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# PRELIMINARY REMARKS

### WE ALL HAVE A PERSPECTIVE

UMC Council of Bishops, UM News, UM Insight, North Georgia Conference emails and webpage, 8 District Newsletters and webpages, and the national media.

- No Enemies Here
- My Comments Are Not Directed Toward People
- Not What I Am Against/Not Attacking The UMC
- How Can You Discern Truth Unless You Know The Facts?

# WHY IS THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH DIVIDING?

We have disagreed about <u>Theology</u> and <u>Human Sexuality</u> for 50 Years and did not divide.

WHY NOW?

### IN THE PAST ...

### We had **<u>differing beliefs</u>**, but United Methodists honored the <u>connectional covenant</u> and engaged in the <u>same practices</u>.

### NOW ...

The <u>connectional covenant</u> is being violated and we have <u>differing practices</u>, many of which are direct violations of the *Book of Discipline* and inconsistent with <u>Scripture</u>. We **do not** contend that the United Methodist Church will alter the *Book of Discipline* to change our core theology.

We contend that theological **PRACTICES have already changed** without altering the *Book of Discipline*.

**PRACTICES** will continue to change without altering the *Book of Discipline*.

No matter what the *Book of Discipline* says regarding theology, if you do not:

- teach it in your seminaries,
- preach it from the pulpit, and
- hold clergy and churches accountable to it,

### YOU REALLY DO NOT BELIEVE IT.

# WHY ARE WE DIVIDING?

**United Methodist Church Practices** Do Not Match Our Stated Beliefs:

> **INSTITUTIONAL** Impasse **THEOLOGICAL** Impasse

# WHY IS THE UMC DIVIDING? INSTITUTIONAL IMPASSE

### **BROKEN CONNECTIONAL COVENANT**

- What Is Our Connectional Covenant?
- Why Does It Matter?

The *Book of Discipline* is our **Connectional Covenant:** the terms of our shared contract.

### WITHOUT THE CONNECTION WE ARE:

- **Outside the Body of Christ** and the relational community it provides.
- **Outside the bounds of accountability** to the Body of Christ and the biblical community.

### **Only** <u>General Conference</u>

sets our doctrine and polity in the *Book of Discipline* through **Christian Conferencing** and **Vote** of the **Global Body**.

- Not Bishops, District Superintendents, or interest groups.
- Not individual churches or individual people.

### We covenant to abide by the <u>will of the body</u> as determined at General Conference.

**Clergy**, including **Bishops**, <u>vow</u> to abide by the *Book of Discipline*.

### **Bishops are set apart to guard our Doctrine and <u>administer</u> the** *Book of Discipline* **(para. 401).**

Instead, many openly oppose and violate the Book of Discipline.

They pick and choose what to enforce based on their agenda, instead of their oath of office.

There is **no uniformity** and **no accountability** to limit their power.

# BROKEN CONNECTIONAL COVENANT EXAMPLES

How can you remain in covenant when one covenant partner <u>Refuses to Honor</u> the covenant while demanding that you honor it?

# HOW CAN THIS HAPPEN?

**Election** and **Discipline** of Bishops is at the **Jurisdictional Level** 

**Committee on Investigation** (para. 2703 – 2706)

7 Clergy: 5 Required to pass 2 Lay "Observers" — **No Vote** 

# WHY IS THE UMC DIVIDING? THEOLOGICAL IMPASSE

We are at a <u>Theological Impasse</u> rooted in our differing beliefs regarding:

the <u>Authority</u> of the Bible, the <u>Interpretation</u> of the Bible, and the Bible's <u>impact</u> on how we live out our faith.

