



Methodist Split Begins!

The Global Methodist Church (GMC)—the denomination for United Methodists committed to biblical, Wesleyan standards—officially launched as a new denomination on May 1.

This launch was to have waited until the United Methodist Church's General Conference could enact an official split. But in late February, a narrow liberal majority of the General Commission on the General Conference (COGC) postponed the meeting until 2024 (see "Cynical Filibuster" on page 2).

Boyette declared, "separation is no longer in the future" for United Methodists, but has now become a fact.

Absent a GMC launch this year, many traditionalists would have left United Methodism and become permanently lost to any future GMC.

There will be multiple "waves" of United Methodists joining the GMC. Unfortunately, the UMC Judicial Council recently blocked entire annual conferences from joining the GMC unless and until General Conference enacts additional legislation, which cannot happen until General Conference actually meets, which a coalition of liberal bishops

and liberal COGC members are preventing from happening. The "gracious exits" provision enacted by the 2019 General Conference does not apply to United Methodists outside the USA, expires next year, and requires large exit fees many congregations cannot afford.

Furthermore, many orthodox United Methodists are in areas where the exit doors are effectively shut, particularly by bishops who have refused to implement "gracious exits" or imposed additional costs. So more traditional United Methodists, especially in Africa, are waiting for better separation procedures, including but not limited to the 2024 General Conference adopting a comprehensive separation agreement.

The first wave is relatively small but significant. A trickle of United Methodist congregations across America has begun transferring into the Global Methodist Church. Overseas, the Bulgaria-Romania Annual Conference recently voted unanimously to transfer into the GMC, defying its liberal bishop. Recently retired bishop **Mike Lowry** of Central Texas was the first United Methodist bishop to join the GMC.

Lowry was pressured by liberal Louisiana Bishop **Cynthia Harvey**, then president of the UMC Council of Bishops, who incorrectly told Lowry, "...you will be required to surrender your United Methodist Clergy

Summer 2022

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Upper New York Bishop Mark Webb (left) and UM Action Advisory Board member Bob Land (right) officiating the closing communion service at the WCA's Global Gathering on May 7.

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Cynical Filibuster: Liberals Block General Conference

While General Conference was scheduled to begin in August 2022, a liberal, mainly U.S. faction of 14 of the 25 members of the General Commission on the General Conference (COGC) voted in February to delay General Conference until 2024. This is the *fifth* time the dates of General Conference—mandated by church law to have occurred in 2020—have been changed since early 2020. COGC’s majority faction submitted to a pressure campaign of liberal bishops,

Africa’s perceived challenges as reasons to further postpone 2022 General Conference.” But COGC’s liberal Western majority ignored them.

COVID-19 restrictions are no longer as great. Other large, in-person, international conferences are meeting this year, from the General Convention of the Episcopal Church (which includes many non-U.S. members) to the Winter Olympics.

COGC ignored creative solutions, such as the Africa Initiative’s invitation to meet in Africa. And the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, which has a large presence in Africa, successfully held its General Conference last year in a hybrid format. Reportedly, **Kim Simpson** of Central Texas (COGC’s liberal chair) and New York Bishop **Thomas Bickerton** (the Council of Bishops’ new president and non-voting rep in COGC) were given basic facts about the AMEZ experience, but did not share with the rest of COGC. Furthermore, they chose not to even contact the AMEZ Church’s General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. **Elvin Sadler**, who had expressed his willingness to share how his denomination had made a hybrid, international General Conference work. Rev. **Joe DiPaolo** of Eastern Pennsylvania resigned from COGC to protest how he “lost trust in the integrity of the process.” DiPaolo publicly exposed numerous derelictions of duty, including how the General Conference staff acknowledged some ways that non-U.S. delegates could have avoided long wait times for visa interviews, but such possibilities for maximizing global participation were never fully explored.

Rather suspiciously, COGC has now formed strategy teams to address visa and logistic concerns to prevent even further delay, but only began this effort one month *after* definitively blocking General Conference from meeting this year.

This blocking of General Conference both continues and dramatically escalates a long pattern of liberal United Methodists disregarding the Golden Rule to get their way by filibustering our denomination’s processes.

