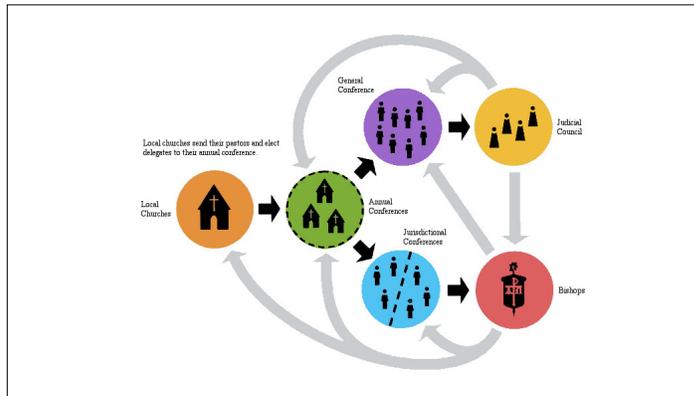


AUGUST 17, 2022

PIERCE CHURCH TOWN HALL

1



2

IMPORTANT TERMS

- ▶ **General Conference:** Legislative body of the denomination...official "voice"
- ▶ **Annual Conference:** Regional conferences to which churches belong
- ▶ **Book of Discipline:** GC outlines structure, policies, law, and doctrine
- ▶ **Trust Clause:** Local church property held "in trust" for the denomination
- ▶ **Traditionalists:** Understand marriage as between one man and one woman
- ▶ **Centrists:** Desire a connection with people on both sides
- ▶ **Progressives:** Desire for the church to fully affirm LGBTQ+ relationships

3

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UMC

- ▶ Connectional (strong relationships among clergy and local churches)
- ▶ Wesleyan in heritage and theology
- ▶ Global and large (12 million people worldwide)
- ▶ Bureaucratic (many agencies, systems, rules, red tape, technicalities, etc.)
- ▶ "Big Tent" (all sorts of people, churches, perspectives, etc.)
- ▶ Lots of church politics (caucus groups, conspiracy theories, etc.)
- ▶ Experiencing steady decline (particularly in the United States)
- ▶ Growing globally (particularly in Africa)

4

ONGOING DEBATE OVER HOMOSEXUALITY

- ¶ 304.3: The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
- ¶ 341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.
-

5

ONGOING DEBATE OVER HOMOSEXUALITY

- ¶ 4. Article IV. **Inclusiveness of the Church:** The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection.
- **This is not a conversation about sacred worth...it is exclusively over the practice of homosexuality and it's relation to clergy rights and practice.**

6

WHERE WE ARE NOW

- ▶ At nearly every General Conference (every 4 years) since the word "incompatible" was added, this has been a point of contention and debate
- ▶ At every General Conference, a traditional view of marriage as between one man and one woman has been approved
- ▶ Increasing amount of ecclesial disobedience and lack of accountability by bishops along with the safeguard of guaranteed appointment
- ▶ Debate has become more mean-spirited, demonizing, and distracting to the overarching mission of the church
- ▶ Instead of being known for making disciples, we're known for our ongoing conflict

7

WHERE WE ARE NOW

- ▶ Some in the church will not stop until same-sex relationships are affirmed at every level...others cannot serve in such a church as a matter of conscience
- ▶ In 2016, the church seemed to reach an impasse...called a Special Called General Conference to work exclusively through this conversation in 2019
- ▶ The SCGC was disastrous and ugly...traditional view was re-affirmed, but conflict was at an all time high...mistrust, accusations, protests, 50/50 votes, etc.
- ▶ Became clear to many that it's not healthy or realistic for us all to co-exist in the same church...need some sort of separation or change in connection

8

THROUGH THE YEARS

- ▶ Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation for GC 2020
- ▶ GC 2020 Postponed to 2022 due to COVID
- ▶ GC 2022 postponed earlier this year (to 2024) despite other large international gatherings finding ways to move forward in light of COVID
- ▶ Launch of the Global Methodist Church in May 2022
- ▶ Realization in recent years that we live in a broken denomination with great dysfunction, crippled and held back by its division and lack of clarity

9

PARAGRAPH 2553

- ▶ 2/3 of the professing members of the church may vote to disaffiliate from the UMC for **“reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions in the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.”**
- ▶ Pursuant to an affirmative 2/3 vote and the meeting of financial and legal obligations, all of the church’s property and assets would become its own and it would be released from denominational connection

10

PARAGRAPH 2553

- ▶ Over 25 churches in Indiana disaffiliated at this past Annual Conference (June)
- ▶ Two more opportunities for disaffiliation before Paragraph 2553 expires and General Conference 2024 takes place: October 2022 and June 2023
- ▶ Following disaffiliation, multiple options are available at the church’s discretion:
 - ▶ Become an independent/community church
 - ▶ Join another denomination: Wesleyan Church, Free Methodists, Nazarenes
 - ▶ Launch of the Global Methodist Church

11

OUR DISCERNMENT AND PROPOSAL

- ▶ Disaffiliation # for Upland United Methodist Church: **~\$214,925**
- ▶ **Pierce Leadership Board Voices:** Jeff Aupperle, Scott Barrett, Sharla Berger, Jodi Brodkorb, Kevin Duecker, Chris Duckwall, Guy Duckwall, Evan Guse, Pam Hensley, Mark Vance, Shawn Zolman, Kelly Yordy
- ▶ The Pierce Church Leadership Board unanimously supports disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church
- ▶ We are still discerning the “right next step” following disaffiliation

12

COMMON QUESTIONS

- ▶ The General Conference has repeatedly voted to affirm a traditional understanding of marriage. Therefore, why are Traditionalists the ones being asked to “leave” the denomination.
- ▶ What if I don’t agree with my church’s decision?
- ▶ What would change at Pierce Church?
- ▶ Where can I go for more information? www.piercechurch.org/discernment
- ▶ When is the vote and who can participate? (September 26 at 7pm)

13

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- ▶ PRAY!!!!
- ▶ Talk to Pastor Evan or church leaders with questions, concerns, comments, etc.
- ▶ If you want a voice, become a professing member
- ▶ “There are no bad people in this story.” -Bishop Julius C. Trimble
- ▶ Stay focused on keeping the “main thing” the “main thing”
- ▶ Season of church-wide prayer and fasting launches September 1, 2022

14

QUESTIONS?

15