as an additional 12 months of apportionments.

- c) *Property.* A disaffiliating local church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property. All transfers of property shall be made prior to disaffiliation. All costs for transfer of title or other legal work shall be borne by the disaffiliating local church.
- d) *Pension Liabilities.* The local church shall contribute withdrawal liability in an amount equal to its pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations to the annual conference. The General Board of Pension and Health Benefits shall determine the aggregate funding obligations of the annual conference using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, from which the annual conference will determine the local church's share.
- e) *Other Liabilities.* The local church shall satisfy all other debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign and transfer them to its new entity, prior to disaffiliation.
- f) *Payment Terms.* Payment shall occur prior to the effective date of departure.
- g) *Disaffiliating Churches Continuing as Plan Sponsors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits Plans.* The United Methodist Church believes that a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to share common religious bonds and convictions with The United Methodist Church based on shared Wesleyan theology and tradition and Methodist roots, unless the local church expressly resolves to the contrary. As such, a local church disaffiliating under ¶ 2553 shall continue to be eligible to sponsor voluntary employee benefit plans through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits under ¶ 1504.2, subject to the applicable terms and conditions of the plans.
- h) Once the disaffiliating local church has reimbursed the applicable annual conference for all funds due under the agreement, and provided that there are no other outstanding liabilities or claims against The United Methodist Church as a result of the disaffiliation, in consideration of the provisions of this paragraph, the applicable annual conference shall release any claims that it may have under ¶ 2501 and other paragraphs of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* commonly referred to as the trust clause, or under the agreement.

Note: Regarding reason for disaffiliation, in addition to the “reasons of conscience” or “actions or inactions of the North Texas Conference (NTC)” listed in ¶2553, the NTC will also accept the reason of the NTC trending to clinging to aspire as a One Church Conference (attached).

**LA 16**

**ONE CHURCH RESOLUTION**

WHEREAS the One Church Plan provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context without disbanding the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church, and

WHEREAS in the One Church Plan, no annual conferences, bishops, congregations, or pastors are compelled to act contrary to their convictions, and

WHEREAS the plan grants space for traditionalists to continue to offer ministry as they have in the past, space for progressives to exercise freely a more complete ministry with LGBTQ persons, and space for all United Methodists to continue to coexist without disrupting their ministries, and

WHEREAS the One Church Plan removes the language from The Book of Discipline used in the United States that restricts pastors and churches from conducting same-sex weddings and annual conferences from ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexual persons, and it adds language that intentionally protects the religious freedom of pastors and churches who choose not to perform or host same-sex weddings and Boards of Ordained Ministry and bishops who choose not to credential or ordain self-avowed practicing homosexual persons,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that as people of the North Texas Conference we aspire to behave as One Church Congregations and Conference.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that:

We will pray for one another;  
We will allow for contextual ministry and pastoral care and not impede the work of others in ministry;  
We will seek to find common ground and actively be in ministry with people who are different from us, and  
We will not speak ill of one another and we will model that all people are of sacred worth.

## THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### **“The church is splitting.”**

No, the term “split” applies when there is a negotiated agreement within the denomination to divide assets and resources. No such agreement has been made in The United Methodist Church. The earliest point at which such an agreement could be made would be at the next General Conference to be held in 2024.

What is happening is that some traditionalist leaders have decided to create their own denomination (the Global Methodist Church). Leaders of that denomination and other unofficial advocacy groups, such as the Wesleyan Covenant Association, which created it, are encouraging like-minded United Methodist congregations and clergy to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and join their denomination instead.

### **“Traditionalists are being asked to leave the denomination.”**

No. The North Texas Annual Conference leadership does not desire for any church to disaffiliate and believes that there is room in the North Texas Conference for all churches – traditional, progressive, and everything in between.

### **“The UMC intends to change the Bible.”**

No. The United Methodist Church has no official translation of the Bible and has never sought to alter the Bible at all. United Methodists have always had a variety of views about how to interpret specific passages of Scripture and likely always will.

### **“The UMC is allowing congregations that exit the denomination to continue to offer the same pension and health benefits programs to their clergy and staff.”**

No, The Book of Discipline does not permit non-UMC entities to be plan sponsors of the Clergy Retirement Security Program. Only a General Conference can change this. Churches that disaffiliate will face changes to the benefits they can offer their clergy. Individual congregations and clergy that join the Global Methodist Church (GMC) will be eligible to participate in a retirement plan offered by the GMC, which will be a Wespath defined-contribution retirement plan similar to a United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP).

Active Elders and Deacons who disaffiliate under Discipline ¶360 will have all assets accrued in CRSP and previous programs in which they may have participated (defined benefit and defined contribution) converted into a cash equivalent and placed into their United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP). Active Local Pastors, Provisional Members, Associate Members and Retired Clergy who disaffiliate under Discipline ¶360 will experience no impact to their account balance. Future retirement plan contributions may be made to the new retirement plan described above which, like UMPIP, is a personal retirement account subject to the effects of the stock market and other investments on its value.

