General Conference 2020
Information Session

brought to you by Bethany Pastors and the Crucial Conversations Committee

Bethany UMC

Austin, TX

5:00pm, February 16, 2020

Opening Prayer

Ann Barlow

Tonight's Information Session

PURPOSE

- To provide **basic** information about the UMC, the General Conference 2020, and potential paths forward
- To provide a time of prayer for the UMC, for Bethany, and for all those who are hurting over this conflict

NOT THE PURPOSE

- To address every plan detail or every aspect of UMC polity
- To enter into theological debates
- To speculate about outcomes

Bethany UMC Pastors

- Tom Deviney
- Sheri Clifton
- Wynn Stenftenagel
- Jessica Petersen
- Thomas Johnson

Crucial Conversations Advisory Committee

- Ann Barlow
- Anita Bradberry
- Becca Edwards
- Tamra Kerns
- Kyle Rudd
- Larry Russell
- Jennifer Welsh

Agenda

• **Welcome and Opening Prayer**	*Ann Barlow*
• **Overview of the United Methodist Church**	*Thomas Johnson*
• **Overview of General Conference Process**	*Tom Deviney*
• **Overview of the Five Proposed Plans**	*Becca Edwards,* *Kyle Rudd, Larry Russell*
• **Possible Next Steps for Local Churches**	*Sheri Clifton*
• **Pastoral Remarks**	*Tom Deviney*
• **Closing and Prayer**	*Anita Bradberry*

Overview of the United Methodist Church

Thomas Johnson

UMC Structure and How Bethany UMC Fits Within

***General Conference* typically meets every 4 years. Delegates from each Annual Conference are elected for this.**

South Central Jurisdictional Conf.

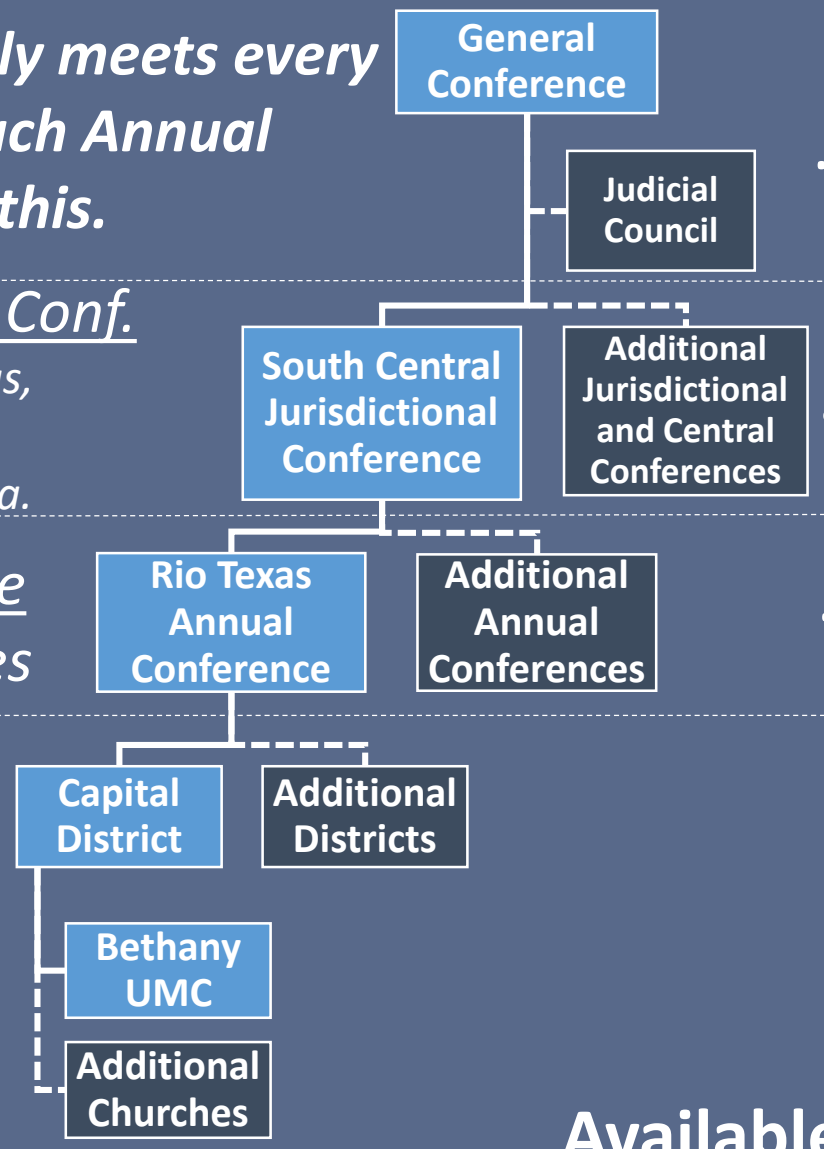
12 Annual Conferences from Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, and Oklahoma.

