

# What Just Happened to My Church!?

Finding a Way Forward Now that the UMC Has  
Adopted “The Traditional Plan”

Presented by FUMC-A2 Leadership Council  
and the Way Forward Strategic Team  
May 5 and 11, 2019

# Agenda

1. Where things stand
2. The decision we need to make
3. What's FUMC leadership working on right now?

# Agenda

- 1. Where things stand**
2. The decision we need to make
3. What's FUMC leadership working on right now?

# UMC Decisions To-Date

- 2/2019: UMC General Conference voted to adopt the Traditional Plan; takes effect 1/2020
- 4/2019: UMC Judicial Council:
  - Upheld constitutionality of most of Traditional Plan
  - Approved “Gracious Exit” plan for local churches wishing to disaffiliate from UMC denomination

# **The Most Relevant Rules**

- The UMC Book of Discipline says that “the practice of homosexuality [is] incompatible with Christian teaching”
- Clergy may not be “self-avowed practicing homosexuals”
- Clergy may not “perform[] same-sex wedding ceremonies” or conduct “ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions”

# **Punishment Falls on the Clergy**

## Violation

“Disseminating doctrine contrary to” UMC teachings

Conducting same-sex marriage or any similar ceremony

Being a “SAPH” – new expanded definition

## Punishment

Discretionary, ranging from reprimand to loss of clergy credentials

1<sup>st</sup> time – suspended one year without pay

2<sup>nd</sup> time – Loss of clergy credentials

Loss of clergy credentials

# **Procedure for “Gracious Exit”**

- Meeting of FUMC members must approve disaffiliation by a 2/3 majority vote of those present
- The UMC Michigan Annual Conference must then approve FUMC decision by a simple majority vote
- Disaffiliation deadline is December 31, 2023

# **Mandatory Terms of “Gracious Exit”**

- Pay unpaid apportionments, capped at 12 months
- Pay exit fee in amount of 12 months of apportionments
- Pay our pro rata share of the unfunded pension obligations for UMC churches in Michigan
- We can keep our church buildings



# Agenda

1. Where things stand
- 2. The decision we need to make**
3. What's FUMC leadership working on right now?

# Options

- “Just Exit Now”
  - Join a new denomination or network of churches
  - Become non-denominational
- “One Last Try before Exit”
- “Stay In and Fight”
- “Stay In and Conform”

May 2019	Dialogue with other congregations and clergy
June 2019	Mich. Annual Conference
Sept 2019	Deadline to submit proposals for global UMC General Conference 2020
Jan 2020	The Traditional Plan comes into effect
May 2020	General Conference 2020
Dec 2023	Deadline for Gracious Exit

# Agenda

1. Where things stand
2. The decision we need to make
- 3. What's FUMC leadership working on right now?**

# Our Current Efforts

- New local church support giving option
- Dialogue with other congregations
- Investigating key questions
  - Apportionments escrow
  - Precise financial cost of exit, and going it alone moving forward
  - Wesley Foundation implications
  - UMC connectional ministries
  - Sense of congregation

# 5 Things You Can Do

1. Join one of the strategic groups
2. Pray
3. Stay informed; sign a petition
4. Engage with fellow members as we work to discern our future as a congregation
5. Ask Questions