

BASIC PROVISIONS OF AN INDIANAPOLIS PLAN  
FOR AMICABLE SEPARATION

September 18, 2019

INTRODUCTION:

The 2019 special General Conference of the United Methodist Church highlighted the depth of the irreconcilable differences present in The United Methodist Church.

Rather than continuing the quarrel over homosexuality at the 2020 General Conference, a group of Progressives, Centrists, and Traditionalists present these proposals as a possible pathway to amicable separation in The United Methodist Church. The names of the participants are at the end of the document.

We envision a new future for the people of The United Methodist Church to avoid further harm to one another, to United Methodists around the world, to the church universal, and to those with whom we strive to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We seek to move away from the caustic atmosphere which has often marked conversation in the United Methodist Church into a new season where we bless one another as we send each other into our respective mission fields to multiply our witness for Christ.

We envision an amicable separation in The United Methodist Church which would provide a pathway to new denominations of the Methodist movement so we can all make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. These new denominations, though separate, will continue the rich heritage of the Methodist movement while being free to share their respective witnesses for Christ unhindered by those with whom they have been in conflict. We will release one another to joyful obedience to Christ's call on our lives.

BASIC PROVISIONS:

1. The 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church would support an amicable separation plan by providing a pathway for the development of a Traditionalist United Methodist Church and a Centrist United Methodist Church. A Progressive expression may emerge as a Progressive United Methodist Church or may be included in the Centrist United Methodist Church. Other denominations may emerge as well. (Names are placeholders and descriptive; each new denomination would choose their own name and may use "United Methodist Church" with an appropriate modifier if they so choose).
2. The United Methodist Church would not be dissolved but would have its legal continuation through the Centrist United Methodist Church.
3. The Traditionalist United Methodist Church would be a global denomination that would maintain the current stance of the United Methodist *Discipline* regarding the practice of homosexuality. It would emphasize unity around doctrine, mission, and standards, leaner denominational structure, greater local flexibility, and accountable discipleship.

4. The Centrist United Methodist Church would be a global denomination that would remove from the *Discipline* the “incompatibility” language and prohibitions against same-sex weddings, ordinations, and appointments. Centrist annual conferences and local congregations would make their own decisions regarding the ordination and appointment of homosexual persons and performing same-sex weddings in their conferences and congregations. It would practice faith with a generous spirit, emphasizing greater local flexibility within a deep commitment to connectionalism, social justice, and missional engagement that transforms the world for Jesus Christ
5. A Progressive expression may emerge as a Progressive United Methodist Church that would be a global denomination that includes church-wide protection against discrimination based on race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or economic condition, and that practices full itinerancy of LGBTQIA+ pastors and same-sex weddings in all their churches. Another progressive expression may be the inclusion of progressives in the Centrist United Methodist Church.
6. Other denominations may be formed by a group of 50 or more local churches or by one or more annual conferences.
7. All denominations would have their own General Conferences or governing boards, books of *Discipline*, structure, polity, and finances. Any local congregation which chooses to join one of these denominations would be relieved of the trust clause in order to take their assets and liabilities into the new denomination.
8. Annual conferences in the United States would decide by a simple majority vote of those annual conference members present and voting with which denomination to align. Annual conferences not making a decision would become part of the Centrist United Methodist Church by default.
9. Central conferences would decide by a simple majority vote of those members present and voting with which denomination to align. Central conferences that do not make a decision would become part of the Traditionalist United Methodist Church by default. Annual conferences outside the United States could decide by a simple majority to align with a different denomination than their central conference.
10. Local churches disagreeing with their annual conference’s decision could decide by a simple majority vote of a charge or church conference to align with a different denomination. All local church property, assets, and liabilities would continue to belong to that local church.
11. Clergy and ministerial candidates would decide with which denomination to align. By default, they would remain part of the denomination chosen by their annual conference, unless they choose to affiliate with a different denomination.

