

Report of the Conference Action Committee

Memorial #1: Local Church Property Transfer

(Submitted by East Gold Street Wesleyan Church)

Whereas, local churches in a number of denominations have experienced something deemed impossible just a few years ago – the recognition of homosexuality and same sex “marriages” by their denominations;

Whereas, many local churches in these denominations do not desire to maintain their relationship to a denomination that is not biblical in their stand on homosexuality and marriage being only between a man and a woman. The recognition of homosexuality and same sex marriage by a denomination is clearly wrong from a biblical stand-point;

Whereas, many local churches in these denominations have been prohibited from leaving their denomination and taking their local church property with them. They are forced to either stay in a denomination that no longer abides by biblical standards or leave their beloved church facilities behind and begin anew;

Whereas people gathered in church meetings like this and said “it will never happen to us,” but it did happen to them. We cannot naively assume it will never happen to us. It can. Others thought it would not. It did. History is our instructor.

Whereas, the United States Supreme Court is now enforcing same sex “marriage” on all 50 states and public opinion has been extremely impacted in favor of so-called same sex “marriage;”

Resolved, that if The Wesleyan Church modifies the Articles of Religion or Membership Commitments or other portions of The Discipline to allow for the practice of homosexuality or affirms ordaining homosexuals or allows for same sex “marriage,” a local church will have the option to withdraw from The Wesleyan Church and to have the ownership of all church property, including indebtedness, being conveyed to the local congregation;

Be it further resolved, that a new paragraph be added to The Discipline of The Wesleyan Church after paragraph 4780 that reads – “If The Wesleyan Church modifies the Articles of Religion or the Membership Commitments or other portions of The Discipline to affirm the practice of homosexuality or affirms ordaining homosexuals or allows for same sex “marriage” as being biblically acceptable, an established local church by majority vote of their membership present at a special called session of the local church conference, can vote to withdraw from The Wesleyan Church and have the ownership of all church property, including indebtedness, being conveyed to that local church, at no cost. This provision is the only exception allowed for paragraph 4780.”

→ Not recommended – Refer to Memorial #3

Memorial #2: Exception to Prohibition for Withdrawal for Local Churches

(Submitted by the District Board of Administration)

Whereas, there exists in our culture a growing perception and increasing pressure to shift from the foundational principles and practices which are in direct conflict with the eternal truths firmly established in God's Word and emphasized by the Wesleyan Church; and

Whereas, this shift encourages an infatuation with cultural narratives and a desire for acceptance by the broader society in conflict with a devout determination to cling to the eternal truths found in the Word of God and emphasized by the Wesleyan Church; and

Whereas, other denominations that have traversed this same path resulted in a subsequent lack of evangelical growth, a diminished devotion to comprehensive discipleship, and a weakened commitment to the pursuit of personal holiness; and

Whereas, those denominations have often ended in divisions that harmed the Kingdom and also provided a poor witness in an increasingly unbelieving world; and

Whereas, it would be wise that we determine truths that are evident and at this time, lest we allow this shift to become the story of our movement; and

Whereas, we should affirm and protect those truths as a body of believers, clearly stating the lines that we cannot afford to cross lest we lose our witness; and

Whereas, we learn from the mistakes of divided denominations in that we proactively prevent a future spectacle of having a division play out in media and in halls of secular justice; and

Whereas, that if The Wesleyan Church seeks to alter the following foundational principles or lower accepted standards, that it should not force people of conscience to live against their convictions;

Be it resolved, that maintaining the following foundational principles, which have been established and affirmed be considered crucial to the current and future health and fidelity of our movement.

Our position on the authority of Scripture (p.218)

Our position on the truth and necessity of the doctrine of Sanctification (p.236)

Our position on marriage and the family as expressed (pp. 222, 265:6, 410:5)

Our position on the sanctity of life (410:11)

Be it further resolved that altering or allowing the violation of any of these foundational truths in any way will be considered as granting permission for a local church to withdraw from the denomination, taking their property and any indebtedness with them, if such withdrawal is approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in a duly called local church conference chaired by the District Superintendent.

Therefore, paragraph 4780 would now read:

4780. *No local church may vote to withdraw as a body from The Wesleyan Church, or in any way sever its relation thereto, and no local church conference and/or local board of administration and/or local board of trustees can divert property from The Wesleyan Church (859:4; 4550) except as described in paragraph 4785.*

If any local church violates or in any way attempts to circumvent these provisions, then all rights, title, and interest in and to all real property of such local church shall thereupon immediately vest in the district corporation (4100) or in the district board of trustees in the case of an unincorporated district (4855); and all such property shall be vacated immediately by the offending party or parties. The district conference or, in the interim, the district board of administration shall have authority to deny the use of any such property to the offending party or parties and to order the immediate eviction of any such party or parties who do not comply therewith.

