

Reasons for Affiliating with the Global Methodist Church

As churches are disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church over theological and ethical differences with the denomination, they are considering where to affiliate next. There is a small percentage that are choosing to remain as independent congregations, a course of action we believe to be shortsighted.

As someone who was heavily involved in helping create the Global Methodist Church, I whole-heartedly believe this is the best option for local churches looking for a Wesleyan denomination with which to affiliate. Here are a number of reasons why.

1. Formed by leaders we know and trust

The Global Methodist Church was formed by people who want to see the GM Church committed to making disciples for Jesus Christ. They have served in leadership in the same Renewal and Reform groups that have worked for decades to promote doctrinal integrity and biblical positions in The United Methodist Church. These include The Confessing Movement, Good News, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association. They are dedicated to the advancement of a Scripturally-based, historic Wesleyan understanding of the Christian faith. They are people of personal integrity and a strong life commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Since these leaders have a track record of faithfulness and integrity, we can confidently follow their leadership in a new denomination.

2. Centered on maintaining Wesleyan doctrine and theology based on Scripture

The GM Church embraces a warm Wesleyan theology and a vibrant spiritual outlook. It has the same doctrinal standards as the UM Church, with the addition of the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon. Agreement with the doctrinal standards is required of churches aligning with the GM Church. All bishops and clergy will be expected to agree with, preach, and defend these doctrines, with robust accountability to ensure doctrinal faithfulness. The teaching of these doctrines through a new catechism will be a featured part of all GM congregations. At the same time, doctrines not considered part of the theological and ethical core are open for exploration and difference of opinion. As John Wesley said, "as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think." The GM Church will have a clear vision about the "root of Christianity" and will make sure it is protected.

3. Prioritizing evangelism and church planting

GM congregations will be challenged to partner together to plant new churches and extend the evangelistic ministry of the church in their communities and in other parts of the nation and world. New churches are already being started under the auspices of the GM Church in the U.S. and in other countries. The GM Church has established a goal of planting thousands of new churches around the world during its first years of existence. We believe our congregations will have a vision for outreach and a global perspective.

4. Leaner, more effective denominational structure

The GM Church at both the general and annual conference level will rely on fewer and smaller organizational units to steer its ministry, rather than building large bureaucracies that require much spending to maintain overhead. The GM Church will partner with existing ministries with demonstrated effectiveness and commitment to Wesleyan theology to extend the church's work, rather than building new ministries from scratch. This approach will enable much greater flexibility and adaptability to changing ministry circumstances.

5. Prioritizing the work of the local church

The local church is where disciples are made. The GM Church exists to support the ministry of the local church, not vice versa. All denominational decisions will be made within the framework of what will strengthen the ministry of the local church.

6. More resources for local ministry

The GM Church has capped the amount that a local church can be asked to contribute to the denominational structures. A maximum of 1.5 percent of local church operating income will go toward general church expenses. A maximum of 5 percent will go toward annual conference expenses. Initially, only 1 percent will go to each. More resources will stay in the local church to be used for effective ministry there.

7. No trust clause

The local church will own its own property free and clear, with no legal trust or obligation to the GM denomination. A simple, straightforward path of disaffiliation is offered for congregations that no longer find their home in the GM Church.

8. Robust accountability

Bishops, clergy, laity, and congregations will hold one another accountable to maintain Wesleyan doctrine and exhibit continued transformation and growth in discipleship. Bishops will be held accountable by a global committee of laity and clergy, not other bishops. Clergy will be held accountable through a fair and equitable judicial system. Laity will be encouraged to participate in accountable discipleship groups to support their growth in faith and Christian living. In the rare instance that a congregation welcomes teaching contrary to GM doctrinal standards or refuses to support the denomination's work financially, it may be removed (following a collaborative dialog process).

