

# COVENANT METHODIST CHURCH – AFFILIATION PROJECT

## Introduction to the Process

When Covenant disaffiliated from the UMC, the Church Council announced that they would wait at least a year before considering any affiliation.

During the first quarter of 2024, the Executive Committee initiated the process and drafted a timeline for considering possible affiliation. That timeline began prior to the one-year anniversary of disaffiliation, concluding in October 2024. It involved appointing a Task Force in April to explore the different Methodist denominations. The Task Force was allotted 3 months to assemble information and make their presentation. The Task Force issued their report on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Executive Committee members met on June 9<sup>th</sup>, the first available day when all members were available after receiving the Task Force report. At that time a decision was made to accelerate the timeline. Although summer is not the best time to schedule churchwide meetings as attendance is historically lower during those months, the Committee heard from several members of their desire to move this issue forward.

### Process for Review and Consideration of Affiliation

A packet is being made available to all members of the congregation. Paper copies are being distributed at Sunday morning services, during Sunday School, and will be available in the Church Office. In addition, the information will be available on the website.

The task force data is summarized on the “WESLEYAN / METHODIST DENOMINATIONAL COMPARISON CHART”. This summary includes ten denominational affiliations. The last is the current independent methodist church status as we operate today.

Congregation members are urged to review the information, ask questions and decide for themselves what they consider the top three options for moving forward. In addition, members should indicate the criteria they view as the three most important in coming to a decision.

An “Indication of Member Preference” form is included in each packet for congregation members to complete after their review of the task force information. Once completed, those are to be returned to the church. This one-page form includes ranking by congregants of possible affiliations or remaining independent. It also asks for the top three areas of importance in selecting a future path.

“Indication of Member Preference” forms are due back to the Church no later than July 7<sup>th</sup>.

The congregation’s “Indication of Member Preference” will be used by the Executive Committee to reduce the number of possible options from 11 included on the Comparison Chart to the top 3. The Executive Committee intends to use this as a basis to make a recommendation to the Church Council of the three affiliation options.

The Committee’s recommendation will include inviting representatives from the top choices to meet with our congregation to provide details of affiliation and answer questions from the congregation. The members of the Executive Committee do not view it as prudent to simply vote on the information

contained in the matrix. Rather, the committee wants the congregation to have an opportunity to participate in vetting the options for the future of the Church.

If there is an overwhelming selection of a denomination, then the recommendation may be for only the top two choices to make presentations.

A six-week period has been set to schedule presentations to our congregation by the top affiliations. We allotted this amount of time to accommodate the availability of representatives from those affiliations.

Assuming those affiliations can meet the timeline for making presentations, then the Church Council can consider a motion to approve a vote on affiliation.

Any decision on affiliation will be a congregation membership decision by a required affirmation percentage (similar to the methodology used in the UMC disaffiliation) of attendees at a Church called meeting. This is not an Executive Committee or Church Council decision.

It is the desire of the Executive Committee to have a process that brings unity and transparency to our church. The Executive Committee strives to have a process that alienates as few members as possible. Hopefully a vote on affiliation does not further divide the church as the disaffiliation did. Rather, by providing everyone with time to review the options before us and indicating their preference, we will build more unity and strength.

### **Timeline for Consideration of Affiliations**

<b>Process</b>	<b>Original Timeline</b>	<b>Revised Timeline</b>
Select Task Force Members	March 31, 2024	March 31, 2024
Initial Task Force Meeting	April 15, 2024	April 15, 2024
Task Force Begins Fact Gathering	April 15, 2024	April 22, 2024
Task Force Completes Fact Gathering	July 15, 2024	May 22, 2024
Executive Committee Reviews Task Force Report	July 28, 2024	June 9, 2024
Circulate Initial Survey of Congregation	August 4, 2024	June 16, 2024
Survey Reply Deadline	August 18, 2024	July 7, 2024
Executive Committee Compile Survey Results	August 19, 2024	July 8, 2024
Church Council Meeting	August 25, 2024	July 14, 2024
Presentations by Affiliations	September 3, 2024	July 21, 2024
Beginning Ending	October 13, 2024	August 25, 2024
Church Called Meeting for Affiliation	October 27, 2024	September 8, 2024