Paragraph 4785 would be added as follows:

4785. **An exception to paragraph 4780 will be made for any church that by conscience believes they can no longer continue to be a part of The Wesleyan Church due to alterations made in foundational doctrinal principles as described in, specifically in the following positions and Discipline paragraphs;**

Our position on the authority of Scripture (p.218)

Our position on the truth and necessity of the doctrine of Sanctification (p.236)

Our position on marriage and the family as expressed (pp. 222, 265:6, 410:5)

Our position on the sanctity of life (410:11)

If the foundational beliefs in the preceding paragraphs are altered, a local church may vote to withdraw and take its property, including any indebtedness. A vote to withdraw can only be approved by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a called special session of a Local Church Conference, chaired by the District Superintendent.

→ Not recommended – Refer to Memorial #3

Memorial #3: Exception to Prohibition for Withdrawal for Local Churches

(Submitted by the Conference Action Committee)

Whereas, there exists in our culture a growing perception and increasing pressure to shift from the foundational principles and practices which are in direct conflict with the eternal truths firmly established in God's Word and emphasized by the Wesleyan Church; and

Whereas, this shift encourages an infatuation with cultural narratives and a desire for acceptance by the broader society in conflict with a devout determination to cling to the eternal truths found in the Word of God and emphasized by the Wesleyan Church; and

Whereas, other denominations that have traversed this same path resulted in a subsequent lack of evangelical growth, a diminished devotion to comprehensive discipleship, and a weakened commitment to the pursuit of personal holiness; and

Whereas, those denominations have often ended in divisions that harmed the Kingdom and also provided a poor witness in an increasingly unbelieving world; and

Whereas, it would be wise that we determine truths that are evident and at this time, lest we allow this shift to become the story of our movement; and

Whereas, we should affirm and protect those truths as a body of believers, clearly stating the lines that we cannot afford to cross lest we lose our witness; and

Whereas, we learn from the mistakes of divided denominations in that we proactively prevent a future spectacle of having a division play out in media and in halls of secular justice; and

Whereas, that if The Wesleyan Church seeks to alter the following foundational principles or lower accepted standards, that it should not force people of conscience to live against their convictions;

Be it resolved, that maintaining the following foundational principles, which have been established and affirmed be considered crucial to the current and future health and fidelity of our movement.

Our position on the authority of Scripture (p.218)

Our position on the truth and necessity of the doctrine of Sanctification (p.236)

Our position on marriage, homosexuality, gender identity, and the definition of family as expressed (pp. 222, 265:6, 410:5)

Our position on the sanctity of life (410:11)

Be it further resolved that altering these above cited doctrines or allowing their violation in practice, to any extent whatsoever, will be considered a grant of permission to a local Wesleyan church to withdraw from the denomination, taking their property and any indebtedness with them, if such withdrawal is approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in a duly called local church conference chaired by the District Superintendent.

Therefore, paragraph 4780 would now read:

4780. *No local church may vote to withdraw as a body from The Wesleyan Church, or in any way sever its relation thereto, and no local church conference and/or local board of administration and/or local board of trustees can divert property from The Wesleyan Church (859:4; 4550) except as described in paragraph 4785.*

If any local church violates or in any way attempts to circumvent these provisions, then all rights, title, and interest in and to all real property of such local church shall thereupon immediately vest in the district corporation (4100) or in the district board of trustees in the case of an unincorporated district (4855); and all such property shall be vacated immediately by the offending party or parties. The district conference or, in the interim, the district board of administration shall have authority to deny the use of any such property to the offending party or parties and to order the immediate eviction of any such party or parties who do not comply therewith.

Paragraph 4785 would be added as follows:

4785. **An exception to paragraph 4780 will be made for any church that by conscience believes they can no longer continue to be a part of The Wesleyan Church due to alterations made in foundational doctrinal principles as described in, specifically in the following positions and Discipline paragraphs;**

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Be it further resolved that altering these above cited doctrines or allowing their violation in practice, to any extent whatsoever, will be considered a grant of permission to a local Wesleyan church to withdraw from the denomination, taking their property and any indebtedness with them, if such withdrawal is approved by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting in a duly called local church conference chaired by the District Superintendent.

→ Recommended to the District Conference