Africans recently became the majority of United Methodism’s membership. But this move preserves U.S. power and prevents reallocation of denominational leadership slots to give Africans fairer representation, especially in the Council of Bishops and the COGC itself. It undemocratically shifts power to unaccountable bishops, who block the legislative branch from meeting and who increasingly refuse to heed General Conference. It also blocks the “Protocol on Reconciliation and Grace through Separation” from enactment this year and imperils its future.

The carefully, professionally negotiated “Protocol” peace treaty to divide our denomination has been widely supported.



A 2021 Zoom meeting of the Commission on General Conference. A majority faction of this group recently imposed a further delay of General Conference. (Photo: UM News Service)

caucus activists, delegates and even the United Methodist News Service.

The official explanation unconvincingly cited COVID-19 and difficulties securing visas for non-American delegates. But the COGC *declined* to help African delegates get COVID-19 vaccines, and even criticized WCA, UMAction, and other renewal groups helping non-U.S. delegates access vaccines if they wanted them. The World Health Organization had earlier declared that the global pandemic was getting under control in Africa, Europe, and elsewhere.

Visas are a challenge at *every* General Conference, and the conference blockers could have helped if this concern were more than just a pretext. But African leaders protested how the Rev. **Gary Graves**, Secretary of the General Conference, had not sent official invitations delegates needed to apply for travel visas. And then COGC conveniently cited delays in processing such visas to justify postponement. African COGC members vocally supported holding General Conference this year. And the Africa Initiative declared, “Absolutely no one should use

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Former Liberation Methodist Connexion organizer Alex da Silva Souto (center) protesting outside a meeting of the UMC Judicial Council in 2017. (Photo: Mike DuBose/UMNS)

Radical Third Denomination Fizzles

Self-described liberationist progressives' plans for a new denomination called the Liberation Methodist Connexion (LMX) have fizzled.

From the beginning, LMX organizers fretted that the post-separation UMC (psUMC) would not radicalize fast enough and touted its commitment to expand "full inclusion" in church leadership to drug users and the "non-monogamous."

In December, LMX admitted major setbacks and internal division, with over half its original "Collaborators" giving up. Defectors included some more prominent liberals who could have potentially attracted others, such as Rev. **Alka Lyall** (chair of Northern Illinois's General Conference delegation), gay activist clergy delegate **Alex da Silva Souto** of New York, seminary professors **Althea Spencer-Miller** and **Darryl Stephens**, non-binary activist **M Barclay**, and former General

Board of Church and Society staffer **Bill Mefford**. While da Silva Souto has now become a Unitarian Universalist pastor, others appear more interested in shaping the psUMC.

The LMX's Facebook page remains active, demonizing Christian missionaries, raising money to facilitate abortions, and claiming "casual sex can be healthy." But there appears to be little energy for organizing an actual LMX denomination.

In recent years, institutionalist liberal bishops have bent over backwards to pander to this vocal liberationist faction, showing little concern for the larger number of traditionalist United Methodists they alienated in the process. But the LMX's failure demonstrates how such radicalism is largely incapable of building its own strong ministries and institutions, rather than leeching onto what more conservative church folk build.

LMX had been strongly critical of some liberal leaders' past support for (very incomplete and likely only temporary) conscience protections for congregations and pastors who may remain in the post-separation UMC but do not want to directly participate in same-sex weddings. Now all major liberal United Methodist leaders appear to have abandoned support for any meaningful such conscience protections.

So, radicals will shape the post-separation UMC, pushing centrists leftward, and the denomination downward.

United Methodists have a two-way choice between the orthodox Global Methodist Church or the increasingly liberal psUMC. There will be no "centrist" or "middle way" option. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: Matthew 7:24-27; Ephesians 2:19-20.

Cynical Filibuster: Liberals Block General Conference

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Last year, the Alaska, Baltimore-Washington, California Pacific, Mountain Sky, North Georgia, and Northwest Texas Annual Conferences all strongly voted to express support in various ways. General Conference likely would have approved it this year. But many liberals apparently prefer to derail it, in order to greedily gain additional major concessions for themselves (even though the Protocol would have already required enough painful concessions from theological conservatives). The campaign to push this anti-Protocol filibuster of General Conference included some of the Protocol's earliest public supporters, and even some liberal members of the Mediation Team that negotiated, endorsed, and pledged "to use their best efforts" to support the Protocol.