### REMINDER

No matter what the *Book of Discipline* says regarding theology, if you do not:

- teach it in your seminaries,
- preach it from the pulpit, and
- hold clergy and churches accountable to it,

### YOU REALLY DO NOT BELIEVE IT.

### WHAT ARE THE TWO MAJOR PERSPECTIVES?

### **TRADITIONAL**

- Historic interpretation of the Bible
- Does not believe in culturally redefining the Bible
- Beliefs align with the current UMC Book of Discipline

#### **CENTRIST/PROGRESSIVE**

- Includes a wide range of interpretation and theological ideas
- Range from moderate to strongly progressive

# TWO MAJOR THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

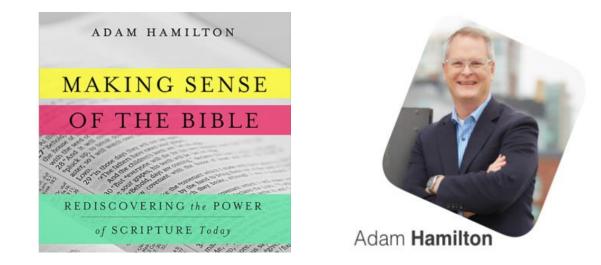
### TRADITIONAL AND CENTRIST/PROGRESSIVE Why Lump Centrists In With Progressives?

- Not all views are shared but all are accepted by them both
- They represent the current and future United Methodist Church

# **DIFFERING BELIEFS ABOUT SCRIPTURE**

> The Word of God	Contains the Word of God
Biblical revelation is	New revelation takes
complete	precedence over old
Bible is true and authoritative	Parts of the Bible are true, portions can be dismissed as not relevant today
Experience is subject to	Experience can supersede
Scripture	Scripture

# THE THREE BUCKETS OF SCRIPTURE ACCORDING TO CENTRIST SPOKESMAN



Hamilton concludes each Scripture can be put in 1 of 3 buckets:

- 1. The timeless Word of God for all times;
- 2. The Word for that time and people but no longer binding on us, or
- 3. Never the Word of God.

# DIFFERING BELIEFS ON THE NATURE & ROLE OF JESUS

Incarnate (fully human and fully divine)

**≻**Virgin Birth

>Physical Death

>Bodily Resurrection

May or may not believe in any or all of these tenets contained in the Apostles' Creed Bishop C. Joseph Sprague – West Ohio Conference UMC *"Affirmations of a Dissenter"* (Abingdon 2002)

**<u>DENIAL</u>** of the historicity of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels:

- No virgin birth
- No bodily resurrection
- No substitutionary atonement
- Jesus is a mere human, not divine

### All charges against him were <u>DISMISSED</u>. ALL VIEWS ACCEPTED.

The Book of Discipline was not changed before this was written.

# Differing Beliefs On The Nature And Role Of Sin

- ≻Sin is personal, and separates us from God
- ➢ Requires atonement
- Forgiveness comes from faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus

- Societal from external forces
- ➢No original sin (Man is inherently good)
- It is possible for sin to be corrected through works of justice and mercy
- Jesus' death on the cross is not necessary

# **DIFFERING BELIEFS ON SALVATION**

- Precious gift received in response to God's grace
  Only comes through faith in Jesus
- Universal Salvation; all receive salvation regardless of belief
- More than one path to salvation

**Roger Wolsey**, ordained United Methodist Pastor Director of the Wesley Foundation, University of Colorado at Boulder

"Friends, Jesus isn't God. Jesus didn't die for our sins. Jesus wasn't killed instead of us. God isn't wrathful or vindictive. There isn't a hell (other than ones that we create here on this earth). Going to heaven after we die isn't what the faith or salvation is about. God didn't write the Bible. There isn't going to be a "rapture." Jesus' resurrection didn't have to be understood as a physical one for it to be a real and meaningful one (Paul and many of the early disciples encountered a spiritually risen Christ)." "I do believe that Jesus was divine (in the way that you and I are), and that he's the 2nd person of the trinity. Christians rightfully honor and celebrate Jesus as a unique and fully incarnate manifestation of God. I don't believe that he's literally God (at least not what most people tend to mean by that word). We live and move and have our being in God, so did Jesus. The trinity is a beloved Christian poem of who God is to us. But poems don't literally define things. Like all art, and theology, they point to what is beyond them" "And Christianity isn't the only way for humans to experience salvation."

