

NOTABLE ACTIONS BY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES AT THE POSTPONED 2020 GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

What follows below is a compilation of notable, below-the-headlines but controversial decisions endorsed by legislative committees over the past week, all of which are likely to secure final approval by the fully plenary session of delegates next week. For most of these petitions, they would have been close votes or non-starters in any previous General Conference, but now there was no more than token opposition to the new liberal steamroller. This shows how dramatically the denomination has shifted...

UMC set to roll back disapproval of adultery, pre-marital sex
Petition #20364, "A Simple Plan #8," amends the "chargeable offenses" for which UMC clergy can be punished to delete not only homosexuality-related offenses, but also "immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage." Approved 32-13.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/364/20364-JA-¶2702.1-G>

Note that this petition has long had the official support of an entire UMC annual conference (Northern Illinois)

While this and the next one do not, by themselves, comprehensively erase ALL sex-is-for-marriage language from every last part of official UMC statements, they do remove clear mention of it from two of the most important places: the main list of clergy accountability standards and the denomination's core social teaching.

Petition #20730: Revised Social Principles-161 and 162

-replaces UMC's longstanding teaching that marriage is between one man + one woman, now saying it is a covenant between "two people of faith," and repeals UMC's longstanding stance that homosexual practice is "incompatible with Christian teaching"

-goes even further, by deleting clear language saying that sex is for marriage and that "fidelity" is an important part of marriage

-deletes from current Social Principles the statements (currently found in "The Nurturing Community") that "sexual relations where one or both partners are ... promiscuous are beyond the parameters of acceptable Christian behavior and are ultimately destructive of the social order"

-On abortion, deletes from current UMC Social Principles the statements that "we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child" and "We mourn and are committed to promoting the diminishment of high abortion rates" (so upon final approval of these Revised Social Principles, the UMC will no longer equally respect the life and wellbeing of mothers and their unborn children, and the UMC will have repealed its earlier desire to lower abortion rates)

-On abortion, also deletes sub-paragraph urging pastors to be aware of and pastorally sensitive to the realities of post-abortion stress.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/730/20730-CB-%C2%B6161-G>

The full current UMC Social Principles can be found here:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/our-social-principles>

And the full Revised Social Principles, submitted to this General Conference in several large chunks, is here:

<https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/124>

The UMC Turns its Back on Post-Abortive Women

The same Church and Society 2 committee voted AGAINST Petition #20581: Healing Post Abortion Stress, which would have re-adopted an official resolution, on the books since 2004, recognizing that while there is a legal right to abortion in much of the world, the fact is that “some regret that event later in life,” and so “urges pastors to become informed about the symptoms and behaviors associated with post-abortion stress” and to make contact information available for relevant counseling.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/581/20581-CB-R3304-G>

Like the aforementioned Social Principles paragraph, this received overwhelming committee support, from delegates who were more conservative as well as those who were more liberal by 2004 standards. Now only 24 voted in favor, vs. 37 against. This shows a dramatic shift in the denomination. It also perhaps reflects UMC mores being shaped by recent shifts in the secular political Left of refusing to support any limits or acknowledge negative aspects about abortion.

Petition #20847: RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

Adds a new resolution to the UMC Book of Resolutions defending elective abortion as a “right,” without any clear qualification or restriction, and a matter of “health care.” This resolution declares that “United Methodists pledge solidarity with those who seek” elective abortions by “taking active measures” such as accompanying them to abortion appointments, and pledging that “United Methodists and their churches” will support abortion rights “through personal prayer, letter writing campaigns to their legislators and, when necessary, peaceful protest.” Approved 52-1.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/847/20847-CB-R9999>

The UMC Doubles Down on Supporting Legalizing All Drugs and Prostitution

The narrowly focused Petition #20638: “No Church Support for Drugs and Prostitution” would have simply amended a lengthy resolution in the UMC’s official Book of Resolutions (Resolution # 5031, Humanizing Criminal Justice) to delete a few words putting the UMC on record as broadly “support[ing] the repeal of laws that criminalize” drug use and prostitution.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/638/20638-CA-R5031-G>

Out of 33 committee delegates voting, only 5 supported this reform. This means that this reform dies in committee. So that with the support of over 84% of committee delegates, the UMC will remain officially in support of legalizing prostitution and all drugs.