In fact, in June, all liberal non-bishop members of the Protocol Mediation Team, together with liberal caucuses that

had previously endorsed the Protocol, publicly repudiated the Protocol, cynically citing the delay of General Conference—a delay in which they were complicit.

While leaders of every major faction and region still admit a split is inevitable, this needless delay fuels confusion and acrimony, and is a recipe for the bitter church-property lawsuits seen in other denominations. A simple majority of the UMC Council of Bishops could call a special session of General Conference focused on adopting a fair, comprehensive separation plan, thus protecting our churches from needless harm and ongoing conflict. ✚

ACTION: Urge your bishop to support a specially called session of General Conference to adopt a fair, comprehensive separation plan ASAP. Contact info: www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/bishops

New Methodist Doctrinal Manifesto

In January nearly 60 traditional Methodist scholars met outside Washington, D.C. to craft an articulation of core Wesleyan doctrine. Their work, called “The Faith Once Delivered,” was released in May, with hopes it will theologically enrich future Methodism.

Nearly 70 Methodist scholars have so far attached their names, and the number is growing. The document is over 24,000 words but it merits your time to read: <https://nextmethodism.org/summit-document/> 🌐



ACTION: Form a study group at your church to reflect on “The Faith Once Delivered.”

Sixty traditionalist Methodist theologians convene in Alexandria, Virginia January 21-23, 2022, to draft a declaration of Wesleyan doctrine. (Photo: Mark Tooley / IRD)

Methodist Split Begins!

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credentials” as “a matter of ultimate integrity” if he remained on the GMC’s Transitional Leadership Council (TLC). The TLC includes United Methodists around the world and will govern the GMC until its own inaugural General Conference. That will likely happen in several years, in order to allow time for enough people to join and be represented. There is no rule preventing TLC members from remaining United Methodists, for now. Other TLC members include the Rev. Dr. **Martin Nicholas** (UMAction’s Steering Committee chair) and **Krystl Gauld** (another UMAction Steering Committee member).

GMC’s launch was widely celebrated by traditional Methodists. The Africa Initiative, a representative caucus of General Conference delegates from across Africa, “welcome[d] the Global Methodist Church to Africa as a faithful, Christ-centered Wesleyan Evangelical Partner toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.”

At its May 6–7 Global Legislative Assembly and Global Gathering, the Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) announced that it has fulfilled its original purpose of midwifing the new denomination. WCA delegates redefined the group’s

mission as helping congregations and annual conferences transfer out of UMC if they choose, advocating “for fair, just, and amicable pathways” of separation, advising the GMC, and “support[ing] efforts to maintain faithful adherence and accountability to the standards of doctrine and discipline embodied in the *Book of Discipline* as it now stands in the UMC.”

WCA President **Keith Boyette** left the WCA’s staff to become the GMC’s founding Transitional Connectional Coordinating Officer. **Jay Therrell** of Florida is the new WCA president. Both are lawyers-turned United Methodist pastors who are now among the Global Methodist Church’s first ordained ministers.

Boyette declared “separation is no longer in the future” for United Methodists, but has now become a fact. Global Methodism will grow as it makes disciples and spreads scriptural holiness, while United Methodism will become more liberal and extreme. 🌐

FOR REFLECTION: *John 15:1-8.*

ACTION: Check out the Global Methodist Church at: www.globalmethodist.org

Midwest UM Leaders Declare Intolerance of Conservatives

Last fall, a specially called, virtual session of the UMC's North Central Jurisdiction overwhelmingly named "amicable separation" as a top priority, with seemingly no one claiming unity was still possible.

