



CORRECTING MISINFORMATION

A group of self-identified centrists in our annual conference is distributing literature with many statements that are debatable, misleading, or even outright false. Here are corrections to some of their misstatements.

CENTRISTS CLAIM THE POST-SEPARATION UMC WILL MAINTAIN CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

While the post-separation UMC is unlikely to alter its doctrinal standards (Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith), this, unfortunately, has little influence over what doctrines are taught from your church's pulpit.

The official orthodoxy of the UMC is already eroded by the highly progressive spirit of most United Methodist approved seminaries and a denomination-wide lack of accountability to these historic doctrinal standards. With the current exodus of so many traditionalist congregations and clergy, The United Methodist Church will continue to be orthodox on paper, but that orthodoxy will be more and more ignored. Instead, the UMC will be increasingly held captive by a radical progressive theology - even in the Texas Annual Conference. This is what has happened in the UCC, the Disciples of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, and even in the Mennonite Church. And it will happen here next.

CENTRISTS CLAIM THERE IS NO RUSH FOR CHURCHES WHO MIGHT WANT TO DISAFFILIATE

[This is misleading at best.](#)

The main paragraph of the Book of Discipline that churches are using to disaffiliate, par. 2553, includes a sunset provision at the end of 2023. Further, in addition to a number of time-consuming steps the local church must take to complete the discernment process, it also must be approved by the Annual Conference. At the moment, there are only two Annual Conference sessions scheduled at which such an approval can be granted - the special session on December 3rd of this year and the regular session in May/June of next year. With Bishop Jones retiring at the end of this year and great uncertainty as to who our next bishop might be, it makes sense to try to move forward this year while we know we have a good faith conversation partner leading the annual conference.

Moreover, while it is technically true that the bishop doesn't decide the disaffiliation process, he or she has considerable influence, and might be able to put up roadblocks in places that are hard to predict. There's a good chance many churches will be able to disaffiliate at the regular annual conference session next year, but there is significant risk in pursuing that option. There is even greater risk in assuming there will be any options beyond the regularly scheduled annual conference session next year.

To not make a decision is to make a decision. And that decision will leave you in an increasingly progressive denomination with a dubious doctrinal future. The stakes are too high to bear such risk. It is best to act now.

CENTRISTS SAY THE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH IS NOT YET FULLY ESTABLISHED

[This is absolutely false.](#)

They launched as a legal entity at the beginning of May, and are the beneficiary of years of careful visioning and planning.

CENTRISTS SAY WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH'S DOCTRINE AND POLITY WILL BE

[This is true of the Global Methodist Church to the same degree as it is true of The United Methodist Church.](#)

Just like the UMC, the GMC has an authoritative governing document (The Book of Doctrines and Discipline) under which it lives. Just like the UMC, that document is subject to change by General Conference action. Just like the UMC, the GMC is a living, moving institution. The difference is in the direction it is moving.

CENTRISTS SAY THERE ARE NO CHURCHES IN THE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

[This is an outright lie.](#)

Churches are slowly coming into the GMC in waves, and many are already there. As of August 4, 2022, hundreds of churches have voted to disaffiliate from the UMC and join the GMC once their effective date of disaffiliation is reached, with many more expected to be added to their number in the coming weeks and months. 59 congregations are already members, including churches in the Philippines and a whole annual conference in Eastern Europe. And some of those churches were already a part of the GMC on May 1, so this assertion has never been true in the history of the brand new denomination. The Global Methodist Church is real, and it is already global.

CENTRISTS SAY SMALL CHURCHES MIGHT BE LEFT WITHOUT A PASTOR IN THE GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH

[This is a scare tactic.](#)

The ordination process in the GMC is much simpler than that of the UMC, which will enable the GMC to recruit, credential, and deploy qualified pastors more quickly and effectively. To take a relevant example, Licensed Local Pastors, who serve many of our small membership churches, are often treated as de facto second-class citizens in the UMC. In the GMC they will be ordained just as they are. The GMC is committed to caring for small membership churches and their pastors; there will be no second-class citizens among either clergy or churches. This will be a better deal for small membership churches and their pastors.

Churches of all sizes served by pastors who are staying in the UMC will be appointed a new pastor as soon as possible. Any gaps in pastoral leadership will be short term - and will be far outweighed by the long-term benefits of being in a denomination that believes what you believe.

CENTRISTS SAY THE GMC MAY NOT BE THE BEST OPTION FOR ALL CHURCHES SEEKING DISAFFILIATION

[While there are other denominational options, joining the GMC together provides the best chance for us to maintain existing connective relationships.](#)

Further, the GMC has the same doctrine and a very similar polity to that under which your church was founded. Centrists claim to value unity above all else. Their attempt to splinter disaffiliating churches into many different denominations is hypocritical in the extreme. Your church should explore its options, but we think you'll feel most at home and most able to pursue God's calling in the GMC.

And in the end, if your church joins the GMC and decides it can serve God better elsewhere, it will be free to withdraw anytime without penalty. In the GMC the local church will always own its own property with no trust clause. The GMC aims to be a denomination of the willing, not the constrained.

CENTRISTS CLAIM PASTORS TRANSFERRING TO THE GMC FROM THE UMC WILL HAVE TO PAY A 7% PENALTY FROM THEIR PENSION

This is either a gross misunderstanding of how pensions work, or it is yet another scare tactic.

Even Wespath says that this is misinformation. The 7% referenced is not a penalty, but a “discount rate,” a standard aspect of any actuarial calculation that converts a defined benefit pension plan into a lump sum payout. Essentially, instead of paying pastors a set amount every month from their retirement until their death, Wespath is just going to convert those future payments into a current value lump sum using an assumed future interest rate, i.e. the discount rate. It is akin to winning the lottery jackpot and taking the cash option now instead of monthly payments for thirty years. The pastor can then invest the lump sum to assist with future retirement income needs similar to a defined contribution plan.

Moreover, this only applies to the defined benefit portion of a pastor’s retirement plan with Wespath. The defined contribution portion is not impacted by this discount rate at all.

CENTRISTS CLAIM THAT THE UMC WILL REMAIN A ‘BIG TENT’ CHURCH, INCLUSIVE OF PROGRESSIVES, CENTRISTS, AND TRADITIONALISTS ALIKE

While there will undoubtedly be some traditionalists remaining in the post-separation UMC, they will be increasingly held captive by the broader church and an unbiblical agenda they don’t believe in, and they will be decreasingly powerful to do anything about it.

Our jurisdiction has likely consecrated its last traditionalist bishop, and our annual conference will ordain precious few (if any) traditionalist pastors in the future. So while it is true that Church Trustees set a congregation’s wedding policy and pastors choose which weddings they will officiate, and bishops will often do their best to ensure a good match between the church and their new pastor, the truth is that your church’s spiritual leadership will be increasingly progressive. Traditionalists in the post-separation UMC will likely experience pressure to behave counter to their convictions, but even without that, traditionalist United Methodists will be de facto extinct within a few quadrennia.