

## Do We Affiliate and if so with Whom?

While there are many options out there, we limited our discernment to Wesleyan theological churches or independent where we could create a statement of belief consistent with our Wesleyan theological heritage. Here are some of our notes on each potential option and why we are recommending the Global Methodist Church

### 1. Become an independent, non-denominational church.

#### Advantages:

- Will own our property.
- No conference tithes (apportionments). Currently about 10% of offerings.
- No interference from denominational leaders
- Free to create our own identity

#### Negatives:

- Must find our own pastor(s)
- Must develop our own *Statement of Beliefs* (our own theology)
- Must develop our own governance structure
- Must develop our own membership requirements
- Must develop our own accountability policy
- Must create our own connections to other like-minded churches
- Need strong, consistent, biblically grounded lay leadership to keep the church from drifting
- No denominational support
- This is very unfamiliar territory for UMC churches. Will require significant investment of resources (i.e., time and money), to sustain this kind of structure. Mistakes will be made.
- When someone requests a same gender wedding the church will not have denominational stance that prevents conflict from opening up in the church again. Also opens church up more easily to lawsuits around not renting facility for same gender weddings if facility rented for any other purpose.
- Churches frequently do very poorly at time of pastoral transitions

### 2. The Church of the Nazarene

The Church of the Nazarene is an evangelical Christian denomination that emerged in North America from the 19th-century Wesleyan-Holiness movement within Methodism. With its members commonly referred to as Nazarenes, it is the largest denomination in the world aligned with the Wesleyan-Holiness movement and is a member of the World Methodist Council.

US Congregations About 7,500

US Members 650,000

Worldwide Members 2,640,000

Headquarters Lenexa, Kansas

#### Beliefs:

##### **Nazarene Essentials**

- **MEANINGFUL WORSHIP** We may say with confidence that to worship God is to acknowledge Him as the Rock of our salvation, the great God, the great King above all gods, the creator of all things, and the Shepherd who cares for His people. These are our sources for **THEOLOGICAL COHERENCE**: Scripture, Christian Tradition, Reason, and Personal Experience
- **PASSIONATE EVANGELISM** is our response to Jesus' love and grace for humanity. The Church of the Nazarene started with passionate evangelism. It continues to be the heart of who we are.
- **INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP** is helping people develop obedient intimate relationships with Jesus. In these relationships, Christ's Spirit transforms their character into Christlikeness— changing new

believers' values into kingdom values and involving them in His mission of investing in others in their homes, churches, and world.

- CHURCH DEVELOPMENT We believe a church is a cluster of believers, not a building or property.
- TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP We seek to develop leaders through a model of Christlikeness. Jesus is our example.
- PURPOSEFUL COMPASSION We do every act of service, generosity, or mercy in Jesus' name, and we offer our efforts to reveal Jesus' love.

**Advantages:**

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice

**Negatives:**

- Nazarene churches are subject to a trust clause when they join the denomination.
- Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (10 to 15% of income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years
- The Church of the Nazarene has a significant presence of progressive clergy and members and appears to be starting to fight the same battles internally as the UMC – they may only be 10 to 15 years behind the UMC.

**Could Be An Issue for Some:**

- Abstinance from Alcohol expected for pastors and members
- Pastors and leaders expected to not belong to secret societies (including Masons, Fraternities, etc.)

### 3. The Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church, also known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Wesleyan Holiness Church depending on the region, is a Methodist Christian denomination in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Indonesia, Asia, and Australia. The church is aligned Wesleyan-Holiness movement and has roots in the teachings of John Wesley. It adheres to Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine and is a member of the World Methodist Council.

The Wesleyan Church was started by Orange Scott. He was an American Methodist Episcopal minister, Presiding Elder, and District President. He presided over the convention that organized the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion in 1843 at an organizing conference in Utica, New York, by a group of ministers and laymen splitting from the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was among the founders of what became known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church, having separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church due to doctrinal and holiness concerns. The split was primarily over their objections to slavery, though they had secondary issues as well, such as ecclesiastical polity. Other leaders at the organizing conference were La Roy Sunderland, who had been tried and defrocked for his antislavery writings, Lucious C. Matlack, and Luther Lee, a minister who later operated an Underground Railroad station in Syracuse, New York.

Near the end of 2014, the Wesleyan Church had grown to an average of 516,203 adherents weekly in around 5,800 churches worldwide and is active in almost 100 nations. In 2017, there were 140,954 members in 1,607 congregations in North America, and an average worship attendance of 239,842. The growing statistics for 2015 reveals the church has around 1 million members worldwide.