At this time, it is not possible for individual congregations (whether in the GMC or in The UMC) to be plan sponsors for the HealthFlex health insurance programs Wespath offers, unless a congregation has more than 50 eligible employees. United Methodist annual conferences are the

# FACT VS. FICTION

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plan sponsors for congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees. This means individual congregations with fewer than 50 eligible employees currently participating in these programs that exit The United Methodist Church can no longer offer these benefits to their clergy and employees effective with the date of disaffiliation. Clergy currently covered by HealthFlex, who choose to disaffiliate are eligible to continue on the health insurance plan by paying 100% of the costs themselves for up to 18 months. At that point, the HealthFlex plan is no longer available to them. Individual congregations and clergy who join the GMC may participate in the health benefits selected by the GMC, which may include HealthFlex.

Retired clergy who surrender their credentials will no longer be eligible for the Conference funding through the health reimbursement account at Via Benefits. If there is funding already on account with Via Benefits, it will remain in place until it is gone, but no additional annual funding will be added to the clergy's account. The same applies for any non-clergy spouse of a retired clergy surrendering credentials. No additional funding will be made available.

Active clergy who are eligible to receive benefits provided through the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP), including but not limited to disability and death benefits, will lose them. Retired clergy who are eligible for death benefits will retain them.

For additional information, [see the latest from Wespath](#).

## **“The Bishops aren’t enforcing the Discipline.”**

The Council of Bishops, like the broader church, holds a range of opinions on how best to live into and uphold *The Book of Discipline*. As such, enforcement of the Discipline has varied from conference to conference. In the North Texas Conference, the Bishop and the Cabinet remain committed to upholding *The Book of Discipline* and following the complaint procedures as outlined in ¶1362 and ¶12701.

## **“The church is too political/liberal/progressive.”**

Regarding spiritual formation, we are non-partisan; as Christians, however, we cannot be apolitical. The church is political, a word derived from the Greek word *polis*, literally “a city” or a gathering of people. Jesus’ overturning tables in the temple was a political act.

As United Methodists, we recognize the vital function of government in ordering society, and our Social Principles remind us that “The strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust.” (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶164.B)

In our current political climate, politics can cause tension and stir strong emotions. But politics are not intrinsically bad. “Political” doesn’t have to mean “divisive.”

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**“General Conference 2019 has already spoken, so why are the traditionalists the ones that have to leave? Conservative pastors and congregations feel persecuted.”**

It is important to remember that no one is being asked, forced, coerced or otherwise made to leave or to remain in The UMC. In 2021, the Council of Bishops released their vision of a future for The UMC that makes space for all perspectives to co-exist and continue working together for the transformation of the world. Their vision document is entitled "A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church." The bishops envisioned "a denomination rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ, and welcoming to all churchgoers – however they identify."

**“This really doesn’t have to do with sexuality. This is our chance to get out with our building.”**

Paragraph 2553 of *The Book of Discipline* states the basis for a church to disaffiliate from The UMC as follows:

“Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.”

Reasons such as connectional giving or property are not related to the basis for ¶ 2553 and would not be applicable to disaffiliation under this provision.

**“The Council of Bishops has already decided that homosexuality will be condoned at the next General Conference.”**

The only body with the authority to set policy for The United Methodist Church is the General Conference. Bishops do not vote at General Conference. While bishops certainly have preferences individually for the future of The United Methodist Church, the General Conference will ultimately make decisions on changes to The Book of Discipline.

**“Our pastor can retire from the UMC and then lead our GMC congregation.”**

Retired and active UM clergy cannot serve as clergy in a disaffiliated church, while maintaining membership in the UMC. In order to serve a disaffiliated church, UM clergy must disaffiliate to unite with another denomination (per paragraph 360.1 of *The Book of Discipline*), surrender their conference membership and be credentialed through an entity other than the UMC.

## THE NORTH TEXAS CONFERENCE

**“All of the churches with conservative pastors are leaving.” OR**

**“All of the churches with progressive pastors are leaving.”**

No, since our formation in 1968, The UMC has always been a “big tent” denomination where progressive, conservative and moderate believers are welcomed and respected.

