

# UNITED METHODIST CHURCH UPDATE



AN INFORMATION SESSION ON ISSUES FACING THE UNITED METHODIST  
CHURCH (UMC) AND POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE IN 2024  
SEPTEMBER 2023  
PRESENTED BY: THE RHUMC NAVIGATION TEAM



# Purpose

To provide the Richmond Hill United Methodist Church (RHUMC) family with background information regarding the UMC-LGBTQ discussion within the denomination and the decisions our Church family will need to make in 2024.



Navigation Team (Left to Right): Sara Goldrick, Chip Hester, Tom Norris, Lavander Wilkerson, Julie Seckinger, Kathryn Johnson, Rev. Jay Tucker, Donna Hoke, Betty Rosenthal, Stephen Peterson  
Not Pictured: Al Dixon

Please send any questions to  
[RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com](mailto:RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com)



# Expectations

- A brief description of the current state of UMC (we encourage you to also do research)
- Be kind, compassionate, and understanding with others in our Church family who may view this discussion differently than you
- Appreciate the complexity and potential decisions our Church family may have to make
- Pray for our Church family and that God's will be done; trust Him with the outcome

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person”

Colossians 4:6

“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.”

James 1:26





# What We Know

- The “United Methodist Church” is splintering over issues of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer (LGBTQ) ordination, marriage, and a lack of accountability of UMC senior leadership
- To date, **6,240** United Methodist Churches have voted to leave the denomination (20% of 30,541 U.S. Churches)
- For some churches, this isn’t an issue of human sexuality, but rather a loss of trust in the leadership, accountability, and direction of the UMC senior leadership; or simply a desire to separate from the current controversies
- The South GA Conference (ours) has provided a pathway for departure from the UMC in 2024
- Every UMC must decide to either:
  - Remain in the UMC
  - Leave and become independent or join a different expression of Methodism

## South Georgia Conference to lose 193 United Methodist churches

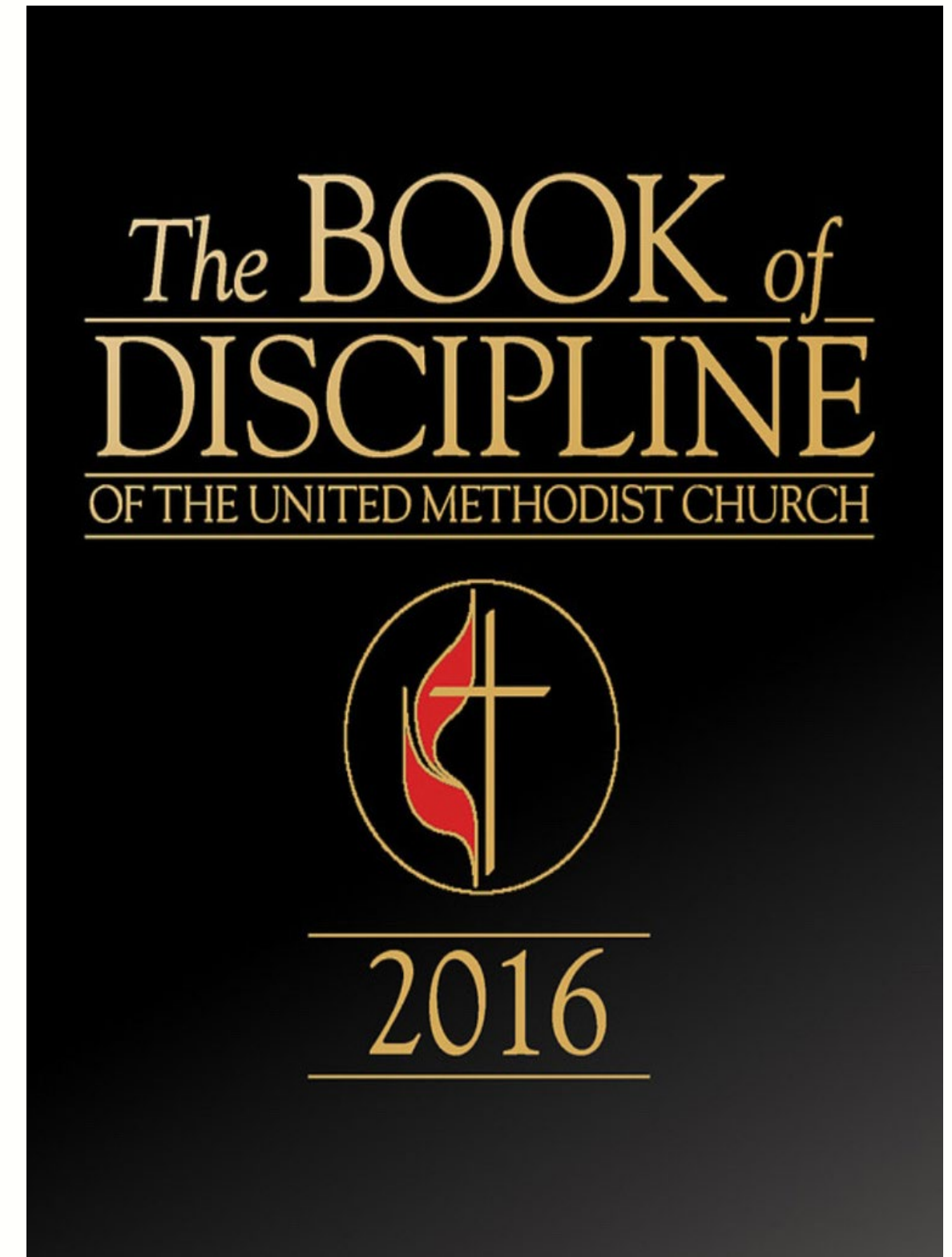
Court lifting of “pause” means North Georgia conference will likely decide later





