

A THEOLOGICAL DIVERGENCE

"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."
John Wesley

In so many ways, the fears that John Wesley articulated are coming true within the United Methodist Church. Decades of theological drift, increasing in-fighting and blatant disregard for our doctrines and Book of Discipline have led us to this place of theological divergence. Hear from Associate Pastor Chris Chandler about how all of these factors led us to a season of discernment regarding disaffiliation with the denomination.

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Our first value as a church is "Jesus First." In our belief sections online, we say: *"God the Son is Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world who lived a sinless life, was crucified, died and resurrected from the dead after three days."* This is a basic teaching of any orthodox Christian church.

Orthodoxy: the historic Christian consensus on the crucial elements of our faith.

Below you'll see clips and videos that call into question what our denomination allows to be taught about Jesus. This first video is a district superintendent admitting that this type of unorthodox teaching is being allowed.

- One UMC District Superintendent was recently asked if it was allowed for a pastor in the UMC to preach from the pulpit that *"Jesus is not the only way to salvation and/or that Jesus was not resurrected."* His answer was *"yes, we are allowing it."*

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ON JESUS

- Newly elected Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai in the North Central Jurisdiction was asked *"is it important that we agree on who Jesus is as a church?"* to which she responded, *"No it is not important that we agree on who Christ is...God became flesh, but not particular flesh. There's no particularity around that. God became incarnate in a culture, but not one culture."*

Bishop Bigham-Tsai has also refused to answer if she believes in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- *"I must dissent from Christocentric exclusives which hold that Jesus is the only way to God's gift of salvation."* Retired Bishop Joseph Sprague
- *"If Jesus can change, if he can give up His bigotries and prejudices, if He can realize that He had made His life too small, and if, in this realization, He grew closer to others and closer to God, than so can we,"* Bishop Karen Oliveto
- *"I believe in the resurrection of Jesus, but I cannot believe that his resurrection involved the resuscitation of his physical body."* Bishop Joseph Sprague
- United Methodist Pastor Reverend Mary Kay Totty, in explaining the miracle of the resurrection, states that the resurrection of Jesus is *"best read as a parable."*

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- *"I am honest about my belief that, while there are many paths to the Throne, I believe following Jesus is the best one. I recently said to one of my son's friends that I believe he will go to heaven no matter what - and I personally believe he will see Jesus and it will be a joyful meeting."* UMC Pastor Julie Fairchild

ON LEADERSHIP

- *"I want to call this Council of Bishops and the entirety of United Methodism today to begin to make a pivot."* Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton

- According to her biography, newly elected Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank openly *"calls for heretics and edge-dwellers to lead the church forward."*
- *"The bishops are the enforcers of the general conference and when the bishops fail to do their duty the whole thing falls apart. That's where we are today."*
Retired Bishop Scott Jones

ON THE BIBLE

- *"And while I believe in our traditional, orthodox faith that's rooted in the scriptures, I have also always believed that we have to adapt our doctrine and our scriptures to changing life circumstances that people have."*
Bishop Ken Carter
- *"We have moved far beyond the idea that the Bible is exclusively normative and literally authoritative for our faith . . . Furthermore, few of us retain belief in Christ as the sole way to salvation. We trust that God can work under many other names and in many other forms to save people. Our views have changed over the years and evangelicals know it. At least they have the honesty to call us to honesty."* Tom Griffith, UMC Pastor
- *"The Bible is Nothing,"* a spoken word piece by Ms. Penny Cost, the drag queen persona of United Methodist Church candidate for pastoral ministry, Isaac Simmons.

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- *"I think the Bible is wrong."* Platform Speaker at Uniting Methodists Conference

ON SEXUALITY

- UMC pastor Rev. Doug Damron spoke of his hope for the UMC after the denominational separation is over. He called for the UMC to *"speak into existence a church which fully welcomes, includes, affirms not only God's beloved gay and lesbian ones, but a host of other folks who have found the door of the church closed to them: trans folks, bi folks, kink folks, poly folk, gender-fluid folk, and others."*

- At the UMC's 2019 General Conference, 323 delegates (nearly 40 percent), voted in favor of a set of proposals that would have deleted behaviors from the list of "chargeable offenses" for which UMC clergy may be disciplined. These chargeable offenses included: "*not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage.*" Meaning a pastor could not be punished for unfaithfulness in their marriage or not being celibate if single.
- The election of two bishops, both in same-sex marriages (one elected in 2023 and one in 2016), is another example of how the UMC's own standards related to human sexuality as approved in the Book of Discipline are not being upheld.
- A UMC pastor and former delegate appeared on a podcast celebrating Christian Polyamory and non-monogamy.

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The UMC's lack of clarity on an orthodox sexual ethic has allowed for all sorts of things to be taught by our pastors, candidates for ministry, and professors. To quote one concerned UMC pastor: "The Church's silence has created a vacuum which those from a secular worldview are all too ready to fill." Below is a video of some of the teaching and activity that is tolerated by our denomination.

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