

ARKANSANS STAYING UNITED: WE WANT YOU TO KNOW

About The United Methodist Church

- We love the United Methodist Church and the people in it. We were raised in the church or found a home here. We have been saved and transformed by Jesus Christ through the witness of the UMC.
- We are staying on mission: “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” That is our call from God and why we exist.
- We are already a global church. The UMC works around the world in missions, disaster relief, education, and countless other efforts. A new denomination will take years to establish that impact and reputation.
- The UMC is dedicated to the inclusion of all people. Though by no means perfect, we nevertheless strive to be a church of “open hearts, minds, and doors.” We affirm the gifts of our LGBTQ+ siblings, the leadership of young people, and the contributions of all racial and ethnic communities. We believe that diversity within the Body of Christ is a strength and helps us give witness to the Kingdom of God in our midst.
- We have a Wesleyan theology of grace: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying. We do not center our theology on judgment, but on the God who reaches out, forgives our sins, and welcomes us into community.
- We believe in the authority and primacy of Holy Scripture. We interpret Scripture through the lenses of tradition, reason and experience. We believe that the core of Scripture is love. This love is what John Wesley called the “royal law” and Jesus called the sum of all the law and prophets.
- The current stance of The United Methodist Church on human sexuality has not changed. As our *Book of Discipline* (BOD) evolves, we want to continue to be a “big tent” church where people of various convictions can live together under the core doctrines of Wesleyan Methodism. Pastors will continue to have discretion over whom to marry, and annual conferences will continue to have authority over whom to ordain. We ask, with John Wesley, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? . . . Without all doubt, we may.”

Resources:

[Council of Bishops, A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church](#)

[What happens when a New Denomination Launches?](#)

[What should United Methodist congregations know about disaffiliation?](#)

[#BeUMC](#)

[#proudtobeumc](#)

About the Global Methodist Church

- According to its temporary *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* (BODD), the GMC is proposing significant changes.
 - Bishops will be elected for a term not life.
 - Retired and unappointed pastors will lose their vote at annual conference.
 - Churches are not guaranteed a pastor.
 - Pastors are not guaranteed an appointment.
 - Ordination will be altered; there will be no permanent order of deacon. The office of

- deacon will be the first step toward elder's ordination.
- It is unclear what will happen with licensed local pastors.
 - The educational requirements for ordained pastors do not meet the high standard of the UMC.
 - The GMC has launched, but is not fully formed. After declaring themselves to be a denomination on May 1, 2022, the GMC does not have many of the necessary requirements for a denomination in the Wesleyan tradition. This includes:
 - No established and approved *Book of Discipline*, but one that is in process.
 - No General Conference convened.
 - No bishops elected.
 - No annual conferences organized.
 - No agreement with Wespath for handling pensions (though talks are underway).
 - The questionable status of the 501(c)(3) non-profit designation for the GMC (and therefore its churches).
 - The GMC has no widespread network of local churches and may not for many years, if ever.
 - The GMC supports the continued exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals from the covenant of marriage and the calling of ordination. In the proposed GMC, there will be no covenants of marriage celebrated for LGBTQ+ persons or ordination of LGBTQ+ deacons or elders anywhere ever.
 - Churches and members in the GMC will have to strictly adhere to the doctrines and practices of the new denomination. Expelling a member, a pastor, or a congregation is remarkably easy and one-sided. A bishop who is unhappy with a pastor can simply choose not to appoint him or her.
 - There is a big difference between the “Social Principles” in our BOD and the “Social Witness” from the GMC BODD. Our United Methodist Social Principles are not considered church law. They are “instructive and persuasive,” intended to be prayerful and thoughtful efforts to spark discernment and understanding. By contrast, the Social Witness in the BODD carries the weight of law, and to add or change anything to this Witness requires a ¾ majority vote from their General Conference.
 - The GMC, until their first constituting General Conference, will continue to be led by a 17-member Transitional Leadership Council with broad powers over most denominational decisions. By contrast, the United Methodist General Conference consists of more than 800 delegates from around the world, elected from every annual conference. Arkansans on GMC Leadership Council—0. Arkansans at General Conference—16.
 - Disaffiliation will be costly for churches attempting to separate, and there is no support from the GMC to help churches pay the costs. Only the General Conference can pass legislation to provide money for the separating denomination, and it won't meet until 2024.

Resources:

[Buyer Beware: What the GMC Book of Doctrines and Discipline Really Says](#)
[What Do We Really Know about the “Global Methodist Church”](#)
[What are the Big Concerns about the GMC?](#)

What the GMC is saying about the UMC

- “*They don't believe in the authority of Scripture.*” Not true. We affirm that “The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation,” and we receive the Old and New

- Testaments as the inspired Word of God.
- *“Their doctrine of Christ is inadequate, and their theology is not orthodox.”* Not true. We, like the GMC, stand by the historical creeds (Apostles and Nicene), the Articles of Religion, the Confession of Faith, the General Rules, and Wesley’s Sermons and Notes on the New Testament. Doctrinal Standards are protected in the UMC Constitution.
 - *“Pastors will be forced to perform gay marriages.”* The current *Book of Discipline* continues to prohibit gay marriage by our pastors. If this is changed in the future, pastors will continue to have discretion about when to officiate at weddings.
 - *“Churches will be forced to accept gay pastors.”* The current Book of Discipline continues to prohibit the ordination of openly gay people who are not celibate. If that changes, Annual Conferences will remain in control of who gets ordained, and churches will be consulted about the appointment of pastors.
 - *“The seminaries are heretical.”* A 2019 study of seminaries by the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools concluded, “A deep Wesleyan theology and ethos pervades the campuses of the thirteen official seminaries.” All 13 were described as “pervasively United Methodist.”
 - *“Traditionalists will be forced out.”* In a broad 2019 study, only 20% of United Methodists identified as progressive. 80% felt they were centrist (moderate) or traditionalists (conservative). The UMC, especially in Arkansas, is by and large a moderate to conservative denomination. The African United Methodists, who are by and large traditionalist, are mostly staying United Methodist (12 of 13 African bishops say so.)
 - *“There are outliers and weird-o’s in the UMC.”* There have always been outliers and weird-o’s in the UMC and every other church. Do we agree with them? Not necessarily. Will we be in a church with them? Absolutely! Diversity of perspective keeps us humble and moving towards perfection in Christ.

Resources:

[United Methodist Seminaries](#)

[Study of United Methodist Beliefs](#)

[“Is The United Methodist Church Really ...?” \(Part 1\)](#)

[“Is The United Methodist Church Really ...?” \(Part 2\)](#)

[“Is The United Methodist Church Really ...?” \(Part 3\)](#)

We agree that The United Methodist Church is in need of reform. All churches, as human institutions, should be always striving to be more faithful to the holiness of Christ. But these issues do not rise to the level of denominational splintering. The disaffiliation of United Methodist Churches in Arkansas is a reaction to things that are largely happening outside of our area and fear of what may or may not happen in the future. Our connection is vital to the witness and ministry of The United Methodist Church. We are better together and stronger united!