



# Navigating Denominational Change

# Fear Not!

- God is at work for good. (and out ahead)
- We are a local congregation with a rich history, a strong congregational core, a good sense of unity with diversity, and a bright ministry future!
- Let's stay focused on building strength, unity and our local church's preferred future.

# Historic Dates in Methodism

- John Wesley 1703-1791 (Anglican Priest)
- 1784 Christmas Conference in Baltimore formed the Methodist Episcopal Church.
- 1845 Methodist Episcopal Church Schism- North and South churches split over slavery.
- 1939 Methodist (North/South) Church re-united.
- 1968 Branches of the Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren Church unite to form the UMC.
- May, 2020: Consideration of separation into multiple units.

# General Conference

## May 2020

- The UM General Conference will gather in Minneapolis May 5-15, 2020.

- There are 862 delegates from all over the world.

51% from U.S.

32% from Africa.

6% from the Philippines

5% Europe and other “concordat” churches

- Only a majority vote of General Conference can change the Book of Discipline as church law.
- At least FOUR plans have been submitted with provisions for separation over homosexual policies...with different time lines.

# Protocol of Separation

- January, 2020- leaders of major constituencies who had participated in mediation... agreed to propose a unified strategy to adopt a negotiated plan of separation and financial settlement called **A Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation** (possible critical mass majority)
- The plan has not yet been put into “legislative language” and will very likely have to be moved from the floor.
- Exit of largest conservative group, the **Wesleyan Covenant Association. (\$25 million)**
- General Conference MAY approve a plan of separation in May 2020 and Judicial Council must rule it legal!

# Summary of Protocol of Separation

- May, 2020- General Conference approves protocol.
- Any proposed NEW Methodist Denomination(s) must submit an application for withdrawal from UMC to the Council of Bishops by May, 2021.
- Annual Conferences MAY vote by July 1, 2021 to affiliate with a new Methodist Denomination OR remain with post-separation UMC. (57% majority vote will be required in an AC.)

# Our Local Church Process

- May 5-15, 2020 General Conf. approval of a plan of separation.
- June, 2021 (possible) Annual Conference Affiliation Vote. **(No vote of AC or local church = stay in post-separation UMC)**
- June 15, 2021-December 31, 2024: a window of time when local churches MAY vote at a called Charge Conference to **affiliate** with a new Methodist denomination OR remain in the post-separation UMC.

# Post-Separation UMC

- Removal of all prohibitions in the Book of Discipline against ordination of homosexual persons or against same sex marriage.
- Local Churches remaining in the post-separation UMC will set their own local church policies related to same sex marriage.
- Our future local church marriage ceremony policies can be negotiated by **June 30, 2022**, after we know for sure how our AC will affiliate and know what new Methodist denominations may be emerging.

# Future Cookeville FUMC Affiliation

- Kevin's strong recommendation: Patience and Prayer!
- No immediate vote on affiliation. (3.5 year window)
- No vote= remain with post-separation UMC with the understanding we set our own local marriage policies.
- If a viable, centrist, post-separation Methodist option emerges, we have until Dec. 2024 to vote to affiliate.

# Building Our Strength and Unity

- Historically, we have been part of THREE Methodist denominations. The next will be the FOURTH. Denominational structures change and evolve through time/history.
- The Wesleyan Theology of grace is our core ID. Our focus shall remain offering a gracious witness.
- We are a vital church with vital ministries.
- 2020+ Emphasis: build local strength/unity.
- Denominational affiliation is a missional relationship and framework. The future of any connectional denomination gives us the means of extending our missional reach nationally/globally. (Examples: Eric Soard, our missionary; UMCOR,)

# Time-line Summary

- May 2020- plan of separation MAY be adopted at GC.
- June, 2021- possible AC Affiliation Vote.
- June 30, 2022- our local church MAY adopt revised marriage ceremony policies.
- July 1, 2021-December 31, 2024- **local church affiliation voting window.** No vote taken means staying with the post-separation UMC with our local marriage policies established.
- Other denominational affiliation options may emerge.

# Three Key Aspects:

- Affiliation choice within 3.5 years.
- OUR local church marriage policies negotiated within 2 years.
- How do we build our local church unity and strength and maintain our gracious witness in our community?

# Stewards of Grace

**Sharing the story of grace  
in the heart of town.**

- Offering God's continual loving action
- Balancing grace and holiness of heart and life

# How to respond to local commentary?

- Our church has 3.5 years to choose which denominational affiliation we will choose.
- Our local marriage policies will be our choice, not the denomination's choice.
- The split is an opportunity for more local church policy control vs. denominational control.

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- Let's stay focused on building strength, unity and our local church's preferred future. (Prayer, patience and discernment!)

**Sharing the story of grace in the heart of town.**