## **“The Conference cares more about the Conference than the local church.”**

While there are certainly pressing concerns at the Conference level, the leadership of the North Texas Conference cares deeply for and seeks to support the life and ministry of all of the local churches in our connection. After all, there is no North Texas Conference without our local churches. The Conference leadership is focused on serving and supporting the local church and is keenly aware of the purpose of the annual conference as defined in *The Book of Discipline*: “equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.” (¶ 601). Here is just a sampling of some of the ways that the Conference is supporting and tending to local churches:

- Clergy coaching and resources
- Missional and congregational support grants, especially during the pandemic
- Camping and retreat ministries at Bridgeport and Prothro camps
- Small group study resources like Wesleyan Roots, which explores Wesleyan beliefs and practice
- Staff support in the areas of evangelism and disciple-making, vitalization, new faith expressions, ministry with neighbors and leadership development for children, youth and adults

## **“The Conference owns our building but doesn’t help us fix it.”**

This question is directly related to the trust clause defined by *The Book of Discipline* and used in titles for property and assets. This requirement is a “fundamental expression of United Methodism whereby local churches and other agencies and institutions within the denomination are both held accountable to and benefit from their connection with the entire worldwide Church.” (¶ 2501)

The trust clause has been a part of Methodism since the beginning and is based on the belief that the key question is, “What is best for the whole connection?” and not “What is best for my congregation or me?” In 1750, John Wesley worked with lawyers to craft deeds for existing Methodist properties that helped ensure they would continue to be used in support of the Methodist movement. The clause was first approved by the General Conference for American Methodists in 1796 and included in *The Book of Discipline* in 1797.

Local church property is held by the local church Board of Trustees. The property is held “in trust,” which means the local church holds the property with an obligation to maintain and protect the property so it can continue to be used as a United Methodist Church in the future.

All North Texas Conference churches participate in a connectional property insurance program. Over the past two years alone, dozens of local churches have benefitted from the program, undergoing major renovations and repairs related to the 2021 winter storm and flooding in Dallas County.

## **“If you stay, the Conference will appoint a gay pastor to your church.”**

In the appointment-making process, the needs and theological understanding of the local church are always considered by the Cabinet. The Cabinet will not send a pastor to “convert” a congregation or force an agenda.

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The Bishop and Cabinet work from a set of core values and commitments as they discern appointments:

- We will listen for and submit to the Holy Spirit's leading through prayer, scripture reading, and holy conferencing.
- We believe the church is the Body of Christ and the work we do is the work of God.
- We will prepare ourselves spiritually, physically, and mentally for this discernment process while relying on Christ to do "more than we could ask for or imagine".
- Our appointment considerations will include the church and the larger community
- We will consider the needs/opportunities of the church and gifts/strengths of the pastor with both a present and a post-pandemic framework in mind.
- We will name and claim the missional rationale for new appointments.
- We will engage in ongoing critical and constructive self-reflection on how we can improve the appointive process and best support clergy & congregations in transition.

**"If you stay, the Conference will force pastors and churches to perform same-sex marriages."**

No pastor is ever forced to marry anyone, nor will they be in the future. Pastors currently make their own decision about their willingness to marry a couple. They have autonomy; they can – and do – decline to marry people and will retain this discretion.

**"Every church has to take a vote on this."**

Every church is **not** required to vote on disaffiliation. Churches staying United Methodist can continue doing ministry as before; no vote is needed to affirm their remaining United Methodist.

**"If we disaffiliate, we have to send the Conference all our UMC hymnals."**

Hymnals have been deemed to be property that will be released from the trust clause under a fully executed Disaffiliation Agreement. As such, hymnals will not be required to be sent to the Conference as part of the agreement. If a church chooses to affiliate with another denomination, they may, however, choose not to continue using United Methodist hymnals.

## THEOLOGICAL CONCERN

**"The Conference doesn't believe in scriptural holiness."**

It is important to note that the North Texas Conference (like all annual conferences) does not have the authority to speak on behalf of the denomination on any topic. That is an inherent part of our denomination's structure. Our scriptural, theological understanding is defined as part of *The Book of Discipline* and further clarified in *The Book of Worship* and *The Book of Resolutions*.

We believe in the authority of scripture and that "Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation." The United Methodist Church is founded on a Wesleyan theology of grace, anchored in Scripture, and based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the continuing movement of the Holy Spirit.

In our polity, we emphatically state: "Faith is the only response essential for salvation." United Methodists affirm that through Jesus Christ, God has made salvation available to all persons. That does not mean we believe that all persons will be saved. John Wesley (and we) teach that Christ's

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death creates the possibility that all may be saved. We believe salvation is God's response and offer of love, and that love does not compel people to accept it. We do not believe that God predestines some to salvation and others to condemnation. We embrace the fundamentals of the Wesleyan tradition and dedicate ourselves to the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**"The UMC is more focused on social justice than sharing the saving grace of Jesus. Why should I continue to give to a denomination that is going to prioritize social justice over the gospel?"**

We insist that personal salvation always involves Christian mission and service to the world. Scriptural holiness entails more than personal piety; love of God is always linked with love of neighbor, a passion for justice and renewal in the life of the world. In joining heart and hand, we assert that personal religion, evangelical witness and Christian social action are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing.

We remember that in Matthew 22, Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment. He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

**"Leaving The UMC will give your local church the revival it needs. The North Texas Conference and The UMC are causing your church to die."**

Revival begins with a transformation of the heart and mind, which compels us to move beyond the walls of the church into the world to be the hands and feet and voice of the Body of Christ. Every church has the power to do this.