# Current UMC Official Policy

- (1972): “The UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching”
- Sex is a gift - should only be practiced in heterosexual marriage
- All persons are of sacred worth
- Gay and lesbian members and friends should not be condemned
- Civil rights should be protected for all
- The Church should be in ministry to people of all orientations
- Professing and practicing homosexual individuals should not be ordained (BOD para 304.3 added 1984)
- Ordained persons shall not conduct same-sex marriages (BOD para 341.6 added 1996)



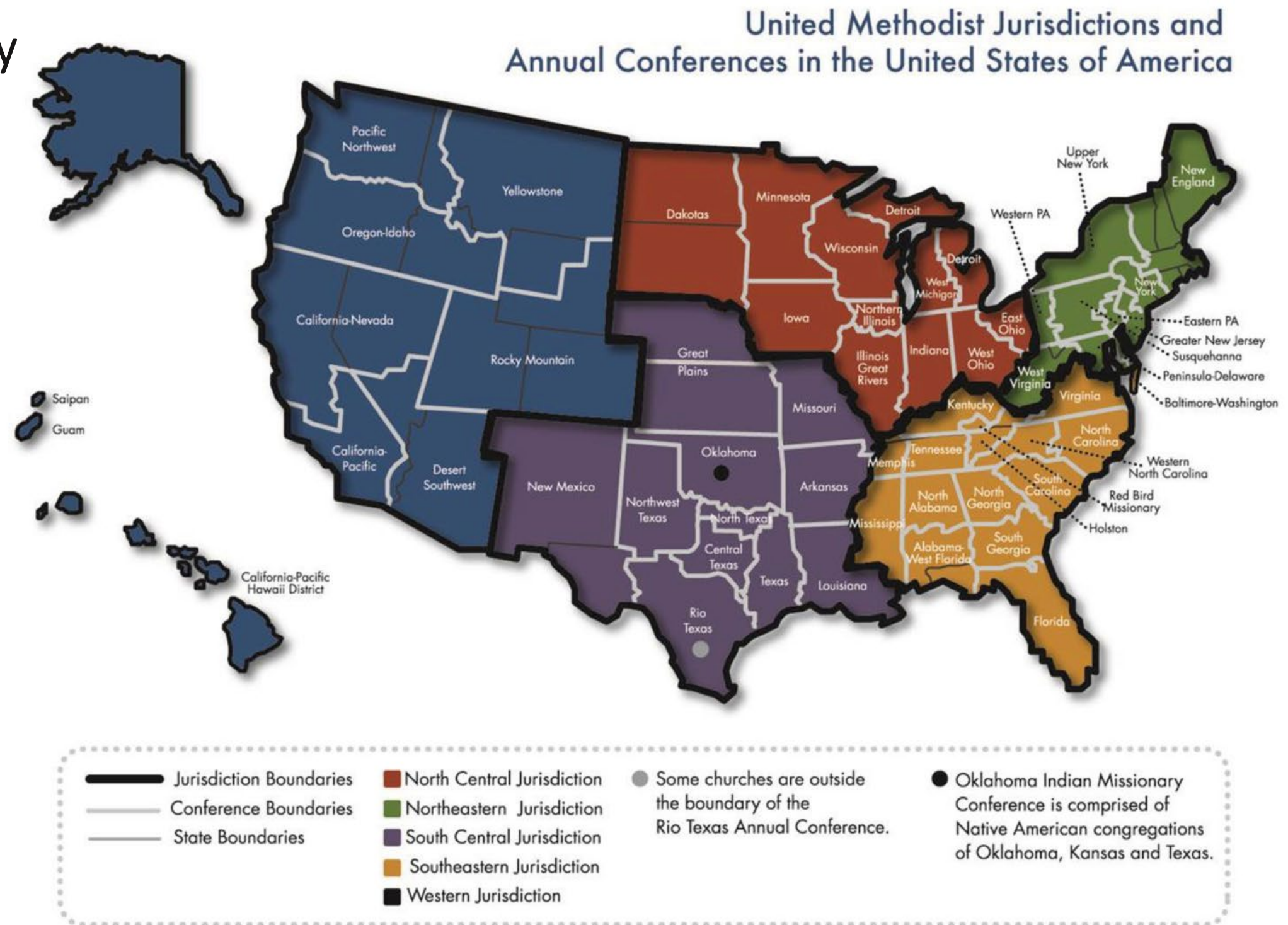
\*The Book of Discipline constitutes the law and doctrine of the United Methodist Church.





# History

- The General Conference (GC) is the only body with authority to speak for the United Methodist Church (UMC) and change the Book of Discipline
- GC meets every 4 years
- GC is made up of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates
- Delegates are elected by the 133 Annual Conferences (54 in the U.S.)
- Every four years the Church's position on sexuality has been debated, sometimes studied, and voted upon



Map highlighting the United Methodist jurisdictions and annual conferences in the United States of America. Photo courtesy of United Methodist Communications

# History

A UMC clergy conducted a same-sex wedding, a church trial followed, the pastor was punished, yet same-sex weddings have continued

1997

2016

The Western Jurisdiction elected an openly lesbian bishop; in 2017 her election was deemed invalid, yet she and other LGBTQ clergy remain in position today

The 2016 GC voted 428-405 to delay debate on homosexuality/empowered a Council of Bishops to study the issues and develop a plan to present at a 2019 special called GC  
**(The Commission on a Way Forward)**

The special GC voted 438-384 to pass the “Traditional Plan” and uphold bans on ordaining LGBTQ clergy and officiating at/hosting same-sex weddings

Approved pathway for UMC churches to disaffiliate from UMC through 2023

2019

2020

Progressives, centrists,& traditionalists announced “**The Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace through Separation**” and received widespread support