9. Strong and clear biblical stances on marriage, sexuality, pro-life, and other bedrock issues

The GM Church's Social Witness statements clearly define marriage as between one man and one woman, while reserving sexual relationships for marriage. Without getting into partisan politics, it states a clear pro-life stance on unborn children, while calling for greater support for women with unanticipated pregnancies. It puts forward clear, non-partisan statements on other bedrock ethical concerns, such as the value and dignity of all persons, opposition to prejudice and discrimination, concern for the poor, care for the earth, the rule of justice and law, and religious freedom. Scriptures are cited in support of each of the GM Church's Social Witness statements. Readers are encouraged to consult the entire Social Witness section of the *Doctrines and Discipline* for more details.

10. A truly global church

The GM Church already has members in the U.S., Asia, Europe, and Africa. It is expected that a majority of members might be located outside the U.S. Members from all parts of the globe will be equally and fairly represented at General Conference and in the general work of the church. The denomination will be multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-national, learning from one another and living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in many different ways.

11. Greater local church involvement in pastoral appointments

While pastoral appointments will still be fixed by the bishop, the local church will have greater input into whom the bishop appoints as pastor. Bishops will work with local churches to ensure their welcome of female and ethnic clergy on an equal basis. Pastoral appointments are intended to last longer, giving greater continuity to ministry.

12. A redefined role and process for bishops

While not included in the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, leaders of the GM Church are committed to a term episcopacy. Bishops are proposed to only serve for a set maximum term, perhaps 12 years, and would not be elected for life. Bishops are envisioned as spiritual and missional leaders, while being relieved of the responsibility to administer the temporal affairs of the church, which can be delegated to lay or clergy staff. Bishops are proposed to be assigned at the call of the annual conference to ensure the best leadership match.

13. Missions through partnership

The GM Church aims to facilitate missions by horizontally linking churches and annual conferences with each other across national boundaries. Financial support for missions will generally travel directly to partners, rather than through a mission bureaucracy. The two-way exchange of volunteers and learning opportunities will foster a mutual equality among mission partners around the world. Local churches and annual conferences will become more invested in cross-cultural missions through increased direct contact with mission partners.

14. Shorter route to ordination for clergy

Rather than the 6-10 years it takes in the UM Church to reach ordained ministry, clergy candidates can expect to be ordained as deacons in 1-3 years. Ordination as elder would take an additional 4-6 years. Half of clergy education would take place after ordination, enabling clergy to integrate classroom learning with current job experience. Various educational routes will enable less expensive and more flexible pathways to ordained ministry. Ongoing clergy mentorship will be an essential part of ministry in the GM Church. Denominational support for clergy education will be a keystone of the connectional financial plan.

15. Greater flexibility in ministry and structure

With unity on essential doctrines, much greater flexibility can be given for how local churches and annual conferences do ministry, based on their ministry context. The GM Church will have minimum requirements for organization of local churches and annual conferences, with maximum flexibility and adaptability for how those structural requirements are met. Best practices will be shared across the church, so that clergy, congregations, and

annual conferences can continually learn from each other and implement the most effective methods of winning people to Jesus Christ and discipling them in the faith.

16. Social Witness statements will require greater consensus

To minimize divisions over denominational positions on social issues, all such statements will require a 75 percent supermajority vote to be adopted. The focus of such statements will be more on biblical principles than advocating partisan political solutions.

17. Opportunity to build a new denomination

With the GM Church, we have the opportunity to build a new denomination for the 21st century that maintains the best of our Wesleyan tradition, while adapting our methods to fit ever-evolving circumstances and correcting for the shortcomings experienced in The United Methodist Church. Joining another, pre-existing denomination means agreeing with and conforming to a church culture and manner of operating that has been developed over decades and will not easily change. The GM Church offers a much cleaner slate on which to write the principles of an effective and Christ-centered denomination that is more flexible and adaptable to today's world.

Churches considering affiliation with the Global Methodist Church should study the *Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, which outlines how the church will function initially. A convening General Conference will flesh out details, such as the election and assignment of bishops. Churches should also contact the GM Church to invite a representative to speak and answer questions, as well as offer further clarification on what to expect.

Ultimately, the Wesleyan witness for Christ will be stronger if most of the disaffiliating churches align with one denomination, rather than splintering into various independent congregations or aligning with multiple existing Wesleyan denominations. The GM Church offers the best option for keeping the best of Methodism, while having the flexibility to try new ways of organizing for ministry and reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

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