

## Questions from Town Hall Meeting July 21, 2019

### Questions regarding OHUMC

1. What is the difference between reconciling ministries and full inclusion of LGBT persons?

*The Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is an organization of primarily United Methodist individuals and churches that are committed to reconciliation that leads to the healing and transformation of animosity into honest relationships that respect all God's children. RMN groups and individuals aspire to fulfill our baptismal covenant to recognize and utilize our privileges to resist oppression in whatever form it presents itself in our movement, church, and world. RMN is committed to policy change and the creation of long-term solutions and practices that create full inclusion in The United Methodist Church and our broader society. RMN works for full equality in membership, ordination, and marriage for God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender children. Churches and Sunday School classes and groups become affiliated with the organization so that those that care about LGBT persons can find a place that will provide love and support. They also move beyond welcoming to advocating, beyond accepting to transforming. Oak Hill UMC has three Sunday School classes that have affiliated with RMN.*

*Full inclusion as being discussed is what we will do at Oak Hill UMC. Such as, if our pastors chose to conduct an LGBT wedding, we would support them without further discussion. We would continue to pay the pastors' salaries if they were punished by the greater Church and/or had their credentials removed. We could offer our church as a site to host a worship service or other events regarding full inclusions and being intentionally diverse. We would place a rainbow on our sign or property to mark our decision to show support of the LGBTQ community. If an LGBT couple wants to get married in our church or renew their vows, it would be at the discretion of the pastors and with the blessing of our congregation. If an LGBT member wants to start the ordination process and we see them as qualified outside of being LGBT, then we will support their ordination. We would list our church on websites to tell LGBT persons as well as their friends and family that we are fully-inclusive and a supportive place for them. We will review our Sunday School, Preschool, and "Created by God" curriculum to ensure that it reflects our beliefs. OHUMC financial support of LGBTQ causes would be considered in the budget process. The Cornerstone will provide information on the UMC Next Movement and the resistance to the Traditionalist Plan so that members are up to date if they choose to participate.*

*Once we become a fully inclusive church, our church could actively participate in UMC Next, the Adam Hamilton group that was set up in opposition to the Traditionalist Plan. We could help shape the discussion about where the greater church goes and not sit on the sidelines waiting for others to tell us our choices.*

2. How many people on the church council? Are they the ones deciding this for us? Or are they deciding to bring it to the church members for a vote?

*There are 36 people who serve as the Church Council. They are the chairs or team leaders of the committees that assist in running the church. In addition, delegates and alternates that attend annual conference are also voting members of the Church Council. There is a chair, vice chair and secretary that run the Church Council with guidance from our pastors. The Reconciling Ministries Team will be bringing a resolution to church council this fall before the implementation of the traditionalist plan to ask if the Council would hold a church wide survey for Oak Hill UMC to support full inclusivity of LGBT persons.*

3. What percentage or how many people have already left the church?

*People leave the church for multiple reasons. The church has lost families on both sides of this issue over the last five years.*

4. Will traditional folks be welcome if the proposal passes? Will differing opinions be tolerated?

*Yes, all means all including those that may disagree with full inclusion.*

5. Can we have a conversation about the proper use of sexuality by Christians?

*We have passed this suggestion on to our Pastors.*

6. Is the ballot as it is currently written, mandating that pastors perform a same sex ceremony? The sentence portion reading “ allowing any two people” can be interpreted as a mandate.

*No, Pastors can decide who they want to marry and who they do not want to marry. It is their choice now and in the future. We have sent your suggestion to the Reconciling Ministries Team.*

7. How can we keep our church together even with our different views? Do the people who are Traditionalist still want to be part of our congregation if we are a reconciling church?

*We hope that we can all stay together as Oak Hill UMC. Whatever happens, many people will need to prayerfully make decisions.*

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## Financial Questions

1. What leverage (financially or otherwise) does the United States contingent of the UMC have to force a global change? The rest of the world benefits from the donor status of the U.S. Can we force the change?

*The Methodist Church has a constitution and regulations as to how funding flows. A budget is voted on at General Conference but .....*

*A bigger issue is that the voting delegates are allocated based on church membership but there is no audit of church members. In the United States, you pay apportionments based in part on membership which encourages keeping your records up to date. In third world countries, you are allocated funding based in part on membership which encourages you keep as many on the membership roles as possible. There is no audit for membership numbers at this time.*

2. Any discussion of withholding apportionments? (Similar to the Church of the Resurrection)

*Much of the apportionment dollars goes to mission work. There has been no formal discussion at withholding apportionments within our church. Apportionments have gone down across the denomination.*

3. Have we lost members? What has been the financial impact?

*It is difficult to determine the financial impact. We live in a growing community but our church is not growing at the same rate. In fact, we are at a standstill at best. Our church budget has gone up every year since 2014 when the marriage equality became the law of the land. However, we have lost people on both sides. Many people who would leave over the issue are usually active. Those members that are active tend to give more financially to the church. It seems logical that losing people from both sides of the issue would have an impact financially on the church.*

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### Questions regarding Scripture (sort of)

1. Please explain the dilemma that “man and woman” can only be married (as to scripture) and the idea of gay marriage. God loves all his children but is this a sin?

*When Jesus talked about marriage between one man and one woman, it was in the context of divorce. However, we allow people who are divorced to marry within our church and our pastors can also be divorced. Many of the Bible verses that are used to defend discrimination against the LGBTQ community describe violence or idol worship. The Bible seems to be silent on loving, monogamous same sex unions.*

2. If we are going to be inclusive, we need to be all in. If Jesus were here today, he’d say ‘What’s the fuss?’ God gave us free will to worship wherever.