Rio Texas Annual Conference

Seven Districts, 359 churches

Bethany UMC

One of 44 local churches in the Capital District



45,126 UMC churches globally
… Approximately 6.8M members in US
Approximately 6.5M members outside US

… 5 Total Jurisdictional Conferences in US
7 Total Central Conferences outside US

… 129 Total Annual Conferences

Available on Bethany-umc.org/GC2020

UMC Book of Discipline – What Is It?

- Basic law and statement of beliefs of the UMC

- Composed of the following parts:
  - Constitution of the United Methodist Church (beginning ¶ 1)
  - Doctrinal Standards & our Theological Task (beginning ¶ 102)
  - Ministry of all Christians (beginning ¶ 120)
  - Social Principles (beginning ¶ 160)
  - Organization and Administration sections (beginning ¶ 201)

UMC Book of Discipline – How Can it Be Modified?

- Most parts can be changed by the General Conference with a simple majority vote

- Amendments to the Constitution must receive
  - 2/3rds vote by the delegates of the General Conference AND
  - 2/3rds vote by ALL the delegates, cumulatively, of ALL the Annual Conferences worldwide

Overview of the UMC General Conference

Tom Deviney

Overview

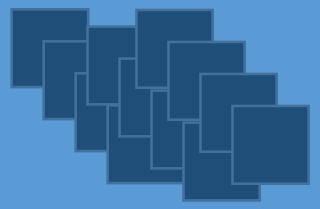
- UMC General Conferences typically called every four years
  - 2016 last regularly called session
  - 2019 was a specially called session
  - May 5-15, 2020 is next session, held in Minneapolis, MN
  - Cost $8.5M per conference
- Bishops preside over General Conference but do not vote
- General Conference Delegates
  - Clergy and Lay Delegates participate
  - GC delegates elected by Annual Conferences prior to conference
  - 600-1000 delegates, based on formula (842 this year)
  - No one from Bethany will be serving as a delegate to GC

Typical General Conference Agenda Items

- Worship
- Ministry Reports
- Administrative Items
  - Budgets
  - Pensions
  - Nominations
  - Revision of Hymnals and Worship Books
- Legislative Items (Petitions)
  - Relationships with other denominations
  - Decisions about Clergy Credentials
  - Other changes to the Book of Discipline

How the Book of Discipline Gets Changed

Petitions Submitted Prior to GC



747 Submitted For GC2020

Rejected Petitions

Petitions Assigned to Legislative Committees

Committees review and accept, amend, or reject, then send Petitions to Plenary

Rejected Petitions

Accepted & Amended Petitions Sent to Plenary (Full Body)

Plenary can accept, amend, reject, or simply not act

If Petition requires no Constitutional change, requires simple majority vote at GC only

If Petition requires a Constitutional change, requires 2/3 vote at GC, then 2/3 of cumulative vote at all Annual Conferences

Some petitions never make it to a vote at the Plenary

approved

rejected

Likely Judicial Review

Rejected or Dead Petitions

Overview of the Five Proposed Plans

Becca Edwards, Kyle Rudd, Larry Russell

Handout

Comparison Chart from UMNews available at Bethany-umc.org/GC2020

COMPARISON OF PROPOSALS TO GENERAL CONFERENCE 2020

This summary compares proposals from various groups, in alphabetical order, about the structure of The UMC. It does not include proposals from individuals. Further details are in the documents and legislation. All proposals will be open for amendments at General Conference and may be subject to Judicial Council review. Updated on 1/7/20.