**"The UMC is about to alter its doctrine to deny the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ or salvation through Christ alone."**

All of these positions are bedrock in the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church, more specifically in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. These cannot be altered without a two-thirds vote of the General Conference followed by a three-fourths aggregate approval of all annual conferences of The United Methodist Church worldwide. There is no basis to conclude such majorities could be achieved to alter the Articles and Confession for any reason; moreover, we are not aware of any proposed legislation for General Conference 2024 that would introduce these sorts of changes.

Read more on this topic and others at "[Is the UMC Really...](#)" from [umc.org](#)

**"People who want to leave The UMC do not believe the Bible." OR**

**"People who want to stay in The UMC do not believe the Bible."**

Statements such as these have been made about persons with differing opinions on several matters. The United Methodist denomination remains committed to the authority of scripture.

One person having a different interpretation of the scripture from another on a given topic does not support either of these claims about a person's scriptural beliefs. These claims might be better

expressed by saying that there are varying opinions within the body of Christ, but broad claims such as these are not based in fact and cannot be applied to large groups of people.

For more information on The UMC's position on scripture, see Articles V and VI in the Articles of Religion and Article IV in the Confession of Faith.

## FINANCIAL CONCERNS

### **“We are tired of paying a ‘tax.’”**

Any church organization that seeks to collectively care for God’s children will have expenses. Sharing in and providing the means for that care is a distinctive way United Methodists live into our call. This connection is at the core of what it means to be a United Methodist.

United Methodists today join the generations of our forebears who built and sustained the church, hospitals and universities so United Methodist ministry will continue into the future. The opportunity to participate in funding our connectional ministries is not a “tax,” but rather, a way that we join other United Methodists in providing a system of support to care for God’s children.

**Apportionments** started with John Wesley when he recognized that people in the small faith groups (class meetings) he helped organize could do more with their combined resources than they could as individuals in reaching out to the poor and in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

**Connectional giving** was developed to support the mission and ministry of the church. Both clergy and laity have a voice and a vote in setting those financial goals. Our shared giving has made it possible for the people of The UMC to share the gospel and care for all of God’s children throughout the world. Every United Methodist church is part of a larger connection of shared purpose and mission that has been in existence for hundreds of years.

### **“The Conference is planning to redistribute apportionments from churches that disaffiliate to churches that stay, so expect your apportionments to increase.”**

The budget is set at Annual Conference, so the churches that remain will be the ones who set the budget. That budget is then allocated to churches as apportionments. The Conference leadership is aware of the budget implications of disaffiliating churches and plans to run several scenarios of how ministry will continue when they are no longer supporting connectional giving. There is no intention to reallocate the same Conference budget to the remaining churches to cover disaffiliating churches.

### **“The UMC is an ever-increasing bureaucracy with a ballooning budget.”**

The UMC has worked diligently to be a good fiscal steward. Over the last decade, all general agencies have embraced steep budget cuts in an effort to be an asset and not a liability to the work of the local church. Specifically in the North Texas Conference, the 2022 apportionment budget was \$10,874,849. In 2023, the projected apportionment budget is reduced by 1%, to a total of \$10,765,727. A portion of the North Texas Conference budget also supports clergy through the ordination process, training, benefits on Clergy Medical Leave and moving expense reimbursement.

South Central Jurisdiction Conference 2022  
Resolution 22-03

**QUEER DELEGATES' CALL TO CENTER JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT  
FOR LGBTQIA+<sup>1</sup> PEOPLE IN THE UMC**

Resolution to the 2022 South Central Jurisdictional Conference

Whereas, in a groundswell response to the passage of harmful legislation at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, Annual Conferences elected queer clergy and lay persons to be General and Jurisdictional Delegates in record numbers, for the first time empowering queer delegates to speak and act from our diverse experiences, and

Whereas, the 2019 Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference passed the Traditional Plan, which increased penalties for United Methodists clergy who are LGBTQIA+ and for clergy who support the LGBTQIA+ community through officiating their weddings, and

Whereas, in an attempt to address the divide within The United Methodist Church, an abeyance or moratorium was proposed to the General Conference, referenced below,<sup>2</sup> by the authors of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, and

Whereas, we understand our call and responsibility as United Methodists to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God, and

Whereas, we call straight and cisgender allies to do good by using their voice and vote to support, empower, and amplify the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community in The United Methodist Church,

Therefore be it resolved that the 2022 South Central Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church:

1. Supports and amplifies the queer delegates' call to justice and empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ community in our Jurisdiction, within and beyond our churches and agencies;
2. Affirms the spirit of the abeyance or moratorium as proposed to the General Conference, as referenced above, until changes can be made in The United Methodist Book of Discipline.
3. Implores our member Annual Conferences to either not pursue or resolve in an appropriately timely fashion through a non-punitive, just resolution process any complaints against clergy regarding their sexual orientation or clergy who officiate weddings of LGBTQIA+ persons;

4. Urges that as a Jurisdiction we either not pursue or resolve in an appropriately timely fashion through a non-punitive, just resolution process any complaints against Bishops regarding their sexual orientation or those who officiate weddings of LGBTQIA+ persons;

5. Supports the election of episcopal leaders who commit to upholding this resolution and who will further justice for and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ people in the annual conferences where they serve;

6. Commits to a future of The United Methodist Church where LGBTQIA+ people will be protected, affirmed, and empowered in the life and ministry of the church in our Jurisdiction, including as laity, ordained clergy, in the episcopacy, and on boards and agencies.