US Congregations	1,600
US Members	150,000
Worldwide Members	550,000
Headquarters	Fishers, IN

**Beliefs:**

- **BIBLICAL AUTHORITY:** The Bible is God's holy Word. It uniquely and infallibly reveals God's plan for His people and how to live out that plan, individually and corporately. Beliefs, practices, priorities, and our mission are to be anchored in clear biblical teachings.
- **CHRISTLIKENESS:** Jesus Christ is the defining feature of God's will and relationship with all humankind. In Christ is found both newness of life and the highest and clearest example for godliness. People made new in Christ find Him to be the source of faith, hope, and love in both the inner life and in our outward actions engaging a world desperate for hope and life.
- **DISCIPLE-MAKING:** Making disciples is a clear mandate from Christ. This requires a strong missional focus on evangelism and training in spiritual growth and holy living. Done effectively, this will produce and promote growth and health in and among the churches.
- **LOCAL CHURCH CENTERED:** The denomination exists to help local congregations grow and multiply, be more healthy, and more authentically reflect God's plan. Local churches are the most fundamental and strategic points of evangelism and discipleship. The challenge of the denomination is to keep finding the best ways to serve, strengthen, and multiply congregations.
- **SERVANT LEADERSHIP:** Wesleyans respect leadership that is placed over them, while realizing that the authority and effectiveness of spiritual leadership is not primarily bestowed, but earned, and is characterized by a loving and willing heart of obedience that serves God and mankind gladly. Wesleyans desire to be leaders in serving.
- **UNITY IN DIVERSITY:** There is intrinsic value in every person. Biblical unity becomes all the more important and beautiful in the light of the wide-ranging differences in personalities, cultures, races, languages, talents, and perspectives. Finding unity and mutual love in Christ eliminates devaluation and deprivation of life to one another.

For trial affiliation, a church needs at least 20 people

#### **Advantages:**

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- Headquarters in Fishers, IN
- Strong institutions like Indiana Wesleyan.
- Strong witness on care for the poor and refugees.

#### **Negatives:**

- Wesleyan Churches are subject to a trust clause when they join the denomination. They do have a seldom used Affiliate status for some churches that doesn't require a trust clause. Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (11% based on income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years
- If very many disaffiliated UM churches join the Wesleyan, they will quickly be overwhelmed

#### **Could Be An Issue for Some:**

- Complete abstinence from Alcohol expected for those in leadership whether clergy, local pastor or laity.
- Their General Conference has debated removing this but so far it has not happened.
- Against secret societies (including Masons, Fraternities, sororities etc) and church officers/leaders cannot belong to them.

## **4. Free Methodist Church**

The Free Methodist Church was organized at Pekin, New York, in 1860. The founders had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church but were excluded from its membership for earnestly advocating what they saw as the doctrines and usages of authentic Wesleyan Methodism. Under the leadership of the

Rev. Benjamin Titus (B. T.) Roberts, a graduate of Wesleyan University, the movement spread rapidly. Societies were organized, churches built, and the work established.

The word "Free" was suggested and adopted because the new church (1) was anti-slavery; (2) wanted pews to be free to all regardless of status, rather than sold or rented (as was common); (3) promoted freedom of worship in the Holy Spirit, as opposed to stifling formality; (4) upheld the principle of "freedom" from secret and oath-bound societies (in particular the Masonic Lodge), so as to have full loyalty to Christ; (5) stood for "freedom" from the abuse of ecclesiastical authority (due to the bishop's action in allowing expulsion of 120 clergy and lay); and (6) desired its members experience "freedom" of transformation in sanctification via the Holy Spirit due to personal consecration and faith, rather than 'sin-management' or gradual growth following justification.

US Congregations	828
US Members	67,000
Worldwide Members	1,200,000
Headquarters	Indianapolis, IN

### **Beliefs:**

#### The Free Methodist Way

In response to numerous national conversations with FM leaders at all levels, in 2021, the Free Methodist bishops introduced: *The Free Methodist Way: Five Values that Shape our Identity*.

These five values express the distinctives that set Free Methodist apart from other faith families in the body of Christ.

They are as follows:

- Life Giving Holiness: GOD'S CALL TO HOLINESS was never meant to be a burden, but a gift that liberates us for life that is truly life by delivering us from the destructive power of sin.
- Love-Driven Justice: LOVE IS THE WAY WE DEMONSTRATE GOD'S HEART FOR JUSTICE by valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children, acting with compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding Creation.
- Christ-Compelled Multiplication: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST — the message He proclaimed, the life He lived, and the ministry He modeled — set into motion a redemptive movement destined to fill the whole earth.
- Cross-Cultural Collaboration: FROM THE BEGINNING, GOD'S INTENT WAS TO HAVE A PEOPLE FROM EVERY NATION, culture and ethnicity, united in Christ and commissioned to carry out His work in the world.
- God-Given Revelation: WE HOLD UNWAVERINGLY to our conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

### **Church Affiliation Steps (Steps to Join the Free Methodist Denomination)**

#### PHASE ONE: Exploratory Phase

The first step for those seeking affiliation with the Free Methodist Church is that of exploration.

#### PHASE TWO: Decision Phase

In the decision phase, the congregation or group desiring to affiliate with the Free Methodist Church processes all the information gathered during the exploratory phase to reach a point of decision to affiliate or not to affiliate.