PLANS	"NEW DENOMINATIONS OF UNITED METHODISM" (INDIANAPOLIS PLAN) (MULTIPLE CONTRIBUTORS)	"NEW EXPRESSIONS WORLDWIDE" (UMFORWARD)	"NEXT GENERATION UMC" (UMCNEXT)	"PROTOCOL OF RECONCILIATION & GRACE THROUGH SEPARATION" (MULTIPLE CONTRIBUTORS)	"U.S. REGIONAL CONFERENCE" (CONNECTIONAL TABLE)
PLAN DOCUMENTS	https://indyplanumc.org/	https://um-forward.org/the-new-plan	https://umcnext.com/legislation/	Protocol FAQS	https://www.umc.org/en/content/connectional-tables-us-regional-conference-legislation-now-available
NUMBER OF DENOMINATIONS	• 2-3 or more global denominations - traditionalist and centrist/progressive • The UMC continues through the Centrist UMC. • Other denominations may be formed by 50+ local churches or an annual conference(s).	• 4 global denominations - traditionalist, moderate, progressive and liberationist • The UMC dissolves.	• 1 or more - The UMC remains intact with options for new Methodist denominations that continue in relationship with the UMC.	• 2 or more • A new traditionalist denomination is formed and others may also be formed. • The UMC continues after separation.	**KEY POINTS: This proposal relates to U.S. structure. It does not address LGBTQ related matters.** • The UMC remains intact with a new regional structure for the U.S. • Does not call for a major restructure of the UMC.
WHO DECIDES WHAT	• Annual and central conferences, by simple majority, choose to join any new denomination. • Clergy and bishops choose to join any new denomination. • Central conferences may become autonomous. • Local churches, by simple majority, may choose a different denomination than their annual	• A transitional council develops a plan of separation. • Annual conferences, central conferences, clergy and bishops choose to join any new denomination. • Local churches, by 2/3 majority, may choose a different denomination than their annual conference and retain	• Congregations, clergy and conferences determine affiliations. • Local churches, by 2/3 majority, may choose to separate from the UMC and retain property, assets and liabilities.	• Annual conferences, by 57% majority, may vote to join a new Methodist denomination. • Central conferences, by 2/3 majority, may vote to join a new Methodist denomination. • Local churches, by either a simple or 2/3 majority, may choose a different denomination than that of their annual conference and retain	• Until a U.S. regional conference is formed, an interim committee of the General Conference handles U.S. matters.

A Note About the US Regional Conference (Connectional Table)

- Creates a new regional structure within the US
- Does not directly address LGBTQ related matters
- New US Regional Conference would be able to deal with US-only issues and allow for some US-specific modifications to the BoD
- Requires a constitutional amendment

Four Primary Plans

1. "New Denominations of United Methodism"
   - (Indianapolis Plan, Multiple Contributors)

2. "New Expressions Worldwide"
   - (UMFORWARD)

3. "Next Generation UMC"
   - (UMCNEXT)

4. "Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation"
   - (Multiple Contributors)

Common Elements Across All Four Plans

- Assume that the UMC will become 2+ denominations
- Assume that local churches retain assets, property, debt
- Assume that clergy/bishops may choose which denomination they will affiliate with
- Suspend current disciplinary action on LGBTQ complaints
- Assume a multi-year transition phase

Proposed Number of Denominations

New Denominations	New Expressions	Next Generation	Protocol
UMC becomes Centrist New Denominations: Traditionalist, and possibly Progressive and others	UMC Dissolves New Denominations: Traditionalist, Moderate, Progressive, and Liberationist	UMC becomes Progressive/Centrist New Denominations: options for new Methodist denominations that continue in relationship with the UMC	UMC becomes Progressive/Centrist New Denominations: New Traditional and possibly others

Proposed Timelines

New Denominations	New Expressions	Next Generation	Protocol
Realignment begins within one year	Transitional Council will be started to develop Plan of Separation	Special General Conference 2023	Annual conference and Central conference affiliation vote 2021
New denominations fully established 2022	Special General Conference with Plan of Separation 2024 at the latest		
Local Church affiliation deadline 2028		Local church disaffiliation deadline 2025	Local church affiliation deadline 2024

Proposed Decision-Making Authority

New Denominations	New Expressions	Next Generation	Protocol
Annual Conferences decide where they go by simple majority	Annual Conferences decide where they go by simple majority	Annual Conferences decide where they go (specific thresholds not provided)	Annual Conferences can decide to join a new Methodist denomination by 57% majority*
Local churches, by simple majority, may choose a different denomination	Local churches, by 2/3 majority, may choose a different denomination	Local churches, by 2/3 majority, may choose a different denomination	Local churches, by either simple OR 2/3 majority, may choose a different denomination

* Central Conferences require 2/3 majority

Proposed Finances and Asset Division

New Denominations	New Expressions	Next Generation	Protocol
New denominations continue clergy pensions All denominations pay apportionments thru 2020 All denominations support funding for central conference ministries thru 2024	General church assets divided equitably Provides for arbitration Additional investments to historically marginalized and vulnerable churches	General Conference funds new denomination grants through 2024	$25M to Traditional Den. over 4 yrs $2M for other new denominations $39M to ethnic ministries over 8 yrs All assets retained by conferences and churches

Proposed Structure and Agency Relationships

New Denominations	New Expressions	Next Generation	Protocol
Denominations develop own structure/governance Some agencies become independent to serve any denomination Other agencies part of the Centrist UMC with option to serve other denominations	Denominations develop own structure/governance Current UMC agencies become independent non-profits	Creates U.S. Regional Conference A special commission proposes new constitution and governance	Post-separation UMC maintains current structure initially Agencies continue in post-separation UMC New denominations may enter into agreements w/ post-separation UMC

Possible Pathways for Local Churches

Sheri Clifton

BREATHE.

