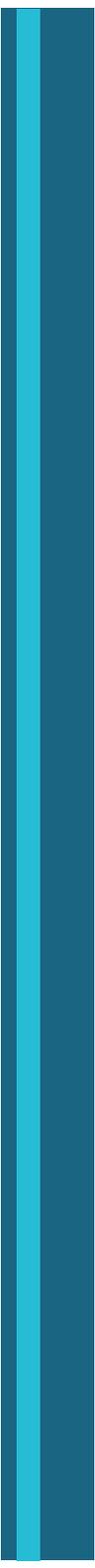


# **How We Got Here:**

## A History of the UMC Conflict

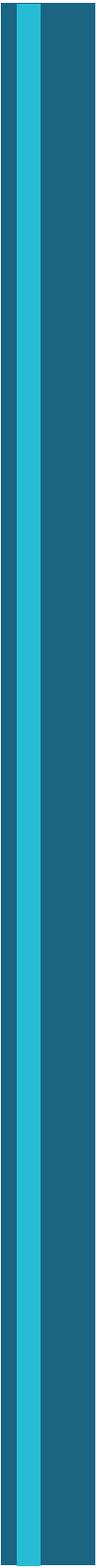


# A Lesson in History

To understand how things are, you have to know how they have been.

The history of the United Methodist Church is important for understanding the current situation.

What we are seeing is not merely a conflict over human sexuality, but two different churches with different approaches to theology and ministry that merged in 1968 and are now finally recognizing that their differences are not sustainable.

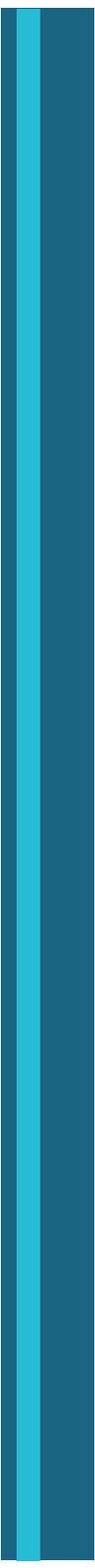


# Methodism Pre-1968

18th century - Wesley, Asbury, and American Methodism; development of German pietist brand of Methodism.

19th century - 1844 split in Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery, late century development of post-Enlightenment “liberal” Protestantism.

20th century - 1939 reunion of Methodist Episcopal Church, ecumenical movement, desire to reconnect divergent streams of Methodism.



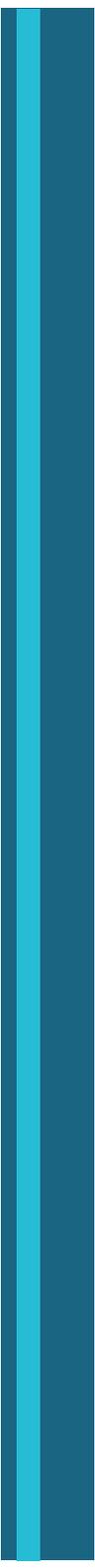
# Characteristics of 20th century ecumenical movement

Establishment of ecumenical bodies such as the Federal Council of Churches, World Council of Churches, National Council of Churches.

Unions and mergers of denominations - ME North & South (1939), Evangelical & United Brethren (1946).

Driving spirit - a quest for unity.

Dominant issues - church structures - how to merge with different understandings and practices regarding ordination, bishops, clergy deployment, etc.



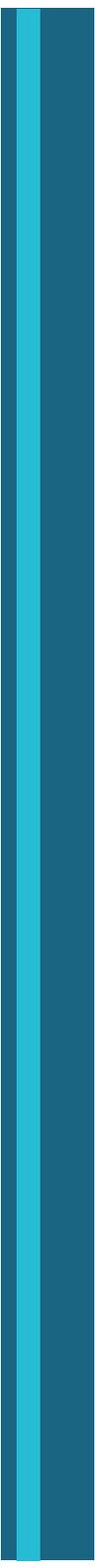
# The UMC Merger - 1968

Merger of The Methodist Church (10 million + members) with Evangelical United Brethren (750k members).

New question: What is our coherent identity?

Dominant issues: doctrinal and moral standards.

Creation of a study commission to present to first postmerger General Conference in 1972.



# Behind the Scenes

Major cultural upheaval in 1968.

Vietnam, student protests, Civil Rights movement, sexual revolution, The Troubles in Ireland, assassinations of Robert Kennedy & Martin Luther King, Jr., Cold War - Soviet takeover of Czechoslovakia.

Rise of Protestant liberalism alongside evangelical movement (Billy Graham, Jesus People).

# 1972 General Conference

Not a new set of doctrinal standards, but mere incorporation of both Methodist and EUB standards side by side without change.

“Theological Statement” - embraced “pluralism” - open to many theological expressions and experimentation (liberation theology, feminist theology, process theology, etc.) - a “big tent” Methodism.

Development of caucus Methodism - interest groups defending different aspects of theological “big tent.”

Albert Outler - developed Wesleyan “quadrilateral” - Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

Insertion of language into 1972 Book of Discipline about homosexual practice.

# In effect...

The roots of the conflict were present from the very inception of the UMC.