*Thank you for your comment.*

3. Does Jesus agree with Ecclesiastical McCarthyism? Jesus was all-accepting as represented by his parable of the Good Samaritan.

*Thank you for your comment.*

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### Questions beyond OHUMC

1. If America’s representatives and lay people to the conference were in majority to compatibilist, why can’t we break from the current conference and form our own U.S. conference with agreement to financially send a percentage of financial support to those other countries as part of our mission outreach?

*It would take a constitutional amendment with a vote of 67% to make that change. Under the current delegation we seem to be at a 45% to 55% voting split.*

2. It is not inevitable that the church splits. I say revisit removal of exclusionary words.

*Groups have been trying this approach since 1972. The special called General Conference last February was supposed to deal with the issue once and for all. The Traditionalist Plan passed which caused more punishments for being inclusive. This is not possible under the current church structure.*

3. Why can’t there be a simple vote to allow each individual conference to make it’s own decisions about LGBTQ clergy and their ability to perform weddings of committed couples.

*That was proposed under the One Church Plan that failed 45% to 55% in February at General Conference.*

4. Our group goal is to support full inclusion in our church with some issues allowing other countries to mandate how we run our churches.

*Delegates for General Conference are set by membership numbers. The United States is losing membership and other parts of the world are gaining membership. However, there is no audit of actual membership in the United Methodist Church.*

5. How did the traditional plan pass? How will a “world church” address the countries in which homosexual acts are illegal and in some cases capital crimes.

*The Traditionalist Plan was supported by conservative churches in the south and in Africa, Philippines and Russia. They have more delegates to General Conference. The One Church Plan would have allowed each conference to make the decision based on their context. The One Church Plan failed. It is one of the reasons that the church is likely to split.*

6. What is the rationale for getting ahead of Hamilton’s timeline for the end of September? Why not wait to discern and digest what comes out of that and band with other congregations in our same situation? (Kyle and Maria Longley)

*The timing that is being discussed is being driven by when the Traditionalist Plan becomes the law which is January 2, 2020. The Reconciling Ministries Team believes if we don’t raise our hand and say we are against the traditionalist plan then we as a church are complicit with the discrimination of our LGBT family. We will be known by our silence on this matter. In addition, churches that have decided which way they are heading for full inclusion or not are working with other churches to help build the new church. We can sit on the sidelines or we can decide what direction our local church is heading and help this process move along more smoothly.*

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## Relating to Youth

1. Should age be addressed? Age of consent?

*Thank you for your comment. We have passed this along to the Reconciling Ministry Team.*

2. Our youth are evolving with the times. They are accepting gays and lesbians. What will happen to the church if we don't evolve?

*This is one of the questions that we should consider as we determine our path.*

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## Miscellaneous Questions

1. What is to be done with centralized functions such as UMCOR, UMM, AND UMW. How do we "break down" functions from the top.

*Legislation for the May 2020 General Conference is being drafted this summer. It is to be submitted in mid-September for consideration. We will know more by the end of the year in regard to possibilities in regard to centralized functions.*

2. Reach out to church members who have left (recently) or are considering leaving and sit down one-on-one to hear their concerns and encourage them to stay (They are a valued member of our family)

*Thank you for your comment. Conversations have been going on for over five years now.*

3. How very sad-sad- that we have come to this. God bless those who are destroying our wonderful church. How dare them.

*We hear you anger and pain at having to face this issue. It is painful to hear that you think that those that are bringing this issue forward are trying to destroy the church. The people that are working toward full inclusion are seeking justice. Our church discriminates against LGBT persons because the UMC refuse to allow them to get married in the church and they won't allow them to be Pastors according to the Book of Discipline. As many as forty percent of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, many of whom are on the streets either because their families shut them out of their homes or because they feel unsafe and/or unwanted in their family home. Research indicates that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens who experience high levels of rejection at home are more likely to attempt suicide, are at higher risk for depression, are more likely to use illegal drugs, and are more likely to be at high risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. By stating that these children are incompatible with Christian teachings we are continuing that harm. Jesus was concerned about the outcasts in society.*

4. I did not join the Methodist church because of the doctrine but because of what it did for the people and those who need help.

*Many of us joined for the tag line open heart, open minds, open doors and weren't aware of the doctrine. However, now that the church has doubled down on punishing those that want to treat everyone equally. Some us believe that we can no longer ignore the doctrine.*

5. How does this issue differ from other items in the book of discipline- I think are not followed- is it the punishment of pastors?

*First, this issue is about people not an action like gambling or drinking alcohol. We wouldn't stand for a rule that said people of color can't get married in our church or can't be pastors. Second, the Traditionalist Plan does force strict punishments for breaking the rules around this issue. The Traditionalist Plan will go into effect January 2, 2020.*

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### **Missions**

1. Good at missions and music and pastors and grace. Need to continue missions, be inclusive and spread God's word.

*Thank you for your comment.*

2. Not recruiting people. Difficult because of uncertainty about what (will happen.)
  - Must be inclusive if we want young people
  - People leaving because of controversy
  - Need to know where people stand

*Thank you for your comment*

3. Mission and goals: to get more members. Younger is important.

*Thank you for your comment*

4. Well-Traditional Music. Need to do:
  - Children's ministry and youth (Jr and Sr)
  - Contemporary music

*Thank you for your comment.*

5. Good of UMC welcoming each other in Christian manner without concern of LGBTQ and of other beliefs.

*Thank you for your comment*

6. Need to focus on Children's Ministries (SS Teachers) and Youth. Need more support. Pathways music better but still needs more help. Anna is great but need some more vocalists. We are good at outreach ministries.

*Thank you for your comment.*