

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH UPDATE



July 14, 2024



Purpose

To provide the Richmond Hill United Methodist Church (RHUMC) family with an update from the United Methodist Church General Conference as well as upcoming decisions that our Church must make.

Please send any questions to
RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com





A Quick Review

Frustrated with the direction of the UMC and a lack of accountability, 7,658 United Methodist Churches (UMCs) have voted to leave the denomination (25% of U.S. Churches) over these issues.

- ▶ **1968** – The UMC was formed. LGBTQ ordination and marriage have been debated ever since.
- ▶ **1972** – Included in the Book of Discipline: Homosexuality is considered incompatible with Christian teaching; same-sex marriages are not permitted.
- ▶ **2016** – Some same-sex marriages continued within the UMC and the first openly lesbian Bishop elected in violation of UMC laws
- ▶ **2019** – Special called General Conference: LGBTQ policies upheld with 53% majority. A departure policy was adopted. The original intent was to provide the option for pro-LGBTQ congregations
- ▶ **2022** – Openly gay Bishop elected; same sex marriages within the UMC increased without consequence.
- ▶ **2024** – General Conference: A 93% majority voted to remove policies on LGBTQ ordination and marriages; 76% voted to eliminate homosexuality as “incompatible”, redefine marriage, and revise relevant Social Principles



UMC General Conference Decisions

A Historic Shift in the Denominations Theology

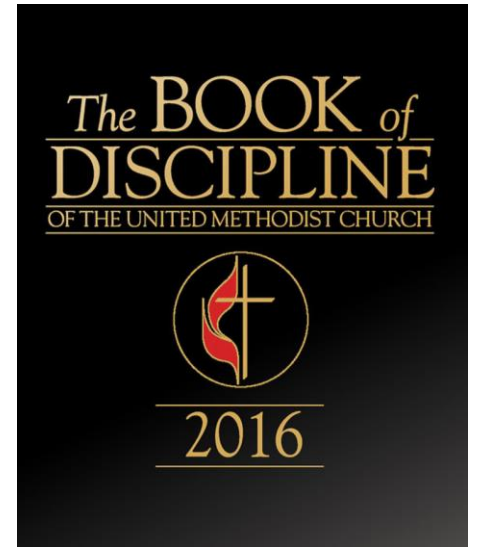
Approved changes to the UMC Book of Discipline (BoD):

1. Removal of Restrictive Language from the BoD
2. A New Definition of Marriage
3. Revised Social Principles Regarding Human Sexuality
4. Changed Definition of “Open Itineracy”





UMC General Conference Decisions



#1

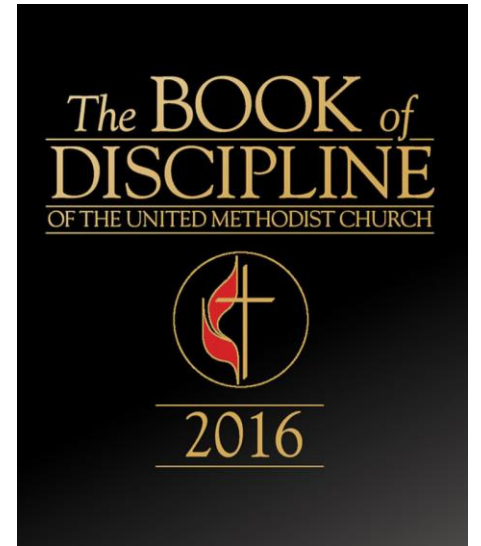
Paragraph 304.3 of the UMC BoD, which includes restrictive language against LGBTQ+ persons, was removed.

Paragraph 304.3 (removed):

“The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church.”



UMC General Conference Decisions



#2

The General Conference approved a revised set of social principles that broaden the definition of marriage to include two consenting adults.

Old 2016 Version Marriage

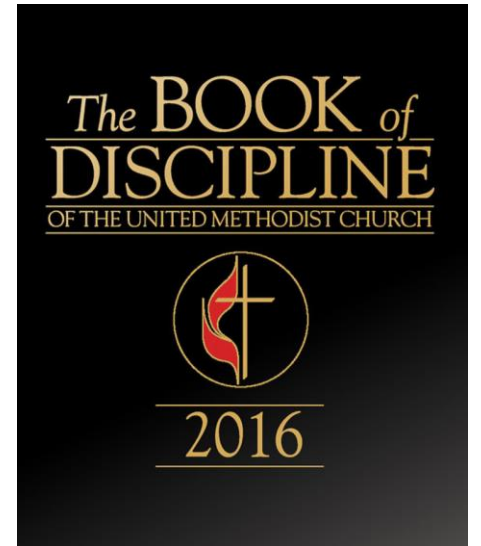
“We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman.”

