

Information on The Current Status of the UMC in the Rio Texas Conference

Rio Texas Conference provides information on staying in the UMC at <https://riotexas.org/we-are-umc>

See the Unidos article from Rio Texas which we posted to the Manchaca UMC newsletter on January 27, 2023. The cabinet of the conference joined together in a statement regarding the future. Link here:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/a0cb9c06101/ea38e0ee-39ac-4d8a-ac4a-2aa79aac3d71.pdf?rdr=true>

- “We will no longer argue about human sexuality” – I refer you to a document published November 4, 2021 from the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church entitled “A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church.”

<https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/files/websites/www/a+narrative+for+the+continuing+united+methodist+church....pdf>

In that article, the bishops penned:

- o “Our churches must be more than echo chambers made in our own image arguing with each other while neglecting our central purpose. This is the way of the world. Instead, we must be one people,
- o rooted in scripture,
- o centered in Christ,
- o serving in love
- o and united in essentials.”

In the next few months as 30% of the Rio Texas UMC churches discern a disaffiliation path and 70% of our churches re-examine their mission within the UMC, our work here will be to state clearly our vision as a church in this connection. As I discern your desire to remain United Methodist, I am setting a course in guiding the church staff toward this communication.

Our central purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Thus, your church staff, senior and associate pastors, and guest preachers are communicating from the pulpit what we discern to be a call from our baptism to welcome, include, and affirm all persons for membership and qualified for leadership.

As we move forward together, there continues to be a great lament over the splintering of our denomination. I feel it in the colleagues choosing to leave or retire from the UMC. I see it in the faces of our congregation. Separation is painful. And finding a new way forward can be both exciting and fearful.

I cannot predict what will happen with our Book of Discipline and any petitions that may be approved at the next General Conference in 2024. If allowed to venture a guess, I would recommend re-visiting the 2019 Plan for a Way Forward which did not pass at that special session of General Conference. See

https://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/council-of-bishops/news_and_statements/documents/Way_Forum_Report_-_Final_-_ENGLISH.pdf

I expect that much of what it proposed in the One Church Plan will now be considered again. There are many remaining in the UMC that wish to see the removal of that infamous 1972 phrase “Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” Part of the Way Forward Plan had proposals for this action. I also expect that many persons remaining in the UMC are not in complete agreement with same-gender marriage or election of gay bishops. That tension will not go away even if we state that we enter a time where we no longer argue about it. That my friends will make our work of caring for each other in the love of Christ so important in the months ahead.

Called Special Session of the Rio Texas Annual Conference set for May 6, 2023 for the purpose of voting on the Rio Texas UMC Board of Trustees recommendations for the churches disaffiliating per the provisions of P2553 of the UMC Book of Discipline.

“United Methodists profess the historic Christian faith in God, incarnate in Jesus Christ for our salvation and ever at work in human history in the Holy Spirit.” [1] We seek to be passionate followers of Jesus who pursue a deeply personal faith and live lives characterized by justice, kindness and compassion. We love the Bible and seek to live its words, but recognize the importance of rightly interpreting it. We’re a church that values conservatives, centrists and progressives who come together to grow in our love for God and for our neighbor. Our mission is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

[1] The United Methodist Book of Discipline, paragraph 102, section 1.

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