## WESLEYAN / METHODIST DENOMINATIONAL COMPARISON CHART

Denomination	Website	Doctrine	Trust Clause	Bishops	Clergy Appointment	Appointments	Size	Extra Info
*United Methodist	<a href="https://www.umc.org/">https://www.umc.org/</a>	** Wesleyan Issue: Lack of accountability	Yes, local church holds property for conference	Elected for life	Yearly appointed by Bishop/D.S., some congregational input. Guaranteed appointments	7-15% of budget (% varies by annual conference)	13 million globally, 6.2 million in U.S., 30,000 churches (2020)	Process of disaffiliation: a congregation may disaffiliate by majority vote of its church conference with no monetary penalty. Marriage: one man/one woman Welcomes all persons while maintaining traditional, biblical teachings regarding sexual relations Missions planned 3 yr affiliation process. Mostly small rural churches who average 116 members. Opposed to gay marriage & clergy. No: alcohol, smoking, dancing, movies, card playing
*Global Methodist	<a href="https://globalmethodist.org/">https://globalmethodist.org/</a>	** Wesleyan adds Nicene and Apostles Creed. More robust accountability	None	Bishop (not lifetime, TBD at convening General Conference)	Appointed by Bishop/D.S., more congregational input, possible congregational search. No guaranteed appointment. Women allowed to serve as clergy	2% of operating income, with a 6.5% cap	2024: 4500 congregations; 240,000 to 400,000 members in U.S. Trinity Conference (E Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas), 370+ churches. Trinity in Ruston joined in May.	
*Free Methodist	<a href="http://fmcusa.org">http://fmcusa.org</a>	** Wesleyan	Yes, local church holds property but any new property is subject to trust clause	Elected to 4-year terms, re-electable;	Appointed by Ministerial Appointments Committee chaired by Bishop; no guaranteed appointment; women can be ordained; serve until change is requested	10-13% of previous year's income	95% are outside US; 830 congregations in US	
*Wesleyan	<a href="https://www.wesleyan.org">https://www.wesleyan.org</a>	** Wesleyan	Yes, local church holds property for conference	One General Superintendents, 4-year terms, re-electable;	Congregational call system (congregations call their own pastors)	11% of income	125,000 members, 1500 churches in U.S. (2019); only 3 in Louisiana (W Monroe, Sport, Pollack which are in the Mountain/Plains District	No: tobacco, alcohol
*Nazarene	<a href="https://nazarene.org">https://nazarene.org</a>	** Wesleyan-Holiness	Yes, local church holds property for conference Cannot withdraw as a body or in any way sever its relationship.	Six General Superintendents, 4-year terms, re-electable	Congregational call system; however, DS and district advisory board must approve. Women can be ordained.	15% of income, includes pastor's retirement	2.6 million globally. 579,000 members. 5,280 churches in U.S. (2022)	No: tobacco, alcohol, other intoxicants, dancing; Abortion only for life of the mother Currently condemns LGBTQ+ persons however they are going towards affirming same - on same path as UMC (per Pam)
Methodist Collegiate	<a href="https://www.methodistcollegiate.org/">https://www.methodistcollegiate.org/</a>	** Wesleyan	No, autonomous	None	Congregational call system (p 31 of MCC Book of Doctrine). Dean plays a connecting role with pastoral openings.	None (pp 36-38 of MCC Book of Doctrine) Churches must share the cost of maintaining the denomination. Cost was not listed.	3 member churches, all in Texas; White's Chapel has 20,000 members	Moderate (centrist), not conservative. Must agree to govern themselves by a common notebook. Churches will maintain control of their financial assets.

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Evangelical	<a href="https://emchurch.org/">https://emchurch.org/</a>	** Wesleyan	No affiliated congregations own their properties. May disaffiliate from EMC with their properties intact.	General Superintendent	Congregational call system to Superintendent who meets for a general interview... S'dent makes offer for a minimum 2 year appointment. At end of 2 years it's at the discretion of both parties if the relationship continues. Conference Superintendent & Conference work with churches to find & appoint pastors.	10% of regular general fund income each month = conference support;	91 congregations in US 4 in Louisiana and another in the affiliation process; 5 Global Conferences bringing global church affiliations to nearly 500	Gay (non-celibate) clergy prohibited. Church Board of Trustees serves as the church's legal entity. Conferences are more worship than business. No behavioral restrictions - members are expected to live lives of holiness.
*Congregational Methodist	<a href="http://www.cm-church.org">www.cm-church.org</a>	** Wesleyan	No Church sets its own budget.	One president, minimal authority	Congregational call system	Decided by local church	15,000 members, 150 churches in U.S.; 10 in Louisiana	Gay clergy prohibited. Evangelical
*Association of Independent	<a href="https://aim2020.com/">https://aim2020.com/</a>	** Wesleyan	No Self governing.	None	Congregational call system Women allowed.	Not officially. Voluntary No fee to join.	40 churches in US. (2019) 2 in La - Indian Bayou & Oak Ridge	Evangelical
*Southern Methodist	<a href="https://thesmc.org">https://thesmc.org</a>	** Wesleyan	No	1 President and 4 Vice Presidents	Must have graduated from Southern Methodist College. Congregational call system 4 year limit for a pastor in a local church. No female clergy allowed.	Not officially. Voluntary	In 2017, 85 churches and 3,200 members; 6 in Louisiana: Campiti, Amite, Stonewall, Coushatta, Haughton, W Monroe.	No: tobacco, illegal drugs, alcohol of any kind, fighting, quarreling, self-indulgence. Singing songs or reading books which do not tend to the knowledge of God is not allowed.
Independent	<a href="https://covenantimc.org/">https://covenantimc.org/</a>	** Wesleyan	N/A	N/A	None - church must find its own pastor	None		No organizational connections.

Sources: Good News Magazine Article by Tom Lambrecht, Dec 8, 2022 and Denominational Websites.

\* Officially according to each churches policies/doctrines; none of these ordain clergy who are self-professing/practicing homosexuals or transgender, although in practice the UMC has.

\*\* Wesleyan theology, otherwise known as Wesleyan-Arminian theology, or Methodist theology, is a theological tradition in Protestant Christianity based upon the ministry of the 18th-century evangelical reformer brothers John Wesley and Charles Wesley. More broadly it refers to the theological system inferred from the various sermons (e.g. theForty-four Sermons), [1] theological treatises, letters, journals, diaries, hymns, and other spiritual writings of the Wesleys and their contemporary coadjutors such as John William Fletcher.

\*\*\* Note that regarding clergy retirement and health care each denomination varies significantly.

Questions or need more info? Covenant Affiliation Task Force Members are here to help.

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