Petition #20169: Next Generation UMC #2-Inclusiveness-Amend 140

Establishes new, binding church law condemning “heterosexism” as an evil – alongside “racism, sexism, misogyny, tribalism, and all other forms of xenophobia” – which must be eradicated from within the UMC (rather than tolerating conservative minorities in the church). Approved 52-6.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/169/20169-FO-%C2%B6140-G>

Remember, everyone ordained in the UMC is asked to affirm their approval of UMC church law. Once this petition is finally adopted it will become part of the church law new UMC ministers will be asked to affirm. This will drive away new ministers uncomfortable agreeing to this judgment against heterosexism.

Petition 20272: ALL BELONG: Support for Intersectional Justice Work-GBGM

Amends the duties of the denomination's apportionment-funded mission agency to promote intersectional progressive ideology, including fighting to normalize homosexuality and transgenderism, for the sake of "actively resist[ing] intersecting structures of white supremacy, heterosexism, sexism, patriarchy, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, colonialism and classism." Approved 40-5.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/272/20272-GM-%C2%B61302-G>
Shows the dividing Methodists have had very different visions of what should be the focus of what they think of as Christian missions.

Requiring ALL congregations to potentially submit to a non-celibate gay pastor

Petition #20315: Building a Fully Inclusive Church amends church law about "open itineracy" to now require annual conference leaders to train congregations to receive pastors sent to them of any "sexual orientation." Approved 37-12.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/315/20315-HS-%C2%B6425.1-G>

A whole bunch of committee-approved petitions are now amending church law to push for a sort of affirmative action to include LGBTQ persons at various levels of leadership...

20353: The UMC Judicial Council (supreme court):

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/353/20353-JA-%C2%B62602.1-G>
other denomination-wide leadership positions

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/142/20142-DI-%C2%B61120.4-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/147/20147-DI-%C2%B61207-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/258/20258-GA-%C2%B6705-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/316/20316-HS-%C2%B6431.4-G>
numerous annual conference and district leadership positions

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/526/20526-CO-%C2%B6610-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/344/20344-IC-%C2%B62003.4-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/121/20121-DI-%C2%B6649.2-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/122/20122-DI-%C2%B6650.2-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/123/20123-DI-%C2%B6651.2-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/124/20124-DI-%C2%B6672.2-G>
and jury pools for church trials

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/386/20386-JA-%C2%B62709.2-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/393/20393-JA-%C2%B62712.3-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/394/20394-JA-%C2%B62713-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/396/20396-JA-%C2%B62714.3-G>

Petition 20814: Annual Conference Strategic Comprehensive Plans for Hispanic/Latinx Ministry, actually amends plans for Hispanic and Latino ministries be replacing the word "Latino" with

“Latinx.” The latter reflects transgender ideology, but does not fit with Hispanic linguistic and cultural traditions. Approved 54-2.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/814/20814-CB-R3222>

20926: Complaint Procedures and Just Resolution amends Discipline Paragraph 362, the main church law place for beginning formal complaints against clergy accused of misconduct. Key changes are repealing recently enhanced accountability standards, so that, with the final adoption of this petition, bishops will have an effectively unchecked, unilateral right to dismiss complaints against wayward clergy, no matter how egregious and well-documented the offenses, and resolutions of complaints will no longer have to state how identified harms will be addressed. Both changes leave victims of clergy misconduct more vulnerable. Approved 46-1.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/926/20926-JA-%C2%B6362>

Several committee-approved petitions reflect the obsession of newly dominant liberal United Methodists with selectively denouncing Israel for one alleged sin or another, while ignoring those of Hamas and Israel’s other enemies:

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/622/20622-CC-R9999-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/554/20554-CC-R6111-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/553/20553-CC-R6112-G>

Meanwhile, this General Conference refused to adopt a resolution (Petition 20611) against anti-Semitism

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/611/20611-CB-R9999-G>

UMC refuses to put its money where its mouth is on global inclusion

Petition 20137: Global Justice for Lay Leaders sought to provide funding to ensure non-Americans’ participation in an influential leadership group, in response to how the lack of such funding has made this group U.S. dominated. Only 3 committee delegates supported this, out of 29 voting.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/137/20137-ST-%C2%B61116-!>

UMC Turns Its Back on Persecuted North Korean Christians

As this General Conference was set to re-adopt a lengthy resolution on the Korean Peninsula, Petition #20637: Human Rights in North Korea sought to amend this resolution by adding a short section acknowledging North Korean human rights abuses. The rationale for this proposed reform noted: “In over 3,000 words on problems in the Korean Peninsula, this resolution has no clear, explicit acknowledgment of the horrible suffering imposed by the North Korean regime on its own people. We owe it to the oppressed, especially persecuted Christians, and our church’s own credibility, to break our silence.”

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/637/20637-CC-R6135-G>

But this plea fell on deaf ears at this General Conference. Instead, committee delegates adopted an updated version of this resolution, continuing to avoid acknowledging the depth of North Korea’s human rights abuses, while politically advocating for “Removing sanctions” on and promoting “foreign investment” in the Communist dictatorship.

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/550/20550-CC-R6135-G>

Newly committee-approved church laws are set, after their final approval, to impose burdensome new top-down mandates for work and annual reports, on all congregations who remain United Methodist, related to carbon-footprint and other extra-mile environmental concerns

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/413/20413-LC-%C2%B62533-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/1057/21057-LC-%C2%B62533>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/417/20417-LC-%C2%B62550-G>

This further shifts the UMC church law to demanding much more accountability for congregations reducing their carbon footprint than in keeping their doctrine in alignment with the Methodist Articles of Religion or any other historic Methodist doctrinal boundaries.

Attempts to add the Nicene Creed (which is part of the Global Methodist Church's Doctrinal Standards) to the UMC Doctrinal Standards went down in flames in committee, with committee delegates voting 43-1, 43-0, and 47-12 against

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/239/20239-GA-%C2%B63-C-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/244/20244-GA-%C2%B617-C-G>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/159/20159-FO-%C2%B6104-G>

Identical petitions were submitted to the 2016 General Conference, and also defeated in committee, but by relatively slimmer margins. That year, they were defeated by committee delegates voting 47-21, 47-21, and 47-18 against.

<https://calms2016.umc.org/Menu.aspx?type=Petition&mode=Single&number=978>

<https://calms2016.umc.org/Menu.aspx?type=Petition&mode=Single&number=979>

<https://calms2016.umc.org/Menu.aspx?type=Petition&mode=Single&number=980>

Delegates in two committees overwhelmingly agree: The United Methodist Church is NOT interested in good ecumenical relations with Global Methodist Church!

Delegates overwhelmingly rejected different petitions to take the minimal steps of recognizing the GMC as a fellow Christian denomination and vaguely expressing hope for friendly relations:

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/960/20960-FO-%C2%B6443>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/1078/21078-HS-NonDis>

<https://www.dailychristianadvocate.org/en/legislation/petition/1079/21079-HS-NonDis>

This strongly contrasts with how in a 2021 special session, the UMC's liberal-led North Central Jurisdiction adopted an otherwise very liberal resolution that included saying, in the context of the UMC's separation, "We respect our siblings who depart and desire to do no harm as we anticipate cooperative ecumenical efforts in the future."

<https://www.ncjumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NCJ-Covenant-to-Build-BeLoved-Community-2.pdf>

This abandoning any pretense of interest in "cooperative ecumenical efforts in the future" is a dramatic shift, in a relatively short time.