The conference also exposed the untruthfulness of liberal officials' claims that the post-separation United Methodist Church

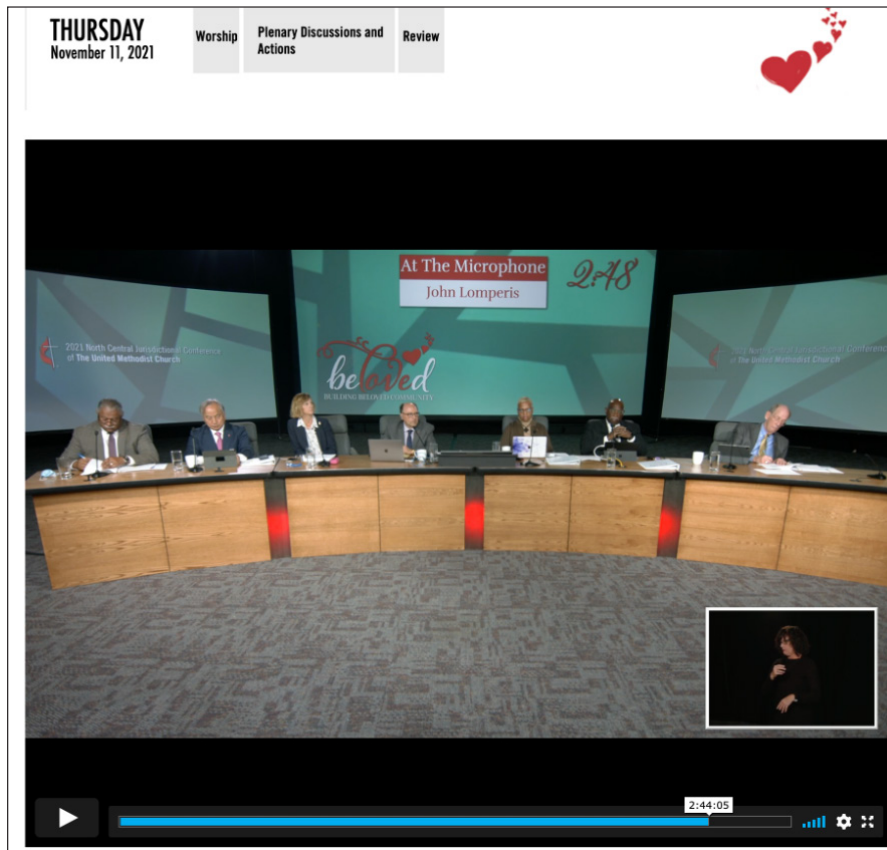
(psUMC) will be a "big tent" that continues to welcome and value traditionalist members. Delegates adopted a "Covenant to Build BeLoved Community," which lists "heterosexism" alongside racism and sexism as "evil powers" and "sins" of which United Methodists should repent. It demands subjecting all NCJ delegates to one-sided re-education about "the impact of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism within United Methodist Churches." And it invites anyone not fully on board to leave. This Covenant was endorsed by 81 percent of delegates, indicating that very few non-conservative delegates, if any, thought that it went too far.

When liberal United Methodists denounce traditional biblical faith as an "evil power" that harms "LGBTQIA+ people," they clearly won't tolerate traditionalist congregations and members for long. The post-separation UMC (psUMC) may soon treat biblical beliefs about marriage as being as unacceptable as the sin of racism.

When NCJ delegates were asked to name top priorities for the church in their region, the option of evangelism did not make the top-five list. ❖

ACTION: Warn others about the radicalism and intolerance emerging as hallmarks of the psUMC.

UM Action Director John Lomperis raising a legal challenge to part of the vision of United Methodist progressive incompatibilism adopted at the 2021 North Central Jurisdictional Conference.



'Centrist' Leader: No More Asbury Grads in UMC!

Asbury Theological Seminary, which is denominationally independent and traditionalist, has for years educated a major portion of United Methodist pastors and has been a main source for evangelical pastors in the UMC.

Last fall, key liberal activist Pastor **Bryan Bucher** of West Ohio publicly declared of Asbury alumni, in a widely noted social-media statement: "We won't take a one of them after the split if I have any say about it. Anyone who signs on to a Blatantly discriminatory seminary's ethos statement should be disqualified for candidacy out of the gate [sic]." He later clarified that he wanted Asbury graduates to be blocked by annual conference boards of ordained ministry, the main officials screening ordination candidates.