Approved 2024 Revision Marriage

“Within the church, we affirm marriage as a sacred lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith, an adult man and woman of consenting age, or two adult persons of consenting age, into union with one another.”



UMC General Conference Decisions



#3

The General Conference approved a new statement regarding Human Sexuality.

Human Sexuality- Old 2016 Version

"We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, **sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.**

All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence.

We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.

The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching

We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Human Sexuality- Approved 2024 Revision

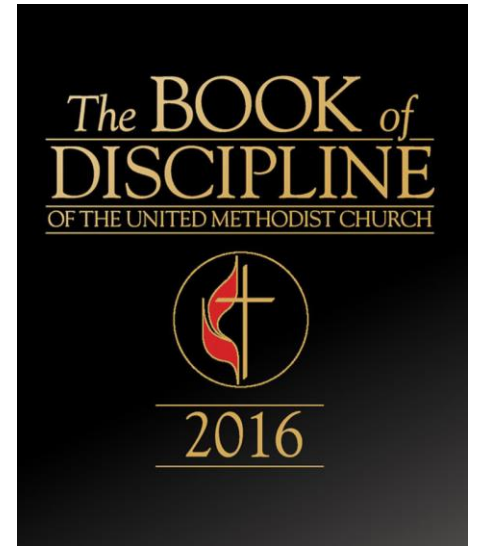
"We affirm human sexuality as a sacred gift and acknowledge that sexual intimacy contributes to fostering the emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals and to nurturing healthy sexual relationships that are **grounded in love, care and respect.**

Human sexuality is a healthy and natural part of life that is expressed in wonderfully diverse ways from birth to death. It is shaped by a combination of nature and nurture: heredity and genetic factors on the one hand and childhood development and environment on the other. We further honor the diversity of choices and vocations in relation to sexuality such as celibacy, marriage and singleness.

We support the rights of all people to exercise **personal consent** in sexual relationships, to make decisions about their own bodies and be supported in those decisions, to receive comprehensive sexual education, to be free from sexual exploitation and violence, and to have access to adequate sexual health care."



UMC General Conference Decisions



#4

Revision to the definition of “Open Itineracy.”

The General Conference amended paragraph 425.1 of the Book of Discipline to read “Open itineracy means appointments are made without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, color, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or age, except for the provisions of mandatory retirement.

Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-parish relations committees, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, color, disability, marital status, economic condition, sexual orientation or age.”



UMC General Conference Decisions

With the removal of the restrictive language and the passing of additional legislation related to human sexuality, several areas of the Book of Discipline will be revised:

- Pastors will have the right to choose what weddings to perform.
- Local church Boards of Trustees will have the right to determine which weddings to host.
- Persons in same-gender relationships are not prohibited from ordination
- The Conference Board of Ordained Ministries and District Committees on Ministry retain authority to recruit, examine, confirm the calling of, and discern the qualifications of those considered for credentialing into licensed and ordained ministry.
- The Bishop and Cabinet will continue to use careful and prayerful consultation in the appointment process to ensure clergy/church matches for effective ministry.
- The superintendent shall not penalize any clergy for performing or refraining from performing a same-sex marriage service.
- The superintendent shall neither require any local church to hold or prohibit a local church from holding a same-sex marriage on property owned by a local church.