#### PHASE THREE: Affiliation Phase

The affiliation relationship officially begins when church leaders and the pastor join FMC Conference leaders and representatives to sign the Affiliate Covenant (MOU). This is a public declaration that the church and the FMC are affiliated. The signing of the covenant agreement should be viewed much like an engagement ring.

#### PHASE FOUR: Full Membership

The Affiliation Process concludes when the church leaders and leaders of the FMC express mutual desire to welcome the church as a full member of the Free Methodist Church. The congregation would then be presented at the following Annual Conference gathering to be welcomed as a Free Methodist Society.

**Advantages:**

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- Headquarters in Indianapolis

**Negatives:**

- Has a **trust clause** when churches reach the Full Membership level of affiliation. The affiliation process is expected to last no more than 3 years. Bishops have Indicated trust clause can be waived upon request for churches coming from UMC.
- Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (10 to 15% of income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years
- If very many disaffiliated UM churches join the Free Methodists, they will quickly be overwhelmed.

**Could Be An Issue for Some:**

- Complete abstinence from Alcohol expected.
- Against secret societies (including Masons, Fraternities, sororities etc) and church officers/leaders cannot belong to them.

## 5. The Global Methodist Church

The Global Methodist Church (shortened to GM Church, or GMC) is a Protestant denomination based in the United States founded on conservative Methodist precepts. The denomination launched on May 1, 2022. The Romania-Bulgaria Conference had already voted to leave the UMC, and in June the Evangelical Methodist Church in Croatia joined as a member church of the GMC.

**Mission – To make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.**

**Hopes for the GMC articulated by founding leaders:**

The Global Methodist Church hopes to be a movement of warm-hearted, like-minded, Jesus-loving, spirit-filled, Wesleyan, evangelical, orthodox, covenant-keeping Methodists who are joined together in mission.

- A church that is all about Jesus
- A church focused on discipleship using Wesleyan practices to “build up one another in love”
- A church with empowered and engaged laity
- A global, ethnically diverse church
- A church serious about evangelism and church planting
- A missional church pursuing Wesley’s goal of social holiness

The GM Church is something we all will recognize (familiar feel). It will be similar to the UMC in many ways. But it will fix the things that blatantly need to be fixed. There seems to be relative agreement that the following habits need to be kicked:

- The most expensive clergy deployment system on the planet aimed at giving jobs to tenured leaders regardless of their effectiveness.
- Keeping congregations in the fold by holding their property ransom.
- A top-down administrative system paired with a bottom-up method of funding.
- Crippling administrative overhead.

Add to the above list some new positive areas of focus:

- Church planting
- A strong mission partnership model
- Better catechesis (education for those coming into the faith)
- Renewal in the areas of prayer, worship, and the sacraments.
- Focus on young adults and communities of color.

#### **Expected features of the Global Methodist Church:**

- Start with a transitional organizational structure and polity, then hold a convening General Conference in 2024
- Very little bureaucracy, low overhead cost
- Lower apportionments (more \$ stays in the local church)
- No **trust clause**. Congregations will own their property / assets
- Churches will have more control over pastoral appointments
- Bishops' power and their terms will be limited, and their accountability assured
- Doctrines and practices will be classically Wesleyan – unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials
- Doctrines and practices will be grounded in orthodox, historical Christianity
- By the end of 2023, estimated between 250,000 and 500,000 US members
- By the end of 2023, estimate 100 to 200 West Ohio Churches will disaffiliate many likely join the GMC.
- Will draw pastors from Asbury Seminary, United Seminary, Wesley Seminary (at Indiana Wesleyan) and others.

#### **Advantages:**

- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- We will own our property (no trust clause)
- Smaller conference tithes (apportionments), 6.5% max.
- Familiar church culture, theology, worship practices, denominational polity, etc.
- A Wesleyan/Methodist re-boot
- A chance to be in on the formation of a new denomination
- Connection with churches, clergy, and laity we know and love
- A truly global denomination. Within 5 years the GMC will have churches in Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, Central America, etc.
- There is no cost to join the GMC. Only a majority vote of church members.
- It is simple and free to leave the GMC. Only a majority vote of church members
- Will have strong emphasis on recovery/addiction ministry but not specific prohibition against alcohol.
- Not expected to take a stance against secret societies (such as Masons, fraternities, sororities, etc)

#### **Negatives:**

- New denomination, not fully formed
- Pastor appointment pool is still forming, may be problematic in the first few years
- Very little administrative structure in place for the first few years. For example, currently only 1 bishop and no district superintendents. Transitional Leadership Council leading.
- Many details of the church's Book of Discipline will be added at the first General Conference. Additions and changes will be significant in the first decade.
- Denominational service agencies (the equivalent of UMW, UMM, Board of Global Ministries, etc.) will take time to get in place. Most will be in the form of strategic partnerships.