

## A Time to Move

Like many of my AUMC brothers and sisters, I am a lifelong Methodist.

My roots trace back to 1963 when I was baptized in the Methodist church. When the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, I was just six years old, so I have been part of the UMC since its inception. I was then confirmed in sixth grade and have been in love with the UMC and its distinct Wesleyan theology ever since.

As a leader, I watched my home church strive to pay apportionments. I gave of my prayers, presence, gifts and service while I taught 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade Sunday School for ten years and served on various committees and boards.

In 2001 I answered God's call to the professional ministry through the UMC. I attended Perkins School of Theology and I watched many professors argue a vast number of positions that were not consistent with the tenants in our UM doctrine, including one that claimed that the death of Jesus on the cross was nothing more than divine child abuse. In 2008 I was ordained an Elder in the Texas Annual Conference. It was exciting to be in covenant with United Methodist clergy literally all around the world. I watched as my clergy friends became increasingly divided over the issue of human sexuality, the authority of scripture, and divinity of Jesus to the point that friendships were wrecked. I have watched as an entire Jurisdiction committed acts of ecclesial defiance as they elected an openly gay bishop, and then ignored the Judicial Council's decision that she could not serve as a Bishop. The brothers and sisters with whom I was in covenant through our ordination vows began to do same sex weddings, which was in direct violation of the written doctrine of the UMC. None of them were held accountable for their actions despite every General Conference since 1972 affirming the current Doctrine of the UMC as it relates to human sexuality.

I have watched as our general agencies have become bloated beacons of bureaucratic morass accomplishing very little for the advancement of the Kingdom. These general agencies, as of a 2020 audited statement, have accumulated unrestricted net assets in excess of \$362,000,000 not including pension assets and permanent funds. The exception to this bloat is the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) which continues to do excellent work around the world and is something I will continue to support with my personal gifts.

I came to the conclusion several years ago that the church that I have loved so much and have been very active in since its inception, is broken beyond repair. Our appointive system is broken as I saw firsthand in my role as VCI director when I worked with hundreds of small and medium churches. Almost every church had stories of badly matched and/or incompetent pastors that were kept in place too long. Our Bishops have too much and church leadership too little authority in the appointment of clergy leadership. Throughout the UMC there is no ability to hold pastors, bishops, conferences and jurisdictions accountable when they openly defy the doctrine of the church.

I have stayed with the UMC as long as I have because I am a true believer in connectional Wesleyan Methodism. It is what I believe with all my heart. I believe the Methodist understanding of God's great love for His people and our understanding of Prevenient Grace, Justifying Grace and Sanctifying Grace is the finest expression of Jesus' love for the world. I believe it has and can continue to change the world. I have stayed in the UMC because there was no alternative expression of that understanding and connection.

Today, there is an alternative expression of that connectional Wesleyan Methodism that my soul so yearns for. The Global Methodist Church has taken the Doctrine that the United Methodist Church has had in place since 1972 and duplicated it in their Transitional Book of Discipline. This is the Doctrine that I have embraced my entire life. If I want to maintain that doctrine I must change to keep it.

I have concluded that it is time for me to move, as there is no long-term future for me in the United Methodist Church. Sometime in the future I will be transferring my ordination to the Global Methodist Church.

What does this mean for our church?

Should AUMC choose to move to the Global Methodist Church, I would like nothing more than to serve as your pastor until my retirement in five to ten years. I will then work with the leadership of the church to create an appropriate succession plan.

If AUMC chooses to remain UMC and not move to the Global Methodist Church, I will continue to serve the United Methodist Church and AUMC short term, in order to facilitate a smooth transition for new pastoral leadership. This is, of course, assuming the newly elected Bishop allows me to do so.

I have come to understand God's calling on my life as strengthening the local church. I have done that everywhere I have been sent. There are several advantages in the polity of the GMC that I believe will strengthen our church and similar size churches:

- First, the GMC has no trust clause, and the church has full title to its property with no exceptions.
- Second, the apportionment financial load for all churches will be significantly lighter.
- Third, the appointive system is very different. Your pastor cannot be pulled away by the bishop because he or she has a problem elsewhere that the bishop thinks your pastor can fix. The church leadership is a key part of choosing its clergy. This will allow AUMC to have stable pastoral leadership for years to come.

I believe that these changes will make an already strong AUMC even stronger.

You have the opportunity to influence this church's future affiliation by voting in person at our called church conference on Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00. Registration information will be on the AUMC website prior to the conference. You can find out more about our discernment process, the GMC, the UMC, and upcoming cottage meetings by visiting the AUMC website.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1 we read, *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.* For me, a season of change is upon me. I am excited to see what God might do with this new expression of Methodism and to be a part of its beginning. It is my sincere hope and prayer that I may be your pastor for many years to come. If that is not to be, I know that God will continue to do great work through each of you and this great church. Despite the hurt, anxiety and pain that comes with change, I know that no matter what happens in the end, God wins!

Peace and Grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Tyson, II". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Rev. Mike Tyson