*"It's time For Progressive Christianity"* The Holy Kiss, Patheos.com, May 24, 2018, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogerwolsey/2018/05/its-time-for-progressive-Christianity/

### DIFFERING BELIEFS ON SANCTIFICATION & CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

- What Wesley called the "grand depositum"
- Not only delivered from the penalty of sin
- Also delivered from the power and control of sin in our lives
- Transformed by the Holy Spirit to live in perfect love

- Deny the ability to be perfected in this life
- Deny the need to be "saved to the uttermost"
- Not willing to die to self and follow Jesus

# DIFFERING BELIEFS ON THE CHARACTER OF GOD

#### HOLY LOVE

LOVE ONLY

God revealed His character in Exodus 34:6-7

### **Duke Divinity Pride Worship** • March 2022

"The holy and queer one be with you."

"Strange one, fabulous one, fluid, and ever-becoming one"

"You are drag queen and trans man and genderfluid, incapable of limiting your vast expressions of beauty, embodied in us, your creation." "Beloved, you are never called to abandon yourself."

"Abandoning the self is negating the truth of who you are, and that is always a lie."

### **MOUNTAIN SKY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

NextGen & Inclusiveness Ministries Presents:

*"Queering Wesley, Queering the Church"* by Keegan Osinski A Five Week Book Study 9/13/22 - 10/11/22

The *Book of Discipline* **Did Not Change** to permit this teaching.

# THESE VIEWS ARE NOT JUST "OUTLIERS"

### 10 YEARS OF EXAMPLES AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE CHURCH

General, Jurisdictional, Annual Conference, Local Church

- How is a Bishop considered an outlier?
- How is the leading "Centrist" UMC Pastor an outlier?
- How are seminaries considered outliers?

### THESE VIEWS ARE NOT JUST "OUTLIERS"

**"Nobody takes the Bible literally."** North Georgia UMC Pastor

**"Do not pray to the Father."** North Georgia UMC Pastor

"Polyamory (multiple partners) is not a sin." North Georgia UMC Pastor

"Our culture has moved on. It's time the church moved on." Bishop Sue Haupert-Johnson

# **BISHOP KEN CARTER** Florida Annual Conference

"And while I believe in our traditional, orthodox faith that's rooted in the scriptures, I also have always believed that **WE HAVE TO ADAPT OUR DOCTRINE AND OUR SCRIPTURES** to changing life circumstances that people have."

– July 26, 2022, Lakeland Ledger

### Our **Denominational Leaders** are **promising** to **change** the *Book of Discipline*

- Regarding human sexuality
- Regarding the structure of the church

### "Come to the Table" with Bishop Sue



The Future of the UMC in North Georgia

"Reclaiming the Welcoming Table"

Released April 12, 2021

No dissenting view from any cabinet member.

All in total agreement.

# When the <u>Beliefs</u> and <u>Practices</u> of the Church are <u>Indistinguishable</u> from the <u>Prevailing Culture</u>,

WE ARE IN TROUBLE!

# NOT ALL VIEWS ARE SHARED BUT ALL VIEWSARE ACCEPTED

**Promised to change the** *Book of Discipline* **regarding the <u>Structure</u> <b>of the United Methodist Church**:

U.S. Regional Conference Plan will be implemented Christmas Covenant, Connectional Table, Alaska omnibus

The United Methodist Church as it is today will <u>no longer exist</u>.

IF YOU WANT TO STAY THE SAME, YOU WILL NEED TO CHANGE DENOMINATIONS.

### **A TIME FOR DECISION IS NOW**

General Conference has been Postponed to 2024.

The Protocol can only be passed at General Conference so the Protocol is not a current option.

**Key Progressive** and **Centrist signers** of the Protocol officially **WITHDREW support** for the Protocol. Web page launched June 7, 2022.

PARAGRAPH 2553 IS THE ONLY OPTION TO DISAFFILIATE.

**Paragraph 2553 expires December 31, 2023.** That date cannot be extended before it expires.

### WHY NOT STAY AT THE TABLE?

### How can we stay in <u>COVENANT</u> with a partner who <u>REFUSES TO HONOR</u> the Covenant?

Traditionalists have been <u>EXCLUDED</u> from the Table.

### WILL MY CHURCH CHANGE?