

## Questions for Dan Parr from the Perspective Email

Got some questions from perspective for Sunday 6/26

I have the following questions:

### **1. What are the ramifications of Hillside taking no action? No vote?**

Answer:

Hillside would remain in the United Methodist Church and be subject to all the changes to the Book of Discipline which will occur in the future. Then it would be too late to leave the denomination as Paragraph 2553 has an expiration date and the Trust Clause would remain operative.

### **2. What guarantee do we as Hillside have that a request to disaffiliate would be approved?**

Answer:

None. However, up to this point the Conference Board of Trustees has acted fairly and in accordance with Paragraph 2553. Annual Conference 2022 voted 92.8% to approve the first wave of disaffiliations. So, there is a reasonable expectation of continued fairness from the CBOT.

### **3. What is the likelihood that the Protocol will not be voted on in 2024 as a way forward?**

Answer:

The Protocol legislation is properly before GC2024 for consideration. That being said, the committee process at General Conference used to determine what legislation comes to the plenary floor for a vote is complicated. There is no guarantee the Protocol will come to the floor, but it very likely will. In early June 2022 the centrist and progressive signers of the Protocol and associated groups such as UMCNext withdrew their previously announced support for it. They now support alternative proposals. So, there is a real question whether the Protocol will pass. A related questions is how the Protocol will be amended during the legislative process. The WCA continues to work for the passage of the Protocol particularly for those in U.S. annual conferences where the bishop and board of trustees have enacted requirements making Paragraph 2553 cost prohibitive and for churches in central conferences outside the U.S. which cannot afford a buyout. Many now doubt the Protocol will pass. Therefore, a church desiring to disaffiliate should use Paragraph 2553 while it is still available and not wait for a possibility which may never occur.

**4. The progressive view is church property can be had for "pennies on the dollar". What percentage of its value was the \$13.1 million that Mt. Bethel had to pay to settle?**

Answer:

I do not know the full fair market value of Mt. Bethel's real estate, its liquid assets, its furnishings, and other assets which are subject to the Trust Clause. I do know that had Mt. Bethel been able to disaffiliate using Paragraph 2553 during Annual Conference 2022, its buyout number would have been more in the range of 2.5 to 3 million dollars.

**5. Is the value of the cost to disaffiliate an objective formula or an arbitrary amount set by the Bishop?**

Answer:

The cost of disaffiliation is ultimately set by the Conference Board of Trustees as Paragraph 2553 gives it the authority to set conditions not inconsistent with 2553. As of the writing of this answer, the buyout contains two parts. We are told both parts are an objective formula. First, is the payment of the current 12 months of apportionments and an additional 12 months of apportionments. Apportionments are set by the conference each year. The second disaffiliation payment is the payment of a potential future unfunded pension liability. Wespath (the pension and benefit company that currently handles those matters for the UMC and will also for the GMC) provides the annual conference on a quarterly basis the total dollar figure for the entire annual conference representing the potential future exposure. The conference then uses a formula to determine each church's share of the future potential unfunded pension liability. Unfortunately, the conference has chosen not to share that formula, how it is implemented, or whether the formula changes. In summary, we are told the calculation is an objective calculation, but we are not given the formula so we cannot verify it is being applied objectively.

Questions from the Perspective Email Address

**1) The question I would like to have answered is: How do you reconcile 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." If there is no new heaven and new earth, then it is loving to allow people to live the lifestyle they choose. But we know that people who chose a life of sin will NOT inherit the kingdom. As a church, how are we loving them if we condone their lifestyle?**

Answer:

In response to this question, all I can say is that we are called to speak the truth in love. The Bible is truth. See John 17:12-19 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. We cannot rely on our own human understanding and certainly not the changing cultural definition of right and wrong.

**2) So, my understanding of the "Great Divide" is ordainment of UMC Clergy Persons. My understanding is that it is the "living in the sin and practice of homosexuality" that is the issue that should disallow this practice. My question is this: How does "living in the sin" of homosexuality differ from "living in the sin of divorce and remarriage"? Our pulpits are filled with divorced and remarried persons. I know and love many of them. Will this be their future?**

Answer:

There are three false assumptions contained in this question. The first concerns what issues are involved. There is more at issue than ordination. At the heart of this issue is the authority of the Bible, its interpretation, and its impact on how we live out our faith. Once we get beyond those questions, then the issues are: ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals, the approving as "candidates for ministry" of self-avowed practicing homosexuals, the performance same sex weddings by our clergy, and same sex weddings being performed in our churches. The common thread of these last issues is celebrating and recognizing as holy what the Bible does not so recognize or celebrate.

