

What is the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation?

The Protocol is a mediated proposal to the 2020 General Conference that would allow for entities strongly divided over human sexuality to create separate Methodist denominational structures. It was crafted in response to the unsatisfactory outcome of the 2019 Special Session of General Conference and the various other plans proposed in the intervening period.

Who was involved in creating the Protocol?

Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone assembled a diverse group that included bishops from Central Conferences in Africa, the Philippines, and Europe, and leaders from Traditionalist, Centrist, and Progressive Caucus groups within the United States. The group's work was facilitated by professional mediator Kenneth Feinberg, a world-renowned negotiator who offered his services at no cost.

Did the design team include all perspectives?

It would be nearly impossible to negotiate and write a plan that included all perspectives. There are too many perspectives under the big tent of The United Methodist Church to include them all. That being said, the Protocol design team did include a wide representation of perspectives on matters related to human sexuality, including the leaders of groups widely divergent in their views and convictions.

What makes this plan different from other plans of separation?

The breadth of perspectives of those involved makes this plan immediately different from plans drafted by other individuals and caucus groups. The addition of a professional mediator brings added credibility and equity to the process and the outcomes. It is comprehensive in its scope, creating a path to amicable separation for those who in good conscience cannot remain in The United Methodist Church as we know it. And it has a pledge of exclusive support from every member of the design team, including some who were involved with drafting other plans.

Does the signing of the Protocol by all these leaders mean it has already been decided?

No. Only the General Conference can change *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. The signing of the protocol included a pledge from the signers that they would support only this plan and encourage their various constituencies to vote for it at the General Conference in May.

Does the Protocol dissolve The United Methodist Church?

No. The United Methodist Church will continue. Under the Protocol, no one would be required to leave or required to vote.

Doesn't this plan for separation just create two denominations: one Traditional and one Centrist/Progressive?

No. The United Methodist Church would continue as a denomination of broad perspectives. The Protocol would create a path for those who in good conscience deem they cannot stay, whether Traditionalists or Progressives. While the Protocol envisions the removal of restrictions pertaining to LGBTQ persons, those decisions will rest with the post-separation UMC and would allow for adaptation to regional contexts. It also envisions a regional governance structure across the connection, including the United States.

Does the Protocol include a moratorium on church trials for violations of the current Book of Discipline pertaining to LGBTQ matters?

The Protocol includes a call to hold all complaints relating to LGBTQ matters in abeyance until after the first General Conference of The United Methodist Church post-separation.

Who can form a new Methodist denomination?

A new Methodist denomination can be recognized by the Council of Bishops and qualify as a New Methodist Denomination under the provisions of the Protocol provided it registers its intent with the Council of Bishops by May 15, 2021; has a distinct legal existence and incorporation; follows the doctrinal standards of The UMC (Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith, General Rules, Wesley's Sermons and Notes); has a definite and distinct organizational structure; and is made up of at least 100 UM local churches in any geographic location.

What financial agreements are proposed for new Methodist denominations?

Under the provisions of the Protocol, \$25 million has been set aside for Traditional Methodist Denomination(s) and \$2 million would be set aside for all other New Methodist Denominations. An additional \$39 million would be set apart within the post-separation UMC for racial and ethnic ministries historically marginalized in the U.S. Annual conferences and local churches that affiliate with a New Methodist Denomination pursuant to the Protocol would retain their assets and liabilities. Local churches that leave without following the provisions of the Protocol would follow ¶ 2553 of the present *Book of Discipline*.

Who decides who stays and who goes?

No one must leave The United Methodist Church. Annual conferences may choose to vote to affiliate with a New Methodist Denomination if at least 20% of the voting members support a vote. A vote of 57% would be required for an annual conference to affiliate with a New Methodist Denomination. A local church may vote to affiliate with a denomination other than its annual conference. In that instance, a church conference would be called in accordance with the *The Book of Discipline* and the church council would determine whether a simple majority or 2/3 majority vote will be required in its local church to reaffiliate.

Does my local church have to vote?

If your local church does not desire an affiliation different from that of your annual conference, no vote is required. If your local church desires to affiliate with a different denomination than your annual conference pursuant to the Protocol, a vote would be required as outlined in the question above.

If a local church chooses to separate, what will it need to pay?

A local church that chooses to reaffiliate under the provisions of the Protocol would be expected to maintain its connectional giving until the time of separation and would repay any loans from the annual conference. It will take responsibility for clergy pension and benefits expenses for active clergy and any unpaid liability for past pensions.

Do pastors get to choose whether to stay or leave? Is the process the same for licensed local pastors as for Elders and Deacons?

Clergy, by default, remain with the denomination of their annual conference. Clergy wishing to affiliate with a denomination other than that of their annual conference will notify their district superintendent by July 1, 2021 or 60 days after the local church they serve votes to separate. Candidates for ordination, commissioning, or licensing continue in their process within their annual conference. Standards for licensing, commissioning, and ordination for New Methodist Denominations will be determined by those denominations. Bishops remain in The United Methodist Church unless they choose otherwise.

What is the timeline?

New Methodist Denominations have until May 15, 2021 to register with the Council of Bishops and meet the criteria for certification. Annual conferences within the United States have until July 1, 2021 to choose an affiliation with a New Methodist Denomination. Local churches have until December 31, 2024 to choose to affiliate with a New Methodist Denomination. Central Conferences (outside the United States) may, by 2/3 vote, choose to affiliate with a New Methodist Denomination by December 31, 2021. Annual conferences outside the United States have until July 1, 2022.