

A New Methodism

Many of us are aware of the debate that has been simmering for decades within The United Methodist Church. Even while the The UMC's stance on human sexuality has not changed, many pastors and bishops in our denomination have ignored the church's teachings on this subject. As a result, we have lost accountability to those things we say we believe. The subject of human sexuality receives most of the press, but it is a symptom of a deeper divide over central theological and institutional issues within our denomination. Some of these issues are: the role and nature of scripture, the centrality of the gospel commission, the process of upholding accountability among clergy and institutional bodies, the function of denominational boards and committees, among much more. It is no wonder that The UMC in the US, is a dying church. During the 10 years prior to the pandemic, worship attendance in the North Georgia Annual Conference declined 20% while professions of faith dropped 46% over the same time period.

This being the case, what is there to do? Is there another option? Even with all the turmoil that engulfs our denomination, we are also witnessing the beginning of a new movement of the people called Methodists. This movement is called the Global Methodist Church. The GMC is a new denomination that will emphasize the characteristics of the Methodist church that have been vital since the time of John Wesley. This includes, but isn't limited to, a focus on discipleship and evangelism as well as the belief that the gospel has the power to transform individuals and families. It will uphold a strong emphasis on helping those in our community and around the world. There will be a focus on recapturing the importance of small group discipleship where people will be accountable to sisters and brothers for their faith. In short, the foundations of The Global Methodist Church are the same things that drew all of us to Due West! Alongside these inherently Wesleyan emphases there are several other important aspects of the GMC you should know:

- 1) The GMC will uphold the current and orthodox view of marriage and sexuality of the church we all joined.
- 2) It will be "Grounded in scripture and the life-giving confessions of the Christian faith found in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds."
- 3) The GMC will eliminate the trust clause. This means local churches will own their own property – something not possible in The UMC.
- 4) There will be an institution of term limits on bishops.

There is so much more to share about this new movement. If you'd like more information, check out their website at globalmethodist.org. The possibilities for mission and ministry in the GMC create an exciting vision for what it can look like to be a vital Methodist denomination in the 21st century and beyond.

For many, leaving The UMC is hard to imagine. But in doing so, we would not be the first. Within the last year, roughly 71 churches within our conference alone have moved to disaffiliate from The UMC. With the postponement of General Conference from 2020 to 2024, it is almost assured that more will choose to do the same in the days, weeks, and months ahead. We have seen this same trend in other denominations. For every traditional church that leaves a denomination, they become less and less the church people originally joined. What we want for Due West today is what we have always wanted; to be a church that makes a priority of The Great Commission and focuses on scripture.

The key question for us is this: Where can Due West best fulfill its role as the church God is calling us to be in our community? Surely our future will be focused on being a church that offers Christ to a hurting world. It is time for Due West to decide how we will do that. Those outside of the church are desperately seeking a cornerstone upon which to build their faith, not a theology that conforms to the ever-shifting sands of the world. If we don't cling to the absolute truth of Jesus Christ that sets us apart as believers, how are we any different than the world? We at Due West must be a congregation that welcomes everyone, acknowledges that we are all sinners saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, and pursues the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit that call us into God's plan to re-create us in His image. For those brothers and sisters who may disagree, we are not enemies; we simply view our faith in different ways that may not allow us to co-exist in the same church. While formally leaving The United Methodist Church may be a painful reality to face, The United Methodist Church actually left us long ago. But perhaps God is once again doing a new thing with the old faith, and perhaps that is The Global Methodist Church.