UMC General Conference Decisions

A Historic Shift in the Denomination's Theology

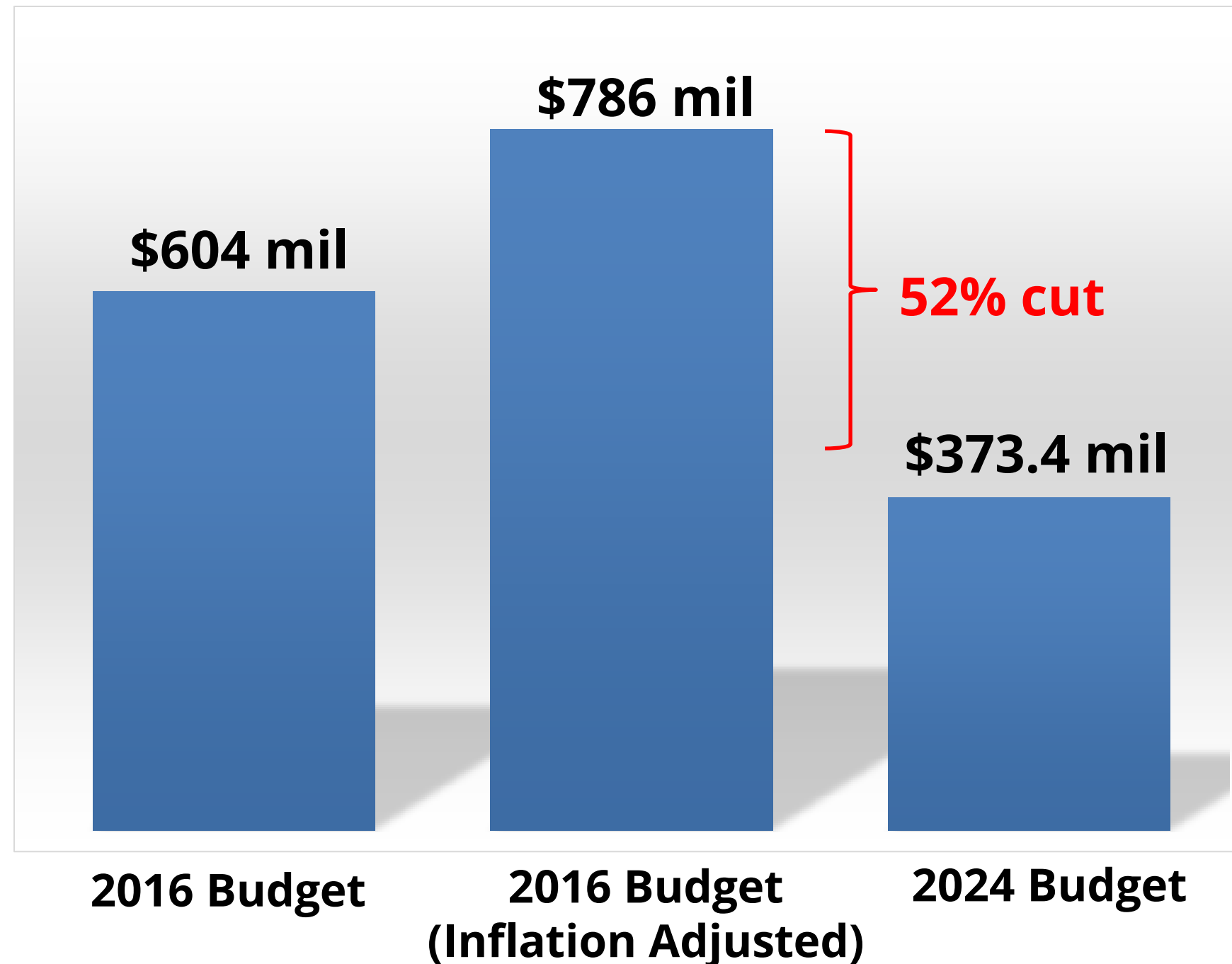
- In 2019...
 - **53% to 47%** (438-384) majority to uphold bans on LGBTQ ordination and officiating/hosting same-sex weddings.
- In 2024...
 - **93% to 7%** (667 to 54) majority in favor of allowing LGBTQ ordination
 - **93% to 7%** (692 to 51) to lift the ban on clergy who are self-avowed homosexuals
 - **76% to 24%** (523 to 161) to:
 - Eliminate language that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching
 - To revise the definition of Marriage

The 2024 legislation was passed without floor debate at General Conference using a legislative procedure known as a “consent calendar” in which multiple pieces of legislation, deemed to be non-controversial and not requiring debate, are bundled together for an “up” or “down” vote.



UMC General Conference Decisions

Budget Cuts



When adjusted for inflation (a cumulative rate of 30% since 2016), the General Conference budget is 52% less than what was approved in 2016.



UMC General Conference Decisions

Funding for the Creation of a Center for LGBTQ+ United Methodist Heritage

GCAH announces new center for LGBTQ+ United Methodist Heritage



Resolution to divest from Israel Bonds

United Methodist Church votes to divest from Israel bonds

In the first such divestment action by a major Christian denomination, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church has voted to divest from Israel bonds, and those of other countries carrying out prolonged military occupations.

BY UNITED METHODISTS FOR KAIROS RESPONSE - MAY 2, 2024 - 2



United Methodists for Kairos Response
United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR) is an international justice movement in The United Methodist Church responding to Palestinian Christians' urgent call for action, in "[Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth](#)." UMKR seeks, through nonviolent means and in partnership with Palestinian Christians, freedom, justice and equality for all Palestinians and Israelis. For more information, visit www.kairosresponse.org.

[More by this author](#)

LATEST ARTICLES

 What it's like to be used as a human shield by the Israeli army



What is next for RHUMC?