Submitted by the following queer delegates from the South Central Jurisdiction:

Jesi Lipp, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, South Central

Adam Philley, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, South Central

Hidden Faithful, General Conference Delegate, South Central

Support by the following queer delegates from other Jurisdictions:

Walker Brault, Reserve Delegate, North Central

Bill Brownson, General Conference Delegate, North Central

Britt Cox, Reserve Delegate, North Central

Hidden Faithful, General Conference Delegate, North Central

Hidden Faithful, General Conference Delegate, North Central

Gregory Gross, General Conference Delegate, North Central

Alberto Hidalgo, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, North Central

Fred Lewis, General Conference Delegate, North Central

Bobbi Ruddock, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, North Central

Hannah Bonner, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Kaleigh Corbett-Rasmussen, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern Ann Craig, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Rev. Dr. Becca Girrell, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Claire Holston, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Jorge Lockward, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Effie McAvoy, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern

J.J. Warren, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Rev. Dr. Jay Williams, General Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Leo Yates, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Northeastern

Jessica Barber Scott, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Southeastern

Matt Dailey, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern

Mark Elder, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern

Rushing Kimball, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Southeastern

Antony Larry, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern  
Caleb Parker, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern  
Helen Ryde, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern  
Derrick Scott III, General Conference Delegate, Southeastern  
Rye Standifer, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Southeastern  
Austin Adkinson, Reserve Delegate, Western  
John Angermayr, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Elizabeth Brick, General Conference Delegate, Western  
Cedrick Bridgeforth, General Conference Delegate, Western  
Megan Burg, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Becca Cramer-Mowder, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Rev Mary Klaehn, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Randall Miller, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Jan Nelson, General Conference Delegate, Western  
Kylie Nelson, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Kristin Stoneking, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Jason Takagi, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Phillip Valdes, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Kathleen Weber, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western  
Wendy Woodworth, General Conference Delegate, Western  
Frank Wulf, Jurisdictional Conference Delegate, Western

1. As delegates, we choose to describe ourselves using the umbrella term “queer,” but refer to the broader community of persons with the LGBTQIA+ acronym.

2. “Effective immediately upon adjournment of the 2020 General Conference, no complaint proceedings (including, without limitation, a bishop’s supervisory response, suspension proceedings, attempts to achieve a just resolution, or referral of a complaint) shall be initiated, and all current or pending complaint proceedings shall be suspended, insofar as the alleged Book of Discipline violation asserted in the complaint is that the respondent is a ‘self-avowed practicing homosexual’ (however that term may be defined, including, without limitation, living in a same-gender marriage, domestic partnership or civil union); that the respondent has conducted, officiated, performed, celebrated, or blessed a same-gender wedding or other same-gender union; that the respondent has certified, licensed, commissioned, ordained, consecrated, or appointed a ‘self-avowed practicing homosexual’; that the respondent has provided ‘funds to any gay caucus or group’ or used funds ‘to promote the acceptance of homosexuality’; or that the respondent has otherwise engaged in conduct that The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church currently states is ‘incompatible with Christian teaching’ as it pertains to LGBTQ relationships. This moratorium on all new and pending complaint proceedings concerning human sexuality provisions applies not only to charges that are explicitly based on ¶ 2702.1b, but also to any charge that the same alleged underlying conduct constitutes a chargeable offense under any other provision of the Discipline, including (without limitation) ‘immorality’ under ¶ 2702.1a; ‘disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church’ under ¶ 2702.1d; and ‘dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church’ under ¶ 2702.1e. This moratorium is inclusive of charges related to the following paragraphs: ¶ 161, ¶ 304.3, ¶ 310.2, ¶ 341.6, ¶ 613.19, ¶ 806.9, and ¶ 2702.1b. This moratorium does not apply to charges under any of these provisions in which the underlying alleged actions address a different subject matter, including but not limited to sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. This moratorium shall remain in effect until the close of the first General Conference of The United Methodist Church after other denominations separate. Any complaints pertaining to this paragraph filed during this period shall be held in abeyance, and no time limits shall commence until the above-referenced General Conference has concluded.” -From the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation

