



Northeastern Jurisdiction

The United Methodist Church



“The Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church embraces theological differences and, without creating more harm to any group, will lead so that within the jurisdiction, there will be room for different theological understandings. Further, we will work with everyone to honor Jesus Christ and advance the mission and ministry within the Northeastern Jurisdiction.” - The Northeastern College of Bishops.

Dear United Methodists in the Northeastern Jurisdiction,

The postponed 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church met from April 23 until May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and approved important changes for our church. Today, we are writing to you because we are receiving questions about continuing with disaffiliations.

Disaffiliations

The delegates at the General Conference deleted paragraph 2553 in our Book of Discipline, which was inserted in 2019, to provide a temporary path for congregations to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church through December 31, 2023. As many as 25% of United Methodist congregations chose this path.

The NEJ College of Bishops will uphold the decision made by the delegates at the postponed 2020 General Conference to discontinue any disaffiliation process and NOT support any more disaffiliations. The United Methodist Church is moving forward as a church that embraces theological diversity.

People have inquired about the use of other disciplinary paragraphs to allow disaffiliations. To be clear, the General Conference indicated through the legislation it approved that disaffiliation is no longer a path for leaving the denomination. There was no extension of disaffiliation, and the disaffiliation paragraph was removed from The Book of Discipline. Two paragraphs were considered in the past: paragraph 2548 was ruled by the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church not to be used for disaffiliations, and paragraph 2549 is for a church closure and how to handle the property. Now that disaffiliations have concluded, the College of Bishops will ensure that annual conferences receive the best value for any sold property.

Same-Gender Weddings and Appointments of LGBTQ Pastors

You may have read or heard that the Global Methodist Church and other non-UMC groups and individuals have said that United Methodist clergy will now be forced to perform same-gender weddings and that our congregations will be required to permit same-gender weddings. This is NOT true. The General Conference passed legislation that prevents district superintendents and

bishops from penalizing pastors and churches that refuse to perform or allow a same-gender wedding on their property. No clergy will be forced to perform same-gender weddings, and no congregation will be required to permit same-gender weddings on their premises. Clergy and congregations are now entrusted to make these decisions gracefully, considering their ministry context based on their beliefs and attitudes regarding ministry with and by LGBTQ persons.

We will make appointments based on gifts, graces, experience, commitments, and theological alignment between congregations and clergy.

In the summer, the College of Bishops will commission a small team of theologically diverse clergy and laity to create a resource to assist congregations in understanding the changes made by the General Conference regarding human sexuality and working through weddings and appointments. This resource is intended to provide a healthy process to (re)build relationships, listen to learn and reflect theologically on this matter from our distinctive Wesleyan perspective so congregations can discern how to move forward. No clergy or laity will be asked to change their beliefs. The goal is to make the resource available by September 1, 2024.

A Future with Hope

We celebrate other important decisions made by the General Conference, including the proposal for a new regional structure for our denomination that, if ratified, will allow for more contextual and equitable ministry, fully revised social principles, a renewed commitment to creation care, sacramental rights for deacons, the consecration of new missionaries, and the historic vote to reunite and establish full communion with Episcopalians, the group Methodism separated from in 1784.

The United Methodist Church is moving forward as a diverse worldwide Christian community that welcomes people from all walks of life. Our faith and hope are anchored in Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, our journey of faith and mission is grounded in Scripture and guided by our doctrine, polity, and social principles. We celebrate our rich diversity as a gift from God. . Although we may not always agree on certain specific issues, we remain joyfully united in our love for Christ and our shared mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In this new season, we are moving forward, claiming God's future with joy and hope—all for God's glory.

Together in mission,

The College of Bishops

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