PRAY.

Things We Know

- We will all still be brothers and sisters in Christ
- There will still be important ministry for us to do here
- No final decision will be required of local churches immediately
- Any voted plan would likely require a Judicial Review

Things We Do Not Know

- We do not yet know the outcome of General Conference
  - Each plan has unique differences
  - Something entirely new could be crafted
  - It is possible that nothing gets voted in at General Conference
- We do not yet know the specific options that Bethany will have

Two Potential Pathways

1. Some form of one of these plans is adopted, meaning that the current UMC denomination will divide into two or more denominations

2. No plan is adopted, meaning that the UMC remains as it is now

BREATHE.

PRAY.

Pathway 1: Multiple Denominations Are Created

- Nothing happens immediately; 1-3 year process
- Most current plans allow for Annual Conferences to vote on which denomination to affiliate with
- Current plans have a provision for churches to vote to move to a new denomination if they do not wish to remain in the denomination their Annual Conference chooses

What Might Pathway 1 Mean for Bethany?

- Annual Conference Actions
  - Annual Rio Texas Conference 2020 meets June 10-13
  - Unlikely there would be anything solidified to vote on by then
  - Likely there would be special called session in late 2020/early 2021 OR that a vote would take place at AC 2021
- Bethany Actions
  - Once we knew the outcome of the Annual Conference vote, the Bethany Administrative Board could decide to stay with the Annual Conference's decision or could call a church-wide vote to consider leaving our Annual Conference
  - We would have 1-7 years to do this, depending on particular plan passed

BREATHE.

PRAY.

Pathway 2: The UMC Remains Intact As It Is

- Some groups (Jurisdictional and Annual Conferences) may desire to leave the UMC
  - Unknown what the process would be for this
- Some local churches may desire to leave the UMC
  - Disaffiliation Plan allows for church vote and their Annual Conference approval
  - Would likely be very financially expensive

What Might Pathway 2 Mean for Bethany?

- If there was a desire to consider leaving the UMC, the Bethany Administrative Board would need to form a special committee to research if/how Bethany could leave the UMC denomination
- That research would be used to determine if it made sense to move forward with a church-wide vote to leave the UMC
- If vote passed, would be taken to our Annual Conference for an approval vote. Annual Conference would determine cost

BREATHE.

PRAY.

How We Are Preparing for General Conference 2020

EVENTS

- HEART Principles Sermon Series
- GC 2020 Information Session (Feb 16)
- Repeat Video Session on Two Biblical Views On Same Sex Marriage (March 29)
- Prayer Events & Opportunities
- *General Conference (May 5-15)*
- GC2020 Town Hall (May 19)
- *Annual Rio Texas Conference (June 10-13)*
- Annual Conf Town Hall (June 22)

January | **February** | **March** | **April** | **May** | **June**

RESOURCES

- **Epistle Articles**
- **bethany-umc.org/GC2020**
- **Resource List**

Questions

Additional Questions Not Answered Tonight

- If you have clarifying questions about information presented tonight, please submit them to the boxes at the back of the Worship Center

- We will answer the questions through Frequently Asked Questions documents and potentially recorded videos

bethany-umc.org/GC2020

Pastoral Remarks

Tom Deviney

Exodus 33: 12-23

12 Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these
people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with
me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found
favor with me.' 13 If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so
I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember
that this nation is your people." 14 The LORD replied, "My
Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." 15 Then Moses
said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us
up from here. 16 How will anyone know that you are pleased with
me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will
distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the
face of the earth?"

Exodus 33: 12-23

17 And the LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have
asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."
18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And
the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you,
and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have
mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on
whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my
face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the LORD said, "There
is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 When my
glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you
with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand
and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

Closing and Prayer Time

Anita Bradberry

Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee, and thou with me Lord;
Thou and thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Great God of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven’s joys, O bright heaven’s Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision O Ruler of all.