Timeline

1968 - Merger with Evangelical United Brethren to become UMC

1972 - The newly adopted United Methodist Social Principles includes the first statement on homosexuality.

* The decades-long church debate on homosexuality begins.
* The sentence, "We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider it incompatible with Christian teaching," is added to the phrase, "Persons of homosexual orientation are persons of sacred worth.“
* The first reference to homosexual unions is made stating, "We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex."

1980 - The General Conference fails to add the phrase "no self-avowed, practicing homosexual therefore shall be ordained or appointed in The United Methodist Church" to the Discipline. The conference notes the denomination "has moved away from prohibitions of specific acts, for such prohibitions can be endless.“

1980 - General Conference adds to the Social Principles, “We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant, which is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a women.”

1984 - General Conference reverses its 1980 decision and declares that "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" are prohibited from serving as clergy.

1984 - General Conference adopts, as a standard for ordained clergy, commitment to “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness.”

1984 - Reconciling Network Ministries formed

* RNM equips and mobilizes United Methodists of all sexual orientations and gender identities to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves

1988 - General Conference changes Social Principles to read, “Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

1996 - General Conference adds three significant points to the church's position on homosexuality

* a footnote defining "self-avowed practicing homosexual“
* a declaration that ceremonies to celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist clergy or in United Methodist churches
* a call for the U.S. military not to exclude people from service "solely on the basis of sexual orientation.“

2000 - General Conference adds to the Social Principles the language, "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends.“

2001 - First instance of UMC Clergy coming out as a self-avowed practicing homosexual

2004 - A trial court of 13 pastors acquitted this Clergy of charges that could have resulted in the loss of ministerial orders

2004 - Chargeable offenses related to homosexuality are added to the Discipline.

2004 - Delegates endorse a statement of unity

* “As United Methodists, we remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement, and affirm our commitment to work together for the common mission of making disciples throughout the world.” Delegates reaffirmed the traditional denominational position on homosexual clergy and marriage in the church.

2008 - General Conference votes to oppose “all forms of violence or discrimination based on gender, gender identity, sexual practice or sexual orientation.”

2016 - General Conference asks for bishops to lead in light of overwhelming number of proposals. They authorize the Council of Bishops to create a commission to study how the church can find unity amid growing divisions over homosexuality.

* Council of Bishops creates the Commission on the Way Forward of bishops, pastors, and laity
  + 32 people from 9 nations
  + All jurisdictions
  + Wide spectrum of positions and theology

2016 - The Western Jurisdiction elects the Rev. Karen Oliveto as the denomination's first female bishop married to a woman.

2016 - Wesleyan Covenant Association was founded

* Theologically conservative leaders from United Methodist Church form group calling for "faithful obedience to the Bible and The Discipline of The [United Methodist Church](https://www.ipl.org/topics/united-methodist-church) on the part of all clergy and laity.“

2017 - The Council of Bishops announces a call to a special General Conference to be held Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis to act on their report based on recommendations from the Commission on a Way Forward.

2019 - General Conference holds Special Session

* The Commission on the Way Forward suggested 3 plans that were proposed
  + One Church Plan (recommended by Council of Bishops)
  + Traditional Plan
  + Connectional Conference Plan
* The Traditional Plan passed.
  + Expands the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” to include those “living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual.”
  + Prohibits bishops from consecrating, commissioning or ordaining self-avowed homosexuals.
  + Mandates penalties for clergy convicted at trial of performing a same-sex wedding. Those penalties include one year's suspension without pay for the first offense and loss of credentials for the second.
* Paragraph 2553 passed to allow those unhappy with the passage of the Traditional Plan a way to exit the denomination.
  + Enables local churches to disaffiliate with their property with a 2/3 vote of professing members
  + Cost: 2 years apportionments and unfunded pension liabilities.
  + Expires December 31, 2023. Churches have to be approved by their annual conference prior to this date.

2019 - UMC Next formed

* A coalition that includes Reconciling Ministries Network, Uniting Methodists and Mainstream UMC. They reject the Traditional Plan passed at General Conference and aim to eliminate the discriminatory language, restrictions, and penalties regarding LGBTQ clergy currently stated in The Book of Discipline.

2019 – 76% of U.S. annual conferences reject Traditional Plan and more that half pass resolutions in opposition to the Traditional Plan

2019 – Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone (now deceased) brings together a diverse group of UM leaders. This unofficial mediation team, assisted by mediator Kenneth Feinberg, Esq., produces the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation.

* The Protocol was placed in legislation for the 2020 General Conference (never voted on due to Covid)
  + The mediated agreement makes provisions for Traditionalists to leave the UMC and start a new Methodist denomination
  + Agrees to hold in abeyance complaints related to the denomination’s bans on same-sex weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy (effective immediately, however, it is binding only to the 16 signers)
  + 5 members of the mediation team have since rescinded their support of this agreement. We do not know if the Protocol or similar legislation will be presented at the next General Conference.
  + WCA has since rescinded its adherence to abeyance

2020 - Due to Covid, 2020 General Conference postponed until 2021

2021 - Due to Covid, 2021 General Conference postponed until 2022

2022 – Due to difficulty obtaining Visas because of Covid, 2022 General Conference postponed until 2024 to be held in Charlotte, NC.

2022 – The Global Methodist Church is launched

2022 – Judicial Council allows Jurisdictional Conferences to hold election of Bishops to alleviate the workload of overburdened Bishops.

* All 5 Jurisdictional Conferences pass three resolutions (resolutions are non-binding statements of support)
  + “Leading with Integrity”
    - Says that only lay and clergy members who intend to remain in The United Methodist Church are appropriately eligible to serve in governance roles
  + “Queer Delegates’ Call to Center Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People in the UMC”
    - Supports the election of episcopal leaders who commit to upholding this resolution and who will further justice and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ people including as laity, ordained clergy, in the episcopacy, and on boards and agencies
  + “Resolution in Support of a U.S. Regional Conference”
    - Supports, legislation that works to create Regional Conferences in Africa, Europe, the Philippines, and the United States

2022 - The Western Jurisdiction elects Rev. Dr. Cedrick Bridgeforth as the denomination's first male bishop married to a man.

Resources

Reconciling Ministry Network

[www.rmnetwork.org](http://www.rmnetwork.org/)

Way Forward Commission

[www.umc.org/en/content/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know](http://www.umc.org/en/content/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know)

Wesleyan Covenant Association

[www.wesleyancovenant.org](http://www.wesleyancovenant.org/)

Traditional Plan

[www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-did-the-judicial-council-decide-about-the-traditional-plan](http://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-did-the-judicial-council-decide-about-the-traditional-plan)

UMCNext

[www.umcnext.com](http://www.umcnext.com/)

North Central Jurisdictional Conference

[www.eocumcnews.com/2022/11/05/north-central-jurisdictional-conference-2022-recap](http://www.eocumcnews.com/2022/11/05/north-central-jurisdictional-conference-2022-recap)

Global Methodist Church

[www.globalmethodist.org](http://www.globalmethodist.org/)