12. Bishops (active and retired) would decide with which denomination to align. By default, they would remain part of the Centrist United Methodist Church unless they choose to align with a different denomination.
13. Continuation of clergy and episcopal pensions would be provided for by assigning liability for the unfunded pension liabilities to the new denominations and by receiving payments from withdrawing congregations that choose not to align with created denominations.
14. Annual conferences and local congregations could begin functioning in the new alignment beginning August 1, 2020, on an interim basis. Annual conferences, local churches, and clergy choosing to align with a denomination other than the Traditionalist United Methodist Church would be exempt during the interim period, following the adjournment of General Conference 2020 to the start of the new denominations, from the provisions in the *Discipline* prohibiting same-sex weddings and the ordination, appointment, or consecration of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals. Inaugural General Conference sessions would be held in the fall of 2021, with the new denominations becoming fully functional as of January 1, 2022. The Progressive United Methodist Church might launch at a later date, if desired. The opportunity to choose an alignment would remain open until at least December 31, 2028.
15. Wespath, the United Methodist Committee on Relief, United Methodist Women, the General Commission on United Methodist Men, and The United Methodist Publishing House would continue as independent 501(c)(3) organizations with their own self-perpetuating boards of directors and would be able to serve any denomination that desires to receive services from them.
16. All other United Methodist boards and agencies would become part of the Centrist United Methodist Church with mutually agreed upon initial funding and subject to possible reforms and restructuring by the Centrist United Methodist Church. Such boards and agencies could also contract to serve other denominations formed in this process.
17. The 2020 General Conference would provide continuing funding for Central Conference ministries during the 2021-2024 Quadrennium supported by all denominations. All United Methodist conferences and congregations would be encouraged to continue support for Central Conference ministries regardless of denominational affiliation.
18. A process and principles for allocating general church assets to fund transition to new denominations and to be devoted to the missional purposes of each denomination thereafter would be adopted by the 2020 General Conference.
19. Mandatory retirement provisions for all bishops would be waived until 2022 after the new denominations have become operational. Jurisdictional conferences might not elect bishops in 2020, reconvening in 2021 or 2022 as part of the Centrist United Methodist Church. Central conferences would elect the number of bishops determined by the 2020 General Conference, as planned. This would allow a proper match of the number of bishops needed under these new

conditions. Bishops in other denominations formed in this process would be elected and assigned according to the provisions of those denominations.

Here are the United Methodist Progressive, Centrist and Traditionalists Clergy and Laity who developed and signed this proposal for an amicable separation. Organizational names are provided for informational purposes only and do not imply that these churches or organizations have endorsed these proposals.

Rev. Keith Boyette, President  
Wesleyan Covenant Association  
Fredericksburg, Virginia  
Traditionalist

Rev. Darren Cushman Wood, Senior Pastor  
North United Methodist Church  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
Progressive

Rev. Dr. Douglas Damron, Senior Pastor  
Epworth United Methodist Church  
Toledo, Ohio  
Centrist

Lynette Fields, Layperson  
Florida Annual Conference  
Orlando, Florida  
Progressive

Rev. Dr. Cathy Johns, Senior Pastor  
Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Centrist

Krystl D. Johnson, Layperson  
Lay Delegate, Eastern Pennsylvania Conference  
Chester, Pennsylvania  
Traditionalist

Rev. Thomas Lambrecht, Vice President and General Manager  
Good News  
Spring, Texas  
Traditionalist

Rev. Dr. Kent Millard, President  
United Theological Seminary  
Dayton, Ohio  
Centrist

Cara Nicklas, Layperson  
Lay Delegate, Oklahoma Annual Conference  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
Traditionalist

Rev. Dr. Chris Ritter, Directing Pastor  
First United Methodist Church  
Geneseo, Illinois  
Traditionalist

Rev. Dr. John E. Stephens, Senior Pastor  
Chapelwood United Methodist Church  
Houston, Texas  
Centrist

Rev. Judy Zabel, Senior Pastor  
Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Centrist