**QUESTIONS FOR UMC – NTC DS Rev. Edlen Cowley**  
**November 6, 2022**

1. The delay in GC has frustrated many and seems to be the basis for some within the UMC to be in conflict with the current adopted Discipline. Sort of a conscientious objection which, in some cases, was effectively endorsed by Bishop(s) based on inaction/lack of response. (There may have been private meetings and repercussions but when kept private it will not/has not deterred others to adopt a similar understanding of the tolerance of not adhering to the Discipline at the local church level.) The question: ***What assurance do we have within the UMC moving forward that the Discipline will ever again be our common agreed upon organizational road map or is the Discipline from here forward likely to be treated merely as "Suggestions" or "Best Practices" for local UMC churches?***
2. I understand the need for a procedural book (like Roberts Rules of Order for the UMC) to deal with procedural issues, but I don't understand why we are looking to something other than the Bible as a source of theological authority. ***Why have the Book of Discipline comment on substantive theological issues?***
3. ***Should our church remain in the UMC, what changes could we anticipate seeing in the day-to-day operation of our church?***
4. ***If the majority of the churches choose to pull out of the UMC because it seems to no longer be the loving, accepting body of Christ, will the remaining churches have second thoughts?***
5. In 1st Corinthians 1, Paul says not to split up when some at Corinth wanted to leave and follow the teachings of either Paul, Apollos, or Peter. Paul says the body of Christ should not be divided and spends 3 chapters talking about church unity. Considering this, it seems there should not be any divisions or denominations within Christianity. One can reach the conclusion that our best path is to get back to following Paul's instructions by disaffiliating and becoming independent. ***Why do you believe this local church or any other should remain within the UMC instead of becoming independent?***
6. The decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference. ***What happens with members that are present but abstain from voting? For example, if 300 members attend and 100 abstain, is the 2/3's number 200 or is it 133?***
7. ***Why does a church who wishes to disaffiliate have to pay two years of apportionments? Is this intended to be punitive?***

- 8. Do you have a plan for churches who wish to disaffiliate but cannot afford it?**
- 9. How did St. Andrew's UMC leave the UMC without undergoing the path outlined in ¶2553, and is there a legal dispute surrounding their departure?**
- 10.** The GMC is establishing a structure with reduced bureaucracy of the denomination compared to the UMC. Changes include no trust clause, term limits for Bishops, general lower cost of running the conference, accountability to the book of discipline, etc. ***In light of the dissatisfaction of many churches with the UMC, is there a plan in place to make any similar changes or address these ongoing concerns?***
- 11.** At the 2019 General Conference the Traditional Plan passed and the One Church Plan failed to pass. At the 2019 NTC Annual Conference, a One Church Resolution passed by 80% and it states no annual conferences, bishops, congregations or pastors are compelled to act contrary to their convictions.....and this NTC One Church Plan removes the language from The BOD used in the United States that restricts pastors and churches from conducting same-sex weddings, and annual conferences from ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexual persons. It also adds language that intentionally protects the religious freedom of pastors and churches who choose not to do the above. ***Since the only body that can change the BOD is the General Conference, but Annual Conferences can make their own resolutions of what to follow and what not to follow in the BOD, why have the BOD?***
- 12.** On November 3 this week, the South Central Jurisdictional Conference, which includes Texas United Methodist Churches, passed Resolution 22-03 by a vote of 128-35 titled QUEER DELEGATES' CALL TO CENTER JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT FOR LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE IN THE UMC. It starts, Whereas, in a groundswell response to the passage of harmful legislation at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, Annual Conferences elected queer clergy and lay persons to be General and Jurisdictional Delegates in record numbers, for the first time empowering queer delegates to speak and act from our diverse experiences... and in the body of the resolution dedicates our Jurisdiction to the full inclusion for all LGBTQIA+ people at every level of the life of the church with a spirit of abeyance and moratorium on punishment until the Book of Discipline can be changed at the next General conference. #5 of the resolution "supports the election of episcopal leaders who commit to upholding this resolution and who will uphold justice for and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ people in the annual conferences where they serve." ***Can you provide a synopsis of this resolution and its impact to the North Texas Conference? Since the NTC episcopal leaders and boards of ministry are already heavily weighted with the Progressive viewpoint, how is there room for Traditionalists to be elected? Did you vote in favor of this resolution? Can you clarify that it will cancel any complaint procedures related to BOD ¶304.3's "self-avowed practicing***

***homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the UMC”?***

**13. *How can the UMC ensure that congregations and pastors can live out their convictions about same-sex marriage?***

**14. *Isn’t preaching “love your neighbor as yourself” or “everyone is welcome here” and then questioning Gay, LGBTQ lifestyles/existence considered bigotry?***

**15. *What are the UMC’s ideas of how to reach and create disciples of Jesus Christ for persons identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community?***

**16. *The biblical definition of marriage is consistent throughout Scripture as one man married to one woman. This definition is found in Genesis 2:23-24, confirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-9, and taught by Paul in Ephesians 5:31. Since marriage is a holy institution divinely designed by God, what gives the UMC the authority to change the definition of marriage today? Do you agree with the traditional biblical definition of marriage?***