The second false assumption is that every divorce and remarriage is sinful. That is not what the Bible teaches. Both Jesus and Paul affirmed the Old Testament grounds for divorce; that the Old Testament allowed divorce for adultery and for neglect or abuse, i.e., the breaking of the marriage covenant by one covenant partner. Both Jesus and Paul affirmed remarriage after a valid divorce. Therefore, the Bible does not teach all divorce is a sin. For a full scholarly discussion of this topic, see: *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context*, David Instone-Brewer (Eerdmans Publishing 2002).

The third false assumption is that to the extent we have failed to live as God instructs regarding one area of human sexuality that is somehow a license to fail in

another. We cannot fall prey to this fallacious thinking. To do so would lead us far from the holiness to which we have been called. Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Peter 1:16; Lev 20:26; Matthew 5:48.

Having said that, there are far too many divorces today and many are not consistent with Biblical teaching. This question requires an answer far more extensive than I can provide in this context. But here are a few thoughts in an attempt to directly answer your actual question regarding how engaging in homosexual behavior is different from a non-Biblical divorce. Divorce followed by remarriage is not contrary to the gendered creation of male and female. Homosexual behavior is. Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:18-25. We do not deny that a non-Biblical divorce is sinful. To the contrary, those supporting homosexual behavior deny such behavior is a sin. Similarly, many divorced persons repent from that behavior and vow not to repeat it. The same is not true of homosexual behavior. This leads to the point that divorce and remarriage is not a repetitive sin committed over and over again. No one celebrates the sin of divorce; we do not gather in church for a divorce worship service and have a banquet following in honor of divorce. Even a marriage following a Biblically invalid divorce can be redeemed by God when the husband and wife repent and seek God's blessing on their union.

Questions from Cards during session on 6/26

**Can bishops of the UMC who are appointed for life do something against the current covenant can't they be "impeached"?**

Answer:

There is a complaint process designed to hold bishops accountable. However, bishops are disciplined at the jurisdictional level where a bishop has significant influence. As such very few charges against bishops proceed. Examples of this are the multiple charges which were filed against Bishop Karen Oliveto and Bishop Joseph Sprague and were summarily dismissed.

**Why are churches who are wanting to stay under the Book of Discipline and the traditional plan having to pay to disaffiliate? Those who are changing our current beliefs should have to pay.**

Answer:

Paragraph 2553 is the only current pathway for churches to leave the UMC. It provides for a buyout payment. Those desiring to change church theology and teaching have control of the executive branch the UMC and therefore control

whether the Book of Discipline is enforced. They will not leave. Ultimately, they know they will be able to change the Book of Discipline in the future once traditionalists leave the UMC. Therefore, the only way to ensure your church remains faithful to Biblical orthodoxy is to disaffiliate.

**Has it been considered that many will just leave “church” altogether?**

Answer:

Yes. As our culture strays further from the teaching of the Bible, many have left the church in favor of the allure of our post-Christian culture. We should contend for Biblical orthodoxy despite this trend. The alternative is to allow the church to adopt the same moral values as the culture. Even a surface level reading of the Bible shows this is folly.

**Are the pensions of current United Methodist ministers transferrable to the Global Methodist Church?**

Answer:

Yes. Wespath has stated so in writing many times.

**Would changing our theology result in the loss of young members?**

Answer:

No. The evidence suggests the exact opposite is true; that remaining faithful to orthodox theology attracts younger people who desire to know truth. In fact, the fastest growing churches with the highest number of young members are churches with very traditional theology. Think of the non-denominational churches. They are where young folks worship and are almost universally conservative theologically. Two local examples of this are North Point Church and Free Chapel. Similarly, 12Stone is a Wesleyan church with theology regarding human sexuality exactly like the current UMC position. It has 7 campuses and over 30,000 members. It is a highly diverse congregation- by gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomics. These churches are not negatively impacted by having traditional theology.

Moreover, changing theology does not result in a flood of new young members. The Presbyterian Church USA and Episcopal Church both changed their theology regarding human sexuality about 10 to 15 years ago and both have seen a drastic and accelerated loss of young members.

The PCUSA removed the language that marriage is between one man and one woman in 2010 (<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2011/5/10/presbyterian-church-us-approves-change-ordination/>) It then adopted their version of UMC “One Church Plan” in 2014. Until these changes it mirrored the decline of the UMC at 1-2% per year. After adoption of the