

NEW EXPRESSIONS WORLDWIDE  
(THE N.E.W. PLAN)



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# DISCIPLINARY PETITION

Suggested Title: Birthing New Methodist Denominations — The New Expressions Worldwide (N.E.W.) Plan

Discipline Paragraph: New

General Church Budget Implications: Yes, Needs New Funding

Global Implications: Yes

Add a new paragraph between existing ¶¶125 and 126 and renumber subsequent paragraphs accordingly:

## [NEW ¶] Section — The Churches in the 21st Century

1. Faithfulness in Serving the Present Age — In order to faithfully carry out the Church's mission in a global context, The United Methodist Church will give birth to four new denominations as fresh expressions of the Wesleyan legacy. These new expressions will share a common heritage, grounded in the Wesleyan view of grace and holiness, commitment to mission, and connectionalism. However, each denomination will have a different understanding of how this heritage faithfully "serves the present age."
2. The present conflict over homosexuality is rooted in deep disagreement over Christology (understanding of the person and ministry of the resurrected Christ Jesus of Nazareth), biblical interpretation (understanding of the role of holy Scripture), ecclesiology (understanding of how church is organized), and social ethics (understanding of the church's role in society). Rather than continuing the conflict, which does significant harm to the vitality of the denomination and local congregations, The United Methodist Church lays itself aside. True to the covenant prayer of the Wesleys, we yield our allegiance to a single denomination for the sake of faithful employment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and reimagine our future ministry and mission. Inspired by the early church, particularly the Council of Jerusalem, we choose to part ways, commending each other's ministry to the grace of God (Acts 15).

3. *New Global Methodist Denominations* — The United Methodist Church creates four new global denominations, each responsible for developing its own Plan of Organization. These new denominations are: Traditionalist Methodist Church, Moderate Methodist Church, Progressive Methodist Church, and the Liberation Methodist Church (names are temporary placeholders until the new denominations organize and self-determine). These denominations may be in full communion with each other and part of a global convention or worldwide Wesleyan Communion.
4. *Plan of Separation* — A Plan of Separation shall be presented to a special General Conference, occurring before 2024, that dissolves The United Methodist Church and attends to all practical, legal, and financial considerations related to this dissolution.
5. *Transitional Council* — There shall be a Transitional Council that develops the above-named Plan of Separation according to the values of self-determination, equitable distribution of general church assets, restorative justice, and reparations.
6. *Moratorium* — There shall be an immediate moratorium on charges, complaints, and church trials related to ¶161, ¶304.3, ¶ 310.2, ¶341.6, ¶613.19, ¶806.9, and ¶2702.1(b).
7. *Precedence and Effective Date* — All provisions of this paragraph shall take effect upon the adjournment of General Conference 2020. All provisions of this paragraph shall take precedence over any conflicting provisions or paragraphs in the Book of Discipline not in the Constitution.
8. *Severability* – If one provision of this paragraph is found unconstitutional, any other provisions not dependent upon that provision shall be severable and implemented as passed by the General Conference.

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Jay Williams, Alexandre da Silva Souto, Alka Lyall, Sean McRoberts, and Joy Butler for UM-Forward



# THE N.E.W. PLAN EXPLAINED

## New Global Methodist Denominations

Upon adjournment of the 2020 General Conference, The United Methodist Church gives birth to four new global Methodist denominations, according to disciplinary Petition XXXXXXXX (Birthing New Methodist Denominations — The New Expressions Worldwide N.E.W. Plan). These denominations are:

- > *Traditionalist Methodist Church, grounded in preserving traditionalism and biblical inerrancy.*
- > *Moderate Methodist Church, grounded in personal salvation, conversion, and missions.*
- > *Progressive Methodist Church, grounded in the social gospel.*
- > *Liberation Methodist Church, grounded in Gospel-centered, anti-colonial, and intersectional justice that intentionally empowers PoC+Q+T [people of color + queer + trans] people.*

*These denominational names and descriptions are temporary placeholders until the new denominations organize and self-determine.*


## Plan of Separation

A Plan of Separation shall be presented to a special General Conference, occurring before 2024, that dissolves The United Methodist Church and attends to all practical, legal, and financial considerations related to this dissolution. The Plan of Separation shall be governed by the principles of self-determination, equitable distribution of general church assets, restorative justice, and reparations. The initial Plan of Separation will be developed by the Transitional Council — in consultation with the Council of Bishops, General Council on Finance and Administration, Wespath, the Connectional Table, the General Commission on Religion and Race, and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women — with the assistance of an independent, professional mediator. The final Plan of Separation, as presented to the special General Conference, shall be achieved through independent, professional arbitration.