RHUMC's Congregational Survey

(Fall 2023)

If the UMC's policies change to permit the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ individuals... how should RHUMC respond?

60% - RHUMC should depart from the UMC
24% - RHUMC should remain UMC
16% - Unsure / Support both / Indifferent

If the UMC's policies change and RHUMC remains UMC... how would you respond?

47% - Choose to leave RHUMC
38% - Continue to attend & support RHUMC
15% - Unsure / Indifferent

If the UMC's policies change and RHUMC departs from the UMC... how would you respond?

28% - Choose to leave RHUMC
52% - Continue to attend & support RHUMC
20% - Unsure / Indifferent



Departure - The Process

The South GA Annual Conference's (AC) approved departure policy includes the following:

- Churches have the right to leave and take property/assets with them
- Requires a 2/3rds supermajority vote of our Church family at a Church Conference AND the approval of the Annual Conference
- Departing churches must pay apportionments for the current year, plus one additional year & unfunded pension liability
- Must be complete by September 30, 2024



Departure – A Vote

- On May 21, 2024 the RHUMC Administrative Board voted to hold a Church vote to permit the Church Family to decide whether to depart the United Methodist Church.
- The vote is scheduled for July 28, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.
- Anyone on the Church's membership roles, including youth who have completed confirmation, will be eligible to vote.
- Members must be present to vote – there is no absentee, early, or proxy voting.
- If you aren't sure of your membership status, please call the church office.



Departure – A Vote

- Please arrive early; check-in tables will be set up to confirm church membership.
- Upon confirming membership, you will be provided a ticket; proceed to the sanctuary to wait for everyone to gather.
- Members will be directed to stand by row (like during a Communion Sunday), come forward, exchange their ticket for a ballot, mark it and place it in a container before returning to their seats or exiting.
- Members are not required to stay while the votes are counted; however, if an unexpected error requires a re-vote, members must be present to vote again and have their votes counted.
- The results will be announced at the Church Conference after the count has been ratified.



Departure – A Vote

- Returning a blank vote (not marked YES or NO) functions as a vote opposed towards the 2/3 threshold (the equal weight of a “NO” vote).
- If 2/3rds of the church members present vote YES to approve the departure, the local church would enter into an agreement with the Conference Board of Trustees for the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church to exit the denomination.



Departure – The Ballot

YES

☐

No

☐

Shall Richmond Hill United Methodist Church (1) depart from The United Methodist Church for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals or the actions or inactions of the Annual Conference related to these issues; (2) close the church and transfer title to all its real and personal, tangible and intangible property of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees (the “Trustees”) in accordance with paragraph 2549.3(a) of The Discipline; and (3) enter into an agreement with the Trustees for the purchase and sale of the real and personal property of Richmond Hill United Methodist Church to a new church to be formed by the members of Richmond Hill United Methodist Church at the price and on the terms set out in the Trustees’ Policy adopted on February 22, 2022.



Departure – Options, Risks & Risk Mitigation

If RHUMC votes to depart the UMC, the Administrative Board approved a plan for the church to become independent (not affiliated) under the condition that a final determination on the church's future be made by the church membership within 12 months following departure. Choosing to become independent carries new risks for our church that can be mitigated in the short-term as follows:

