

## **FAQs The Protocol and The United Methodist Church; Western Jurisdiction ‘Where Love Lives’**

### **What is the Protocol?**

The Protocol is a nine-page [formal agreement](#), known as the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, that was signed in early 2020 by a diverse group of 16 United Methodists from across the globe that were involved in a mediated negotiation. The signatories to the Protocol have agreed to support the development and implementation of General Conference legislation necessary to implement the terms of the Protocol.

### **Where did the Protocol come from?**

After the specially called 2019 General Conference ended without reaching a broadly accepted agreement on the future of The United Methodist Church, and dissatisfied that deep divisions over policies related to human sexuality remained within the church, the late Bishop John K. Yambasu of Sierra Leone initiated a series of private conversations that led to the creation of the team that met to try to forge a way forward in a mediated setting. The result of that effort was the Protocol.

### **Where did this campaign come from?**

It emerged from the work of the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops and Mission Cabinet. The Western Jurisdiction leadership want to remind the jurisdiction of the values that have informed the ministries of the region and have provided a home for diverse people, ideas and theological perspectives. They believe this is important as congregations and individuals begin preparing for the postponed General Conference and the decision coming on the proposed Protocol.

### **What does this potentially mean for Local Churches and Annual Conferences?**

There will be no actions required by a local church or Annual Conference wishing to remain within The United Methodist Church, if a local church or an Annual Conference wishes to affiliate with another Methodist denomination, there will be clearly stated process that will enable them to do so. And, if a local church or Annual Conference wishes to disaffiliate altogether, there will be an approved process in *the Book of Discipline* spelling out those requirements.

### **My local church does not support gay marriages. Will we be forced to allow them if the Protocol is approved?**

No. The Protocol is clear. No church will be forced to allow same sex marriages.

**I'm a United Methodist pastor and I don't believe in marrying people of the same sex. What choice will I have if the Protocol is approved?**

Pastors currently have the authority to decide whether or not to preside over any marriage. That authority will remain. You can decline. No clergy person will be forced to do anything that violates their personal views on same sex weddings.

**What will be the name of the new church?**

It will continue to be known as The United Methodist Church. The vision of the team that developed the Protocol team is that The United Methodist Church will continue to be a diverse place for members and churches. It will be a place where people from diverse theological understandings, political, geographic, racial, ethnic and national origins, gender identity and sexual orientation. It will include people from inside and outside the United States.

**Would Traditionalists be welcome in The United Methodist Church?**

Yes. They will be welcomed and encouraged to stay as part of The United Methodist Church, but must be willing to accept that others hold different views and will have a right to conduct same-sex marriages and ordain qualified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. Individual clergy and congregations will not be forced to conduct or host same sex weddings.

**What happens if the Protocol does not pass?**

Regardless of any vote on separation, The United Methodist Church is at a point where it must take steps towards resetting and reforming. The carefully crafted and negotiated Protocol offers the opportunity to jump start the process. No matter what happens, The United Methodist Church needs to look at its structures and processes and discern how to streamline in the church's current financial reality to maximize opportunities for mission and ministry.

**Where can I learn more about "The Protocol agreement?"**

Details on the agreement and links to learn more can be found here:

<https://www.gracethroughseparation.com>. Other places to learn more include the [United Methodist Council of Bishops website](#) and [ResourceUMC](#).

**When is the now-postponed 2020 General Conference going to be held?**

Currently, the postponed 2020 General Conference is scheduled to take place Aug. 29 – Sept. 7, 2021 in Minneapolis, Minn.