



Written by [James Murphy](#) on May 30, 2023

## United Methodist Church to Lose Nearly 100 Louisiana Churches in Fight Over LGBT Doctrine

In a late March meeting of the Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC), a total of 95 churches were approved for disaffiliation of their membership with the denomination. Those Louisiana churches join more than 1,800 churches nationwide that have left the denomination since 2019 over fears that the UMC may be considering liberalizing its teachings on homosexuality.

For instance, in November of last year, the UMC Western Jurisdiction voted to make Cedrick D. Bridgeforth of the California-Pacific Conference a bishop of the denomination despite the fact that he's married to another man. Such a bishop is [prohibited](#) by the church's Book of Discipline.



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As decided at a 2019 meeting of the denomination's General Conference, UMC churches have until the end of 2023 to cut ties with the denomination and take their property with them, provided they pay out apportionments and any pension liabilities.

"Because of the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality, a local church shall have a limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference," Section VIII, paragraph 2553 of the UMC's Book of Discipline states.

The new Louisiana disaffiliations will go into effect on June 1.

"This road has been long and it has not been easy for those who choose to stay or remain in the United Methodist Church," said Bishop Delores J. Williamston. "I want to say to those who chose to stay and remain: we see you and are moving forward. We want you to know that you do have a place in the United Methodist Church, and there is much work to do."

The UMC is the third-largest Christian church in America by membership, and the issue of liberalizing UMC doctrine regarding homosexuality spurred fears of a schism in the church. Thus far, although a significant number of churches have chosen to disaffiliate, some church experts say that the current situation falls short of an actual schism.

"You think of a schism as 50% or even 35% [split]," said Scott Thumma, director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research. "This is not a real schism."



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But whether there's a schism or not appears to largely depend on what part of the country you're looking at. For instance, the Texas Annual Conference, which covers East Texas, has lost 302 of its nearly 600 churches. Meanwhile, in states such as California and New York, the number of disaffiliations is not nearly as high.

So, it would seem that politics, not Christian doctrine, may have a lot to do with exactly why churches are leaving. While disaffiliations are as high as 70 percent in some portions of Texas, *Good News* magazine [reports](#) that by the end of 2022, overall only about 6.6 percent had disaffiliated.

Churches who leave the UMC tend to join the new Global Methodist Church — which has promised to never condone homosexuality — join denominations more in line with their thinking, or remain independent.

It's not only its stance on homosexuality that the UMC is liberalizing, though. Even the most basic of Christian doctrines are being challenged by some in the church. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, an Indiana bishop ordained in 2022, has, reportedly, refused to confirm that she believes in the resurrection of Jesus — a cornerstone of Christian belief.

"The first new bishop elected last week [Bigham-Tsai] has refused to say if she believes in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apparently [she] does not believe in basic biblical doctrine about His incarnation," said John Lomperis at the time. Lomperis, of the Institute on Religion & Democracy, was previously a delegate of the UMC General Conference.

If churches have begun to cater to the LGBT agenda by ordaining gay bishops, looking the other way on sin, and even denying the resurrection of Christ, one has to wonder whether they are Christian at all. Or have some denominations become nothing more than social clubs?



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