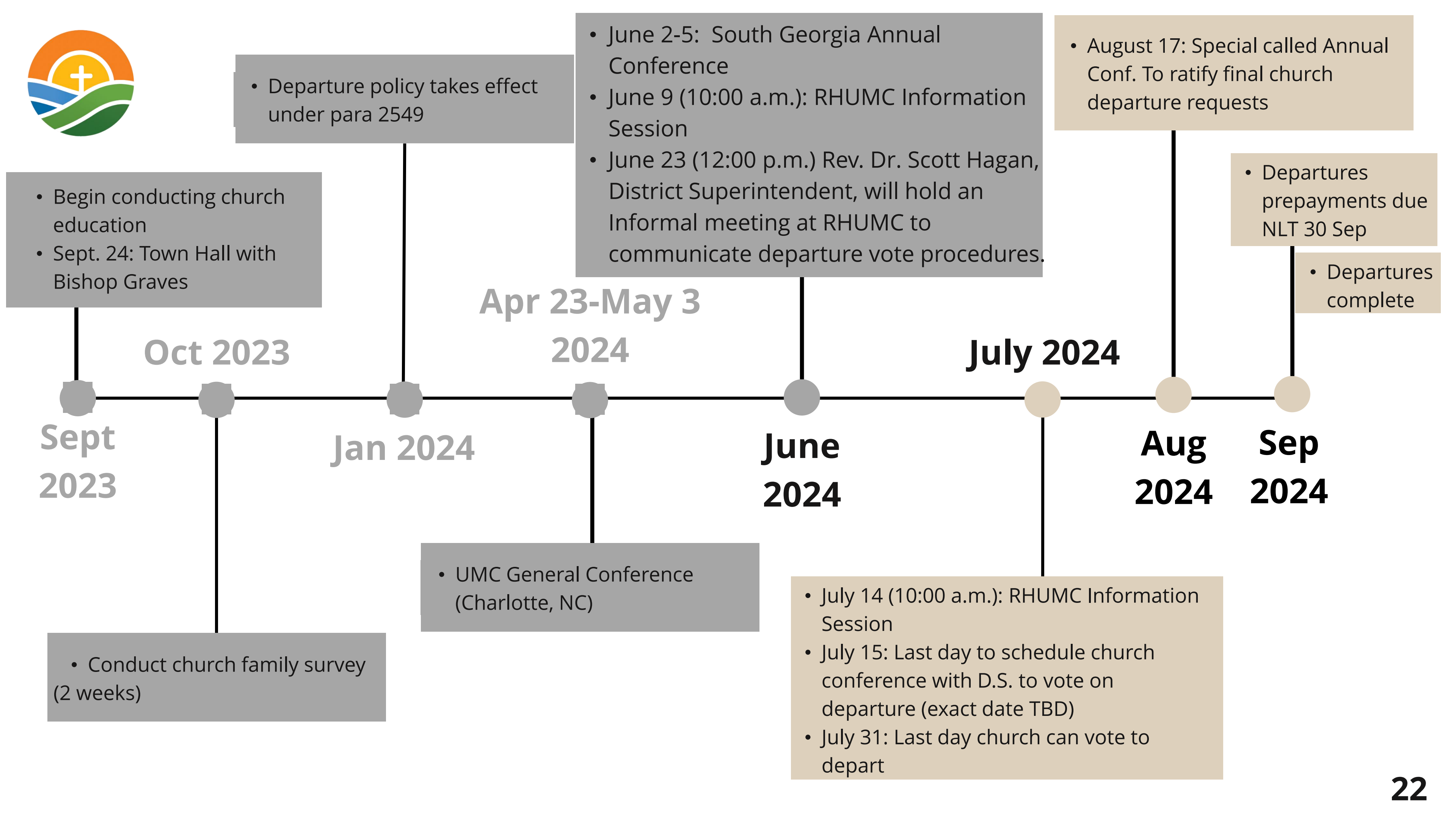
Stay UMC	Departing the UMC (Risks)	Departure Risk Mitigation
1. The Senior Pastor is appointed by the Bishop.	1. The Senior Pastor will no longer be appointed by the UMC. The church will have to recruit, vet, hire and negotiate benefits for its own Sr Pastor.	Rev. Jay Tucker has agreed to remain as the church's Senior Pastor to help the church, at least through its transition period.
2. The church retains its 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption status.	2. The church will lose its 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption status if it departs the UMC.	The church obtains its own 501(c)(3) Tax Exemption status.
3. The church retains its status as a Corporation.	3. The church will lose its status as a Corporation.	The church obtains its own Incorporation.
4. The church will operate under the 2024 UMC Book of Discipline.	4. The church will need to adopt its own rules, policies, and governance structure.	The church fully adopts the 2016 version of the UMC Book of Discipline to provide the authority for rules, policies and governance structure.
5. This option presents the greatest risk of Church Staff loss.	5. This option present the least risk of Church Staff loss.	
6. Potential 47% membership loss.	Potential 28% membership loss.	Perhaps we can agree to separate ourselves from the UMC controversy and depart as a united body.



Departure - Costs

- **Payments Required by the UMC; these are sunk costs that RHUMC already includes in every annual budget:**
 - **2024 Apportionments = approximately \$45k remaining (in our current budget)**
 - **2025 Apportionments = \$91k (a prepayment – otherwise total due in 2025)**
 - **2025-2027 Pension Obligation = \$64k** (a prepayment – otherwise approximately \$20k paid annually)
 - **Mortgage Refinance Costs = \$15k (must be prepaid in 2024)**
- **Other Costs Associated with Departure:**
 - **Corporate Structure Costs = \$1k (funded by an anonymous Church member)**
 - **Church Rebranding Costs = estimate \$18k (funded by the RHUMC Day School)**

Bottomline: RHUMC's Costs for Departure are all funded





QUESTIONS

You may also contact us at
RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com