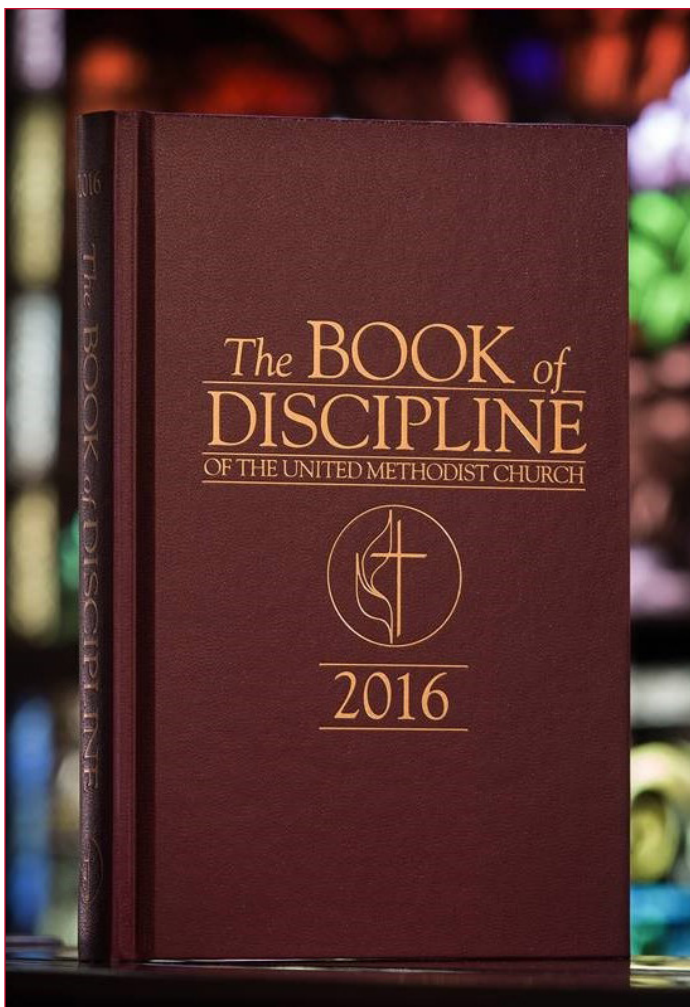
Bucher was a main, founding leader of the "United Methodist Centrist Movement." Some traditional congregations who

choose to stay in the post-separation UMC may be tolerated initially. But such congregations will increasingly have liberal clergy imposed on them, as their pastors retire and new traditionalist pastors are blocked or discouraged from seeking ordination in the denomination. ❖

FOR REFLECTION: *Proverbs 29:2; Titus 1:6-9.*

The Rev. Bryan Bucher of the West Ohio Annual Conference (Photo: Amazon author page)





Ruling: Bishops, Other Leaders Must Uphold Biblical Standards

After the Fall 2021 North Central Jurisdictional Conference adopted an LGBTQ-affirming “Covenant,” UMAction Director **John Lomperis**, an elected delegate from the Indiana Conference, submitted a formal legal challenge.

In response, Bishop **David Bard** of the Minnesota and Michigan Conferences ruled that this resolution was merely aspirational and, crucially, that the United Methodist *Discipline* remains in force for banning same-sex weddings and clergy who are sexually active outside male/female marriage. Most helpfully, his presently binding ruling made clear that “bishops, district superintendents, counsels for the church, committees on investigation, trial courts, boards of ordained ministry, [and] district committees on ministry” still have their “rights and obligations” to “fully comply with and uphold” these standards.

Enforcement will remain uneven, but this ruling makes it harder for liberal church officials to ignore our biblical church laws and strengthens United Methodists defending church standards. 🌱

UMAction Briefing

A newsletter for United Methodists working for Scripture-based renewal and reform in our denomination

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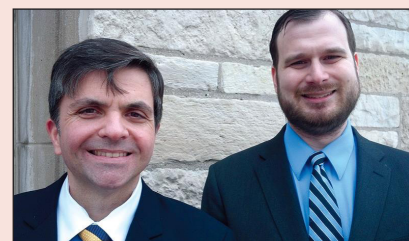
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