



Two Methodisms: A Comparison Chart

by Chris Ritter
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The [Separation Protocol agreement](#) announced in January 2020 creates options United Methodists will want to carefully consider. If the legislation is approved at the next General Conference (August/September 2022), annual conferences and congregations will be empowered to change affiliation without losing their properties or incurring significant exit costs. Separation has already begun with the [exit of both traditionalist and progressive congregations](#), but these exits tend to be expensive and contingent upon local negotiations. The Protocol is designed to open a wider door in the interest of peace and goodwill. The primary options for congregations will be (1) remaining in a post-separation United Methodist Church or (2) joining the new [Global Methodist Church](#). Votes will happen first at the level of the annual conference. Congregations that disagree with the decision made by their annual conference may hold a [church conference](#) to consider a different affiliation.

Planning for the Global Methodist Church has been the work of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and a wider Transitional Leadership Council that includes some UM bishops. The vision for this new denomination supports more local control, less denominational bureaucracy, and classic Christian doctrine/ethics. Walter Fenton of WCA [estimates](#) that 3,000-5,000 congregations in the U.S. will join the GMC initially, with perhaps another 1,000 joining a bit

later. These numbers include a handful of U.S. annual conferences that will take a 57%+ vote to opt into the new denomination. There will likely be significant numbers of United Methodists overseas joining the new connection, but this is impossible to calculate. It is fair to say the new denomination will be distinctly global.

So far, there are two competing visions for the future of the post-separation UMC. The first is an effort on the part of Progressives to shape the remaining institution around the concepts of intersectional justice. This is the "[Out of Chaos... Creation" Group](#). The other vision is captured in a [working document](#) shared by a group of bishops that calls for a regionalized, theological "big tent." This more recent proposal seems to be aimed at keeping Centrists and Traditionalists in the UMC. The post-separation United Methodist Church will go through an undetermined period of adjustment following separation. We can anticipate a decided shift in the Progressive direction. This will show up initially in terms of theological emphasis, marriage and sexuality standards, and advocacy for abortion rights. A proposed [re-write of UM Social Principles](#) provides a preview. District, annual conference, and jurisdictional maps eventually will need to be adjusted in light of the new demographic realities. There will also likely need to be further attempts to right-size the general agencies in light of separation and decline.

Here is a simple chart that compares the two primary branches that will flow from approval of the Separation Protocol (should that happen at General Conference in August/September 2022). Information about the Global Methodist Church is based on the draft [Book of Doctrines and Discipline](#). These provisions will not be enacted unless and until adopted by a convening General Conference (late 2023 or early 2024). In the meantime, the Global Methodist Church will be governed by the [Transitional Discipline](#) which is much closer to what we have today.

Two Future Methodist Denominations Compared

v. 1.4	Post-Separation UMC	Global Methodist Church
<i>General Conference, AC, District Structures?</i>	Yes. Annual conference and district boundaries likely will be adjusted in many locations following the separation.	Yes. Annual conference and district boundaries will be new in many places. General Conference will meet every two years while the church is organizing and every six years afterward.
<i>Boards and Agencies?</i>	Inherits the current 13 general boards and agencies.	New, leaner structure with a single connectional operations officer overseeing.
<i>Name?</i>	The United Methodist Church	The Global Methodist Church
<i>Trust Clause on Local Church Properties?</i>	Local church property held in trust for the annual conference.	Local church property owned by the local church.
<i>Global in Nature?</i>	Likely yes (U.S., Western Europe, parts of Philippines, and maybe Africa)	Likely yes (U.S., Eastern Europe, part of Philippines, and Africa). Some former UMC conferences in Latin America and Asia have indicated an interest in joining, too.
<i>Openly Non-celibate homosexual or Transgender Bishops and Clergy?</i>	Yes	No

<i>Clergy Performing Same-Sex Weddings?</i>	Yes, if they so choose.	No
<i>Female Clergy at All Levels of Leadership?</i>	Yes	Yes
<i>Clergy Deployment</i>	Ordained clergy guaranteed an appointment by the bishop, and the local church guaranteed a pastor of the bishop's choosing -- with consultation.	Collaborative appointment system where church lay leaders have a bigger voice in the appointment. No guaranteed appointments for clergy. Bishop must sign off on the selection made. Minority candidates must be considered.
<i>Ordination</i>	Elders and Deacons are separate orders. Commissioning is a step toward ordination in both orders. Many/most clergy are non-ordained, licensed local pastors with limited sacramental authority. Deacons do not have full sacramental authority.	[Note: This is a work in progress.] In an effort to restore the connection between ordination and the sacraments, there may be a return to the pre-1992 understanding that elders are first ordained deacons. Local pastors will be ordained as deacons. There will be permanent deacons and deacons on their way to becoming elders. Deacons have sacramental authority.
<i>Bishops</i>	Yes. Bishops for life (in the U.S). Selected by Jurisdictional/Central Conferences and paid by General Church.	Yes. Term-limited. Called by the annual conference from a list of candidates approved at General Conference.
<i>District Superintendents?</i>	Yes. Appointed by the bishop.	Presiding Elders (the historic term for DS's) may also serve a local church. They will be

		selected by the bishop from a nominated slate elected at a district conference. District size will be smaller.
<i>Clergy Appointment Length?</i>	One year at a time.	Open-ended. The bishop's consent is required to declare a pulpit open.
<i>Clergy Pensions?</i>	Administered by Wespath	Administered by Wespath
<i>Apportionments</i>	Yes	Yes, General Church apportionments will be about half of what is paid by a UMC congregation currently. Conference apportionments are up to each annual conference but encouraged to be lean.
<i>Position on Abortion</i>	Likely Nuanced Pro-Choice	"We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who are powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn. We believe human life begins at conception and abortion ends a human life."
<i>Theology</i>	Pluralistic, flexible per "Our Theological Task," with articles and confession retained as historic markers.	Classic, per the Methodist Articles of Faith and EUB Confession of Faith , but updated into a single document in today's vernacular (this work is to be done by a blue-ribbon commission created at the first Convening Conference).

Source: <https://peopleneedjesus.net/2021/05/21/two-methodisms-a-comparison-chart/>