**17. *Can you provide Scriptures that indicate acceptance of same-sex marriage?***

**18. *In the 2019 survey conducted by United Methodist Communications the results showed 44% identify as Traditional/conservative, 28% as moderate/centrist and 20% as Progressive – these are theological views, not necessarily political. The results of the survey showed significant differences in how we are approaching being United Methodists. In response to the question of whether the primary focus of The United Methodist Church should be saving souls for Jesus Christ or advocating for social justice to transform the world, 88% of Traditionalists said saving souls, while 68% of progressives chose social justice. How do these conflicting responses serve the official mission of the UMC to make disciples for Jesus Christ to transform the world?***

**19. *Will people that hold a traditionalist view be welcome and have an active role in the UMC?***

**20. *What is the make up of the NTC Nominations Committee and Core Leadership team – how many Progressives and how many Traditionalists on each?***

**21. *How many Progressives and how many Traditionalists are on the NTC Board of Ordained Ministry?***

**22. *Will the UMC continue to approve clergy candidates who have strong convictions in favor of traditional marriage between a man and a woman?***

**23.** Substitutionary atonement is the belief that Jesus died as a substitute for all of fallen humanity, making it possible for all who have sinned to be declared righteous. There are reports that members of the North Texas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry have discussed no longer recommending anyone for ordination that expresses this belief. **Are these reports correct? Were there candidates this year not recommended because they did express this belief? Will belief in substitutionary atonement disqualify future candidates?**

**24. Is the UMC *prima scriptura* or *sola scriptura*?**

**25. What does the UMC hope to gain by abandoning both the teaching and discipline of the Bible and the current UMC Book of Discipline in favor of the whims and changing desires of the world?**

**26.** Since the ministers and leaders of the church inspire and guide the congregation, it cannot be disputed nor argued that they should be held to the highest of Christian standards. **How does the UMC hope to accomplish this by abandoning the scriptures and adopting a new book of discipline designed to yield to societal pressure?**

**27. Does the UMC believe the canon of Scripture is closed and there is no new revelation of truth outside of what God has already revealed in the Bible? Why or why not?**

**28. Does the UMC require its clergy to believe and practice in their preaching in the Divinity and Lordship of Jesus Christ, His miracles, and salvation through His shed blood?**

**29.** The DS for the North and West districts of the Central Texas Conference, Rev. Danny Tenney, confirmed at a Q&A session on July 31 at Granbury FUMC that the UMC is allowing clergy to preach from the pulpit that Jesus is not the only way to heaven, and/or that Jesus was not resurrected. He goes on to note that it grieves him and hopes that it stops, and that it cuts out the foundation and the feet of integrity. **Do you believe this doctrine is in-line with the BOD, and if not, what is the timeline and steps for the UMC to hold offending clergy accountable?**

**30.** In the UMC Articles of Religion Article V it states: The Bible contains all essential, necessary truth, and is a true rule and guide for faith and practice. A quote from John Wesley regarding the Bible: "For this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God!" **How is the UMC current Article V consistent with UMC Bishop Karen Oliveto's comments that the Bible should be framed by: "The text, the Bible is not God and that 'biblical theology' requires addressing both**

***“the benefits and flaws” of Scripture? [Abandoning Scripture, Abandoning Faith and Morals: The UMC’s Decision \(christianheadlines.com\)](#)***

- 31.** In the UMC Articles of Religion Article III Of the Resurrection of Christ, UMC Bishop Joseph Sprague stated in a lecture at the **Iliff School of Theology** and also wrote in his book Affirmations of a Dissenter “the myth of the Virgin birth was not historical fact” and that he did not believe that Jesus’ resurrection involved the “resuscitation of his physical body.” ***Are these statements part of the UMC Big Tent philosophy, and if so, how do they reconcile with the BOD as written today? [Methodist bishop cleared of heresy – Chicago Tribune](#)***
- 32.** Our neighbors at Oak Lawn United Methodist Church recently had a drag queen leading their children's time in worship on September 18. ***Please explain how this action supports the mission and vision of the United Methodist Church in North Texas.***
- 33.** Lake Highlands is a biblically-shaped, multi-generational church deeply invested in the teaching and training of our children. We strive to follow Paul's instructions to Timothy to pass the Word of God on to the next generation unchanged. Several churches in the Metro District of North Texas are promoting sexual confusion to children outside of biblical teaching. Examples include hosting drag queen shows, having children march in the Dallas Pride Parade, suggesting parents read the “I am Jazz” transgender book to their children, and telling children that God can be the King or the Queen of their lives. ***Do you agree some churches in your district are promoting sexual chaos and confusion to children? If so, what can be done to protect the children?***
- 34.** Several churches within the Metro District of the UMC march in the Dallas Pride parade every June under the banner of their church and the UMC logo, many times with the church pastors walking in the parade. ***Do you support this activity? Will attempts be made by others to shame traditional congregations into doing this in the future?***
- 35.** Many churches have crossed out “United” in their signs at their churches or colored the words or logo in rainbow colors. On ResourceUMC, there are branding standards which authority is established in the Book of Discipline. These standards include use of the cross and flame logo, along with color and font standards for the text. ***How is your office ensuring the integrity of the UMC Brand identity is being protected?***
- 36.** The North Texas Conference hosted a video workshop on ministry with transgender children, youth, and adults based upon the resolution passed at the 2022 NTC Annual Conference. In this video, pastors are encouraged to edit Scripture based upon the cultural norms of gender fluidity. ***Please describe the rationale of the North Texas Annual Conference in supporting this practice.***

