

DEAR KUMC MEMBERS

REASONS WHY KUMC SHOULD STAY IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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YOUR "STAY UMC" LEADERSHIP TEAM

The United Methodist Church has always maintained a firm foundation in its core beliefs, doctrines, and Wesleyan rules. We believe in the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the Resurrection of Christ, as set forth in the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith. These historic documents are intended to be eternal and are almost impossible to change. John Wesley's charge to DO NO HARM, DO GOOD, AND STAY IN LOVE WITH GOD is unchangeable and is as applicable today as it was when the words were spoken. Our primary task is to "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you". (Matthew 28:19-20)

Separation is never a pleasant experience and should only occur as a last resort when there is no other alternative. To quote Bishop Scott Jones: "It breaks my heart to see this separation happening". We can deal more effectively with important and divisive issues together – separation is not a path to resolution. A good example is the split that occurred in the Methodist Episcopal Church (predecessor to the UMC) in 1844 over the issue of slavery. The split did not resolve the issue – it was resolved 18 years later by President Lincoln, but the devastating part of the story is that it took the two factions 95 years to re-unite (the merger of 1939).

Belief in the Holy Scriptures should not be an issue. We believe that all factions in the church respect the authority of Scripture – the issues are interpretation, context, and understanding. We also believe that we ought to be able to respect each other's understandings and the application of Scripture in our lives, even when they differ from our own. We also respect the importance of reason, experience, and tradition (guided by Scripture) which is a critical element of the Wesleyan tradition.

There may be some changes in the UMC organizational structure and operating disciplines in the future, however, we believe that the majority of the 12+ million members and clergy are moderate and traditional in their theology. Any changes will/should be gradual and properly vetted. In any event, we believe that the convictions of the clergy will be respected in the matter of same sex unions/marriages and their respective decisions as to performing such ceremonies.

There have been some violations of church rules and most of them have been dealt with accordingly – unfortunately, some have not. We believe that the conversations regarding violations and anti-doctrine activities are exaggerated. Again, we believe that the majority of members and clergy are moderate and traditional and adhere to the standards established in the Book of Discipline – including our historic doctrinal statements/documents.

A recent estimate, from a webinar featuring Rev. Adam Hamilton, indicated that only about 10% of the UMC churches are expected to disaffiliate and align with another Wesleyan denomination. Another important reason for staying UMC is to preserve our covenant connection with other UMC churches, our general agencies, and historic institutions. Obviously, a church that leaves can continue to support the institutions, but the relationship will be outside the connection.

We are concerned that disaffiliation may result in the loss of younger members and impair our ability to attract new younger members. We believe that the younger generations are much more tolerant and accepting in matters of diversity and sexual orientation and could perceive an orthodox environment to be less inclusive.

The Texas Annual Conference established a process for disaffiliation – any church seeking disaffiliation must pay the current and prior year's apportionments in full. We have not satisfied our total apportionments since 2014. The total cost of disaffiliation would include the unpaid apportionments from 2021, total apportionments for 2022, unfunded pension liabilities (if any), and legal fees. The current, estimated total cost is between \$225,000 and \$250,000.

We believe that there is some uncertainty in remaining in the UMC because there will, undoubtedly, be some changes in organization and discipline (not doctrinal standards) over time. However, we also believe that there is also uncertainty in leaving the UMC. For example, the GMC is still in its formative stages and there are open questions regarding organization, discipline and doctrine.

A final thought – we believe that the UMC has been a strong force for the cause of Christ in the world since its creation in the 1968 merger with EUB church. Think of the work of UMCOR and Global Missions around the world and the Boards of Discipleship, Higher Education, and others. Certainly, they could reduce operating costs, but how long will it take the GMC to create an infrastructure of that magnitude? Great accomplishments are a by-product of unity – staying together and building on the things we agree on and working to resolve the things where we have different understandings.

Stay UMC!