The 2020 GC was supposed to pass the “Protocol” and create an orderly process for separation to occur – but it was postponed due to Covid-19 - postponed again until 2022 - postponed again until Apr 23-May 3, 2024

The Global Methodist Church (GMC) launched as a conservative/traditional alternative to the UMC

Western Jurisdiction elected another openly gay bishop

Formation of the GMC and GC delays bred mistrust on all sides

Traditionalist churches began to exit due to the controversies

2022

Current Departure Policy  
(see slide)

2023





# Current Departure Policy

The South GA Annual Conference (AC) approved options for departure within the Annual Conference through December 31, 2024 (2022 under para 2549 of the Book of Discipline)

This policy includes the following:

- Gives a church 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 (AC)
- Departing churches must pay apportionments for the current year, plus one additional year & unfunded pension liability (approximately \$290,000 total)
- Must complete by December 31, 2024





# Business Considerations of Departure

- Regardless of the path chosen – we assume there will be a loss of membership and financial giving
- RHUMC currently pays \$90,757 annually in apportionments to the UMC; we assume that apportionments will increase for churches remaining with the UMC; departure would significantly reduce this financial burden
- Our Church family would own all assets (approx. \$8 mil) including cash, building, furniture, etc.
  - The Coastal district currently owns all assets
- Our Church would be responsible for required legal fees and re-branding costs



# RHUMC Options

## Option 1: Stay United Methodist Considerations

- The Church will continue paying apportionments to the UMC (costs may increase)
- No need for the following: to incorporate, to obtain tax exempt status (501c3), or change/develop new Church governance structures and policies
- Guaranteed pastoral appointments under the supervision and mentorship of a District Superintendent and Bishop
- No rebranding of the Church required
- Potential progressive direction of the UMC (this may or may not be a concern for RHUMC members); RHUMC will remain under the shadow of UMC controversy
- Church property will continue to be held in Trust by the District (no change from the current property ownership)