The UMC looked more like a big tent political party holding together various constituencies rather than a church with core convictions and common mission.

How do you maintain a church in which everyone disagrees with everyone else?

The cultural wind blowing against that “big tent” eventually meant that it could not hold up.

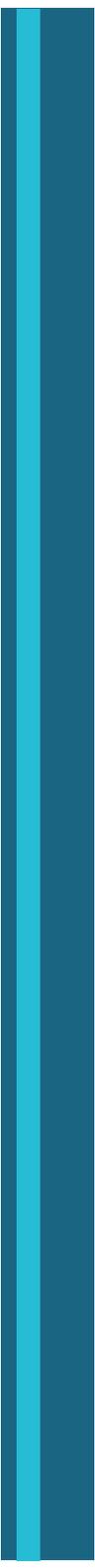
# 1988 - Reassessment

Adoption of new theological statement that expunged “theological pluralism,” and re-emphasized the Wesleyan heritage around the primacy of Scripture.

And yet, many continued to operate under the pluralistic vision of the 1972 Discipline, including most United Methodist seminaries and many bishops and clergy educated in those seminaries.

Reaffirmed statement that “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching” - subsequent conferences added additional prohibitions against same sex marriage and ordination of practicing homosexuals.

And yet, pluralistic vision caused many to reject these statements.



# Late 20th century

Conflict ramps up with differing visions digging in.

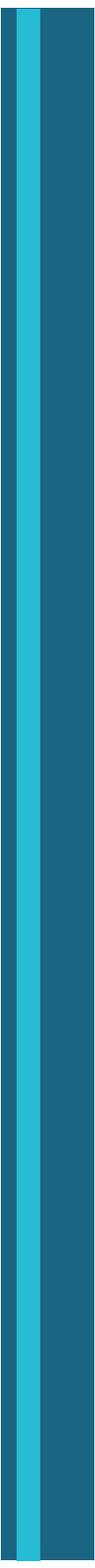
U.S. Methodism - regional differences.

Caucuses and conflicts over LGBTQ issues, abortion, political issues.

Most Boards and Agencies and Bishops skewed progressive.

Provisions of Discipline not enforced in many segments of the church.

Rise of Orthodox Methodism in Global South.



# Mainline or Methodist?

The conflict comes to a head.

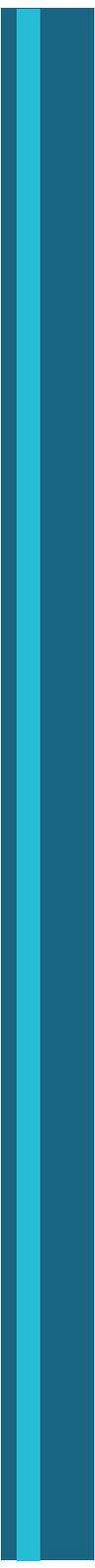
Key question: Which vision will prevail?:

“Mainline” (institutional, pluralistic) or

“Methodist” (Orthodox, doctrinally focused)

General Conferences from the late 20th century to present have been focused on the conflict between these two visions.

Human sexuality is the presenting issue, but the conflict runs much deeper.

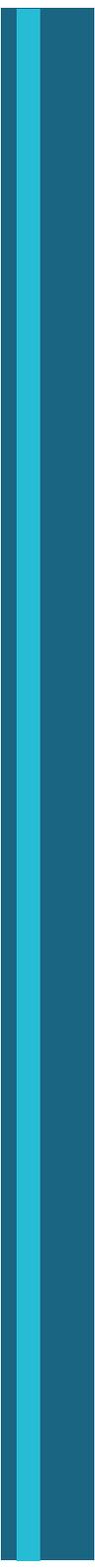


# 2004 - A Proposal to Split

2004 General Conference - Rev. Bill Hinson of the Confession Movement proposes that the UMC is not sustainable, separation inevitable.

Widely rejected by institutionally focused UMs.

Affirmations of unity while continuing the battle.



# Why Breaking Up Has Been Hard to Do

Trust clause - local church property and assets held in trust by Annual Conference (regional body).

Churches cannot simply “leave” the UMC without penalty or payment.

Apportionments - requirement for connectional giving of a percentage of church income.

Appointments - clergy appointed to churches by a Bishop.

The institutional “connectional” system has made it virtually impossible to stop the conflict, keeping combatants locked in battle.

# 2016 - The Conflict Comes to a Breaking Point

Resistance to the UMC Book of Discipline ramps up - progressive bishops and clergy conduct same sex weddings in protest, Annual Conferences begin ordaining non-celibate gay clergy.

Provisions about to be passed by traditional majority at 2016 General Conference to strengthen the Discipline's language and accountability concerning human sexuality.

A coalition of large church pastors asks Council of Bishops to lead the UMC out of the impasse.