## Transitional Council

There shall be a Transitional Council that develops the above-named Plan of Separation according to the values of self-determination, equitable distribution of general church assets, restorative justice, and reparations.

- *Composition — Each of the four denominations will name 5 individuals, which shall include at least two lay individuals per denomination. The President of the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church will also be a member of the Transitional Council. Upon approval*



*of this legislation, at the 2020 General Conference, a General Secretary will convene a "caucus" of each new denomination for the sole purpose of electing members to the Transitional Council.*

- *Organization and Staffing — The Transitional Council will be empowered to organize and staff itself, according to its needs, in order to steward the Plan of Separation. After determining its human capital requirements, the Transitional Council may hire or temporarily co-opt staff from general agencies and annual conference staff.*
- *Mutual Accountability and Transparency — The Transitional Council will operate in such a way that it remains accountable to the four new denominations — and in communication with Council of Bishops, General Council on Finance and Administration, Wespath, the Connectional Table, the General Commission on Religion and Race, and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women — at minimum through monthly briefings.*

## Funding

The General Council on Finance and Administration, in consultation with the Council of Bishops, shall fully fund the work of the Transitional Council — including meeting costs, assessments and research, mediation, and arbitration.

## General Principles

1. *Dissolution — The United Methodist Church is dissolved.*
2. *Legality — Each new global denomination is organized in such a way that adheres to the governing laws of the territories in which the denomination fulfills its mission.*
3. *Worldwide Communion — Denominations are part of a global convention or worldwide Wesleyan Communion, and may be in full communion with one another.*
4. *Self-Determination — Denominations can organize under their own constitutional, connectional, and conferencing mechanism, as well as their own understanding of ordination and clergy membership. Each denomination will determine its own need for an episcopacy, general and regional conferences, and judicial process.*
  - Current annual conferences of The United Methodist Church will be attached to one of the four new denominations. There is no mandate that the general and district superintendency would continue in new denominations.
  - Local churches disagreeing with their annual conference's decision could decide by  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority vote of a church conference to align with a different denomination. All local church assets, and liabilities, as well as real and personal, tangible and intangible property, would be retained by that local church.
  - Clergy would decide with which denomination to align. By default, they would remain part of their annual conference in whichever expression their annual conference affiliates, unless they request to affiliate with a different denomination.

5. *Self-Funding — Each denomination will fund itself.*
6. *General Agencies — General agencies would become independent 501(c)3 organizations according to U.S. law, with their own self-perpetuating boards of directors, and will retain their current liabilities, assets and reserves. Some agencies may choose to merge or dissolve. Their services could be offered to new denominations through agreement negotiated between each agency and each new denomination.*
7. *Pensions — Pension liabilities would persist, and be transferred proportionally to the new denomination that an annual conference or a local church joins. It may be determined that the pro rata share of any aggregate unfunded pension obligations for at-risk congregations—particularly historically marginalized congregations—are forgiven.*
8. *Equitable Distribution of Common Assets — General church assets are divided equitably.*
9. *Restorative Justice and Reparations — Historically marginalized and particularly vulnerable churches, as determined jointly by the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, are set up for success worldwide. Injustices of colonialism, institutional racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, and misogyny are repaired through financial re-investment.*
10. *Trust — Property held in trust is released to the entities that have stewarded those entrusted properties. Local congregations and annual conferences retain real and personal, tangible and intangible property, and are provided easement in transitioning to new denominations.*
11. *Urgency and Modulation — With sensitivity to the varying needs across the connection, individual congregations would be granted sufficient time to transition — until the special General Conference.*
12. *Moratorium — There shall be an immediate moratorium on charges, complaints, and church trials related to ¶161, ¶304.3, ¶ 310.2, ¶341.6, ¶613.19, ¶806.9, and ¶2702.1(b).*
13. *Precedence and Effective Date — All provisions of this paragraph shall take effect upon the adjournment of General Conference 2020. All provisions of this paragraph shall take precedence over any conflicting provisions or paragraphs in the Book of Discipline not in the Constitution.*
14. *Severability – If one provision of this paragraph is found unconstitutional, any other provisions not dependent upon that provision shall be severable and implemented as passed by the General Conference.*