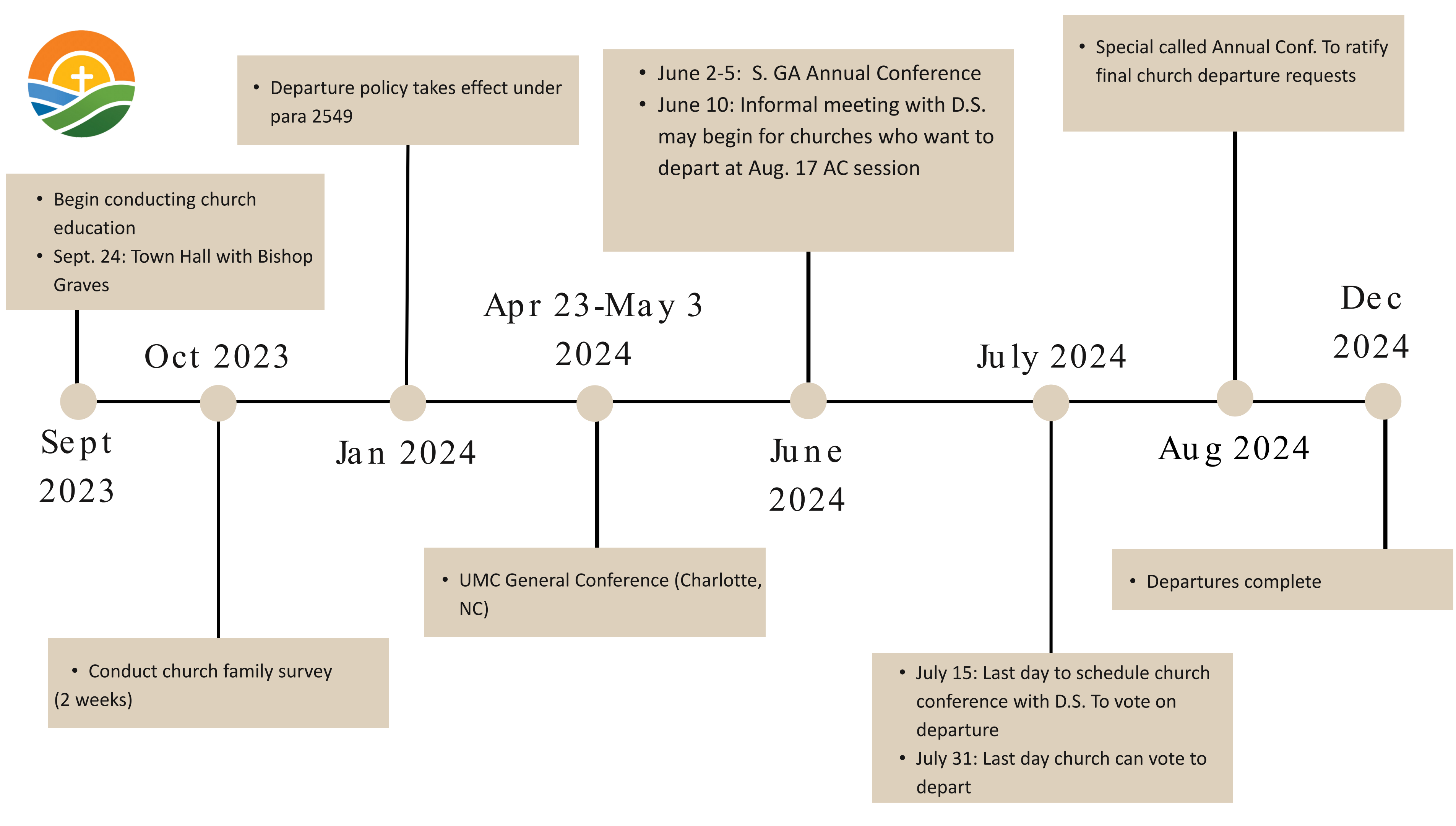


# RHUMC Options

## Option 2: Depart the UMC Considerations

- Allows our Church family to make its own decisions without the process & approvals required by the UMC; and own its own property
- Removes the Church from current and future UMC controversies
- Relieves the Church of a significant financial burden (no or lower apportionments)
- The Church may need to
  - be Incorporated with someone responsible for maintaining
  - establish 501c3 tax exemption
  - create by-laws, a leadership structure, committees, and policies for running Church
  - consider rebranding/legal cost (i.e. return all UMC Hymnals)
- Pastors may or may no longer be appointed, resulting in our Church having to recruit and vet ministers/there is risk of being without a Pastor for extended periods
- There may or may not be denominational “mentorship” of the Pastor
- The Church would have to pay costs to depart the UMC







# A Note From Our Bishop

“As we provide timelines for disaffiliations and departures, it is our hope that local churches postpone any decision until after the General Conference meets in 2024 when we will have more information to make any necessary decisions. Local churches can be assured that an opportunity will be given to complete the process of departure after General Conference meets and before the end of 2024, should they wish to do so. This is in accordance with the process put forth by the Conference Trustees under para 2549 that honors the terms of South Georgia’s current disaffiliation policy through December 31, 2024. This process was affirmed by the South Georgia Conference at its June 2022 Annual Conference Session.”



# Voices for “Stay UMC”

“ . . . it is possible to be faithful, orthodox, Wesleyan, United Methodist Christians and hold to differing ways of understanding these texts [biblical texts] and to come to different conclusions regarding homosexuality.”

Rev. Adam Hamilton

Senior Pastor

UMC of the Resurrection Leawood, KS

“ Separation is evil in itself, being a breach of brotherly love, so it brings forth evil fruit . . . the most mischievous consequences. It opens a door to all unkind tempers, both in ourselves and others.”

Rev. John Wesley

Sermon on Schism





# Voices for “Stay UMC”

“ The Global Methodist Church (GMC), fed up with United Methodists speaking out on social issues, is forming a church inspired by a single contemporary social issue.