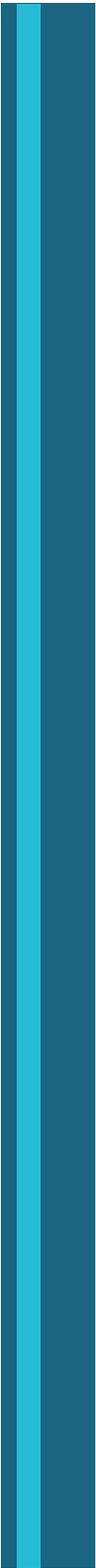
Council of Bishops formed "The Commission on a Way Forward" - 32 member panel from different constituencies - to develop a plan to maintain the unity of the church in the midst of the conflict.

Council of Bishops calls for a special General Conference in 2019 to vote on plans put forward by the Commission on a Way Forward.

# 2016 - continued

After General Conference in May 2016, the Western Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church elected Karen Oliveto, a married lesbian, as Bishop in defiance of the UMC Discipline - she is subsequently assigned to the Rocky Mountain Conference of the UMC.

October 2016 - A coalition of traditional United Methodists forms The Wesleyan Covenant Association, which seeks to either reform the current UMC or, if that was not possible, to start a new traditional Methodist denomination separate from the current United Methodist Church.



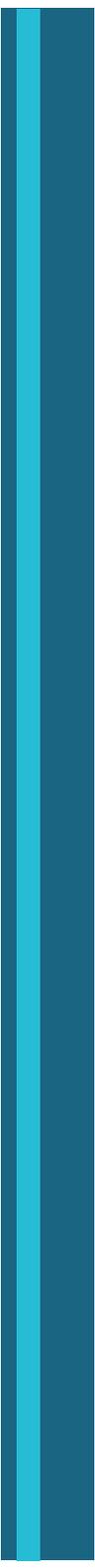
# 2019 Special General Conference in St. Louis

Three plans brought forth by Commission on a Way Forward:

One Church Plan - remove language of current Discipline around human sexuality and yet allow those who disagree to continue to hold their convictions.

Connectional Conference Plan - divide UMC into two (or three) different “conferences” under a general UMC umbrella.

Traditional Plan - strengthen current language in UMC Discipline around human sexuality and add additional accountability measures for Bishops and clergy.



# Results of 2019 Special General Conference

One Church Plan - was preferred by Bishops and progressives - failed to make it through preliminary votes.

Connectional Conference Plan - garnered virtually no support because it was complicated and required constitutional amendments.

Traditional Plan - passed by slight majority of traditional UM delegates (53-47%) including wide support from African delegations, but accountability provisions were not passed due to time running out.

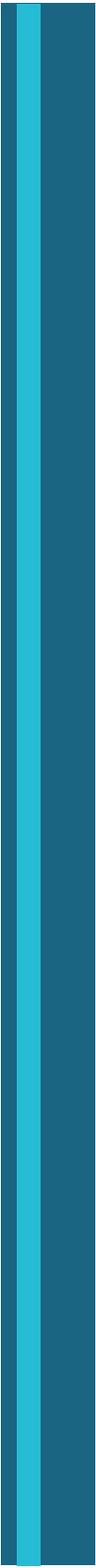
# Post-2019 General Conference

Progressive Annual Conferences, Bishops, and others declare statements of non-compliance and resistance to the Book of Discipline and the provisions of the Traditional Plan.

Institutional UMs who wanted the One Church Plan join in that resistance.

U.S. Annual Conferences elect more progressive delegations to the regularly scheduled 2020 General Conference in hopes of overturning the Traditional Plan.

Angst and conflict over the passing of the Traditional Plan causes different groups to begin seeking a separation of the church and developing plans for that separation to be submitted to the 2020 General Conference.



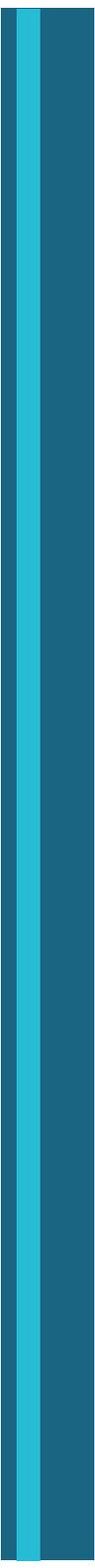
# Post-2019 General Conference

Wesleyan Covenant Association develops a new book of Doctrines and Discipline for a potential new traditional Methodist denomination.

Plans for separation submitted by various caucus group as legislation for the 2020 General Conference.

2020 General Conference postponed due to COVID-19.

2021 General Conference to be held August 2021.



# **Protocol of grace and reconciliation through separation**

This piece of legislation was written and agreed upon by a diverse group of progressive, centrist, and conservative United Methodists.

While several other pieces of legislation around an amicable separation have been put forward, the protocol is the most likely piece of legislation to pass at the upcoming General Conference because of its widespread support.

# Details of the Protocol

Provides for a “Post-Separation” UMC to continue, while also providing for the creation of a new traditional Methodist denomination.

The Post-Separation UMC will modify the Discipline to fit its context and eliminate current language concerning LGBTQ issues, removing restrictions on marriage and ordination.

Traditional denomination will create its own Discipline and structure, which the Wesleyan Covenant Association has already done.

Local churches who join the new traditional Methodist denomination will retain their property and assets.

No additional apportionments or pension liability payments will be required upon separation, other than previously documented loans from the annual conference.