



Wesleyan Covenant Association - Wisconsin Chapter

April 19 at 7:35 AM ·

Recent communication to WCA Regional Leaders from our President, Keith Boyette...

WCA Regional Leaders,

Thank you to each of you who participated in the recent survey concerning potential paths forward in resolving the irreconcilable conflict in The United Methodist Church. I want to provide you with an update on the dialogue in which I am participating and comment on a recent article you may have seen.

As I shared with you in our last set of conference calls, a dialogue is underway involving recognized leaders associated with the One Church Plan (OCP) and the Traditional Plan (TP). Ten persons have been involved in the dialogue – five from each group. The group has agreed that the specific identity of its participants is to be confidential at this time. I am obviously one of the participants and I have chosen to disclose my participation. The group has further agreed not to attribute statements made to specific individuals.

Participants in the dialogue have agreed there is a desire to avoid repeating the experience of St. Louis in Minneapolis, but what this means is unclear.

Both camps are preparing for another confrontation in Minneapolis, focusing on the election of delegates for GC 2020 and the preparation of legislation to implement their positions. TP proponents are focused on adopting those portions of the TP that were either not enacted at GC 2019 or which were declared unconstitutional. OCP proponents are focused on enacting some version of the OCP or perhaps even enacting the Simple Plan.

Thus far, both groups are trying to ascertain each other's plans and what are their non-negotiables. Both groups acknowledged some form of separation (or multiplication of Methodist expressions) might be needed to resolve the conflict. Both groups have made efforts to discern how much separation their constituencies would regard as necessary, and where any amount of ongoing connection would be possible.

The TP group relied upon surveys conducted by the WCA and Good News. In terms of preference, those surveys revealed our constituency favors a complete separation creating two or three successor denominations to the UM Church. Some or all of the existing UM boards and agencies would be spun off as independent 501(c)(3) entities. Successor denominations would have the option of contracting with those entities for services, but would not be required to do so. There was less support for grouping the existing UM boards and agencies in something like an UM association, preserving the UM name, and permitting the successor denominations to contract for such services as they desired from the UM

association. And a distant third option was to push forward for the TP's full adoption and implementation. It calls for supporters of the full inclusion agenda to voluntarily exit the UM Church, or face disciplinary actions and trials that could result in their forced removal if they remain and violate the Discipline.

The OCP group primarily relied upon two meetings (held in Dallas and Atlanta) to take the pulse of its constituency. A recent article by Adam Hamilton essentially summarizes where the OCP group understands its constituency to be. The OCP constituency has moved a considerable distance since GC 2019. Prior to GC 2019, they were almost universally opposed to providing a gracious exit for any churches and to any division of the UM Church. Now they report about 50 percent of their constituency favors a strategy of "stay, resist and work to provide WCA congregations with a gracious exit," and 50 percent favors the adoption of legislation to multiply Methodist expressions into two or three new denominations.

The deadline for submitting legislation for GC 2020 is September 12.

Here are the options that could be considered by the TP Group:

- 1) Enact the rest of the TP and encourage pastors, churches, annual conferences and bishops who cannot commit to abide by the Discipline to graciously exit the UM Church. Implementation of this strategy will ensure that St. Louis will be repeated in Minneapolis, and likewise will prolong the conflict in the Church for some time if successful as the TP is implemented likely involving resistance and obstruction by those who disagree with the TP. Our survey showed that pursuing this strategy was the last of the strategies in terms of preference although absent a mutual agreement, it is the most likely strategy to be pursued as we approach GC 2020.
- 2) Work with OCP proponents to enact a gracious exit provision and encourage those who cannot abide by the Discipline to exit the UM Church.
- 3) Work with OCP proponents to enact a gracious exit provision and have WCA/TP pastors and churches exit the UM Church and launch a new Methodist expression/denomination.
- 4) Work with OCP proponents to enact legislation to multiply Methodist expressions out of the UM Church (which would cease to exist) thus creating two or three new denominations.

Based on Adam Hamilton's article referenced above, here are the options being considered by the OCP group:

- 1) Stay in the UM Church, resist the TP, and give TP proponents a gracious exit in the hope they will leave.
- 2) Leave the UM Church to start a new denomination.

Adam Hamilton's article states that OCP leaders who gathered in Dallas and Atlanta were equally divided between these two options. Those who favored the OCP plan to have a meeting at Church of the Resurrection from May 20-22 during which they will have further conversation about these options.

Hopefully this gives you context to interpret Adam Hamilton's article and to see how what he is sharing in the article fits into the dialogue between TP leaders and OCP leaders. Further dialogue between TP proponents and OCP proponents is planned.

Keith Boyette
President, WCA