Any new denomination must struggle with graying members, changing understandings of gender and sexuality, and a culture in which church – any church – is optional. So the GMC’s big idea to set right what’s wrong with the UMC is to form another denomination – destined to be one of the smallest Methodist bodies in the world . . . who told the GMC that same-sex relationships are the chief challenge in the UMC? Not the Bible. Not Jesus, who makes not even a cameo appearance in most of these debates . . . Most Methodists are clueless about the Book of Discipline, can’t name their bishop, are uninterested in clergy power plays, and have never run across a member of General Conference. In their unconcern for Methodism beyond their congregation, I think they’ve got things in proper perspective. The denomination is largely irrelevant to their encounters with Christ, in church or out, and contributes little to their taking responsibility for their mission that Christ has assigned to their congregation.”

Rev. William H. Willimon

Retired UMC Bishop

Professor, Duke Divinity School



# Voices for “Stay UMC”

“The United Methodist Church needs traditional, orthodox members as well as progressive members, centrist members, and everyone in between. A church cannot effectively reach the least, the lost, and the lonely if it is of one mind on every topic. It takes us all to challenge and encourage one another in our discipleship efforts and our spiritual journey.”

Bishop David Graves

UMC South Georgia Conference



# Voices for “Amicable Separation”

“They have elected the most extreme people – especially clergy – to Jurisdictional and General Conferences, and those extremists have now elected the most extreme bench of Bishops we have ever seen in our lifetimes. Which means – bottom line – that a lot of ordinary folks who just want to ignore what’s going on in the leadership, who just want to ‘love everybody’ and do church as usual, who think it’ll all blow over and things will be as they always have been, are going to wake up in a couple of years – after the escape hatch has been closed to disaffiliate – and see their denomination’s decline and dysfunction accelerate. They won’t be able to ignore it then, and it will be too late to do anything about it.”

Rev Arthur Collins

blog post regarding Nov 22 UMC Bishop Elections

“The growing caucus of gay activist bishops will increasingly redefine the denomination.”

- Jon Lomperis

Institute on Religion & Democracy



# Voices for “Amicable Separation”

“The really bad news for centrists [within the UMC] is that with the departure of the traditionalists [conservatives] who have maintained the balance with the progressives, the progressives are poised to make a triumphal display of power at the upcoming General Conference in which they will move forward with the entire agenda of the progressive movement.”

Lonnie D. Brooks

UMC General Conference

Lay Delegate

“The leadership of the new United Methodist Church made clear that basic Biblical doctrines are not as important as other beliefs and agendas. Throughout my jurisdictional conference, I observed far more excitement and passion for converting church folk to secular LGBTQ+ liberationist ideology than for evangelizing people who do not know Jesus.”

Jon Lomperis

Institute on Religion & Democracy





# Voices for “Amicable Separation”

- United Methodist Churches in the U.S. hosting events like the following:
  - **Family Friendly Drag Show - Star City Pride**  
**Friday April 14<sup>th</sup> 7PM to PM**
    - Christ United Methodist Church, Lincoln, NE
  - **Drag me to Church - Drag is not a sin**  
**June 11<sup>th</sup>, 3 p.m.**
    - Open Table United Methodist Church, Raleigh, NC



# Helpful Resources

- A 7-part series titled “Is the United Methodist Church Really . . . ?”  
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-series-is-the-umc-really>
- South Georgia Conference Disaffiliation Process Information  
<https://www.sgaumc.org/disaffiliation>
- South Georgia Conference Disaffiliation Frequently Asked Questions  
<https://www.sgaumc.org/faqs-october-2022>
- A Compendium of “United Methodist Fallout” News Articles
- <https://peopleneedjesus.net/2023/08/06/um-fallout-a-compendium/>



# QUESTIONS

You may also contact us at  
[RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com](mailto:RHUMCNavigationTeam@gmail.com)