



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 6, 2020

Proposed LGBT Embrace Threatens United Methodist Church

After decades of intense debate among members and clergy, along with non-stop lobbying by LGBT individuals within its ranks, the United Methodist Church (UMC) announced at the beginning of 2020 that UMC leadership is taking a serious look at a denominational split over the issue of homosexuality.



Among other elements, the proposed split would open the door for the UMC to change its bylaws to allow for the ordination of openly homosexual clergy, and for the blessing of homosexual partnerships as “marriage,” both of which are prohibited under the current UMC Book of Discipline, which takes the scriptural stand that homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The proposed split would allow for “traditionalist-minded congregations” currently within the UMC “to form a new denomination,” reports the [UMC News](#). “The separating group would get \$25 million in United Methodist funds and would keep its local church properties.”

Debate over the issue has been pitched and even rancorous within the denomination, as one side has insisted upon a continuation of the scriptural prohibition on homosexuality, while the other has pushed for the full embrace of practicing homosexuals in all areas of UMC church life.

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Leaders proposing the split have attempted to spin the conflict as merely a difference of direction between two fully biblical Christian camps, insisting that they are recommending “separation as a faithful step with the possibility of continued cooperation around matters of shared interest, enabling each of us to authentically live out our faith,” according to the language of the official [proposal](#).

The proposal calls for “restructuring the United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences, allowing each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person.”

By contrast, reported [CBN News](#), at a special UMC meeting in February 2019, “delegates voted 438-384 for a proposal called the Traditional Plan, which affirmed bans on LGBTQ-inclusive practices. A majority of U.S.-based delegates opposed the plan, but they were outvoted by U.S. conservatives teamed with most of the delegates from Methodist strongholds in Africa and the Philippines.”

Among those pushing for an embrace of LGBT behavior within the UMC is the Reverend Adam Hamilton, pastor of the 22,000-member Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, the largest



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congregation in the denomination. The four-campus church is openly affirming of homosexuality, including a special “LGBT Ministry” and a “LGBT and Allies Community Group,” according to its website.

Asked how he would answer someone who notes the scriptural admonitions against homosexuality, Hamilton responded in part: “For many of us, we believe, when it comes to human sexuality, that the handful of verses that talk about stoning a gay man don’t reflect God’s will and purposes for human beings.... Instead, God wills for us to be faithful to one another and to love one another. When the biblical authors were speaking about homosexuality, they were talking about what was going on in their time and their understanding of human sexuality.”

Mark Tooley, a lifelong Methodist and president of the [Institute on Religion and Democracy](#), predicted that the coming split will be anything but smooth and dignified, as the UMC transitions to full LGBT inclusiveness. “This process will be messy and often tragic,” he wrote. “Many local congregations will divide and die. But United Methodism is already dying in America.”

He also predicted that the divide will allow biblically motivated Methodists to practice their faith unimpeded by denominational compromise. “This division will allow evangelistic-minded Methodism to plant new congregations and grow,” he wrote, adding that “American Christianity and society desperately need a theologically cohesive rejuvenated Methodism. I’m looking forward to participating in a Methodist revival!”

A vote on the proposed split may come as soon as May, at the next United Methodist General Conference set for Minneapolis.

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