**37.** The Pastor of the Oak Lawn UMC self-appointed two practicing homosexuals as Associate Pastors after the Bishop declined to do so. News reports indicated that you were scheduled to attend the appointment ceremony. ***Did you attend? Were charges filed against the pastor for this activity?***

**38.** In violation of the Book of Discipline, Reverend Greg Neal of Lakewood United Methodist Church in your district married his same sex partner in the Lakewood UMC sanctuary on October 1 that was officiated by United Methodist clergy. Charges of violation were filed the next day by the bishop's cabinet. This question is not about the details of the cabinet addressing a personnel issue but rather about the process. ***As the bishop's cabinet is a party to the complaint and also responsible for resolving the complaint, and knowing that personnel issues are confidential and resolutions of complaints are not made public, how can those outside of the cabinet have confidence in the process?***

**39.** ***What responsibility does the Metro District and North Texas Conference take in appointing the current senior pastor Rev. Neal to Lakewood UMC?*** This pastor is currently suspended, but his sexuality was well documented on the official Lakewood UMC website, and he publicly publicized his wedding six months in advance. ***Is there any discipline or accountability for the bishop, district superintendent, or their offices for appointing him or allowing him to stay in his appointment up until the wedding?***

**40.** ***Why is the UMC and North Texas Conference determined to strictly follow the Book of Discipline for ¶2553 Disaffiliation of a Local Church Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality, but chooses leniency or loose adherence to ¶304. Qualifications for Ordination and ¶341. Unauthorized Conduct of clergy and churches?***

**41.** Bishop Karen Oliveto is a bishop in the Western Jurisdictional conference, the first openly lesbian bishop in the UMC who is married to her wife. In 2017, the Judicial Council ruled that it was not lawful for any regional church body to consecrate a self-avowed practicing homosexual bishop. Over five years later, she remains in her position. ***How can we have confidence in the integrity of the United Methodist Church when it appoints and consecrates those in the highest position that blatantly break the fundamental law, doctrine, administration, and procedures of the UMC?***

**42.** The Book of Titus says that overseers (bishops) should be above reproach and be reminded to be submissive to rulers and authorities. ***Do you believe that anything that honors the Lord contrasts what is written in His Word?***

**43.** In a press release issued June 25th this year the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church says the decision by the Supreme Court of the United States to overturn Roe v. Wade has denied the sacred worth of women who

face “the tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion.” Scripture says we are fearfully and wonderfully made, made in the image of God, that God knew us before we were formed in the womb. **Are children in the womb not of sacred worth? What is the basis of Scripture behind this statement from the spiritual leaders of the denomination?**

**44.** The Bible says in Deuteronomy 4 and 12, Proverbs 30, and Revelation 22, to not take from or add to Scripture. **What is the Scriptural basis for redefining the sanctity of life, the definition of marriage, and qualifications for elders, deacons, and overseers?**

**45.** In his book, Together: United Methodists of the Temple, Tabernacle and Table, Rev. Stanley Copeland writes: “We have a big tent in the UMC and in the Wesleyan tradition. In our denomination, we seem to have intentionally wide lanes in terms of what we can believe and still call ourselves United Methodists. Having just gone through the experience of interviewing with our Board of Ordained Ministry, I knew that in each interview room sat colleagues who held differing views on:

- *Historical accuracy of the Old Testament*
- *Virgin birth*
- *Bodily resurrection*
- *Legitimacy of other religions*
- *Any number of social issues*
- *Suffice it to say, in terms of what we believe, the lanes are wide in our denomination as it is.*

**If the UMC is a big tent philosophy denomination with wide lanes, how do differing views on the above areas reconcile with the current beliefs in the BOD of the Apostles Creed, Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith, and Wesleyan Heritage?**

**46.** Many in the UMC are embracing the notion of a “big tent” church. Jesus in the book of Matthew says, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” **Big tent seems to contrast a narrow gate. How do you reconcile the two?**

**47. Do you believe it is important what authorities you submit yourself to, who you learn from, and whom you follow? What are the most important characteristics in considering what authority and church to submit to?**

**48. The Bible repeatedly warns us against false teachers. What false teachings should we be alert to in our present day, and how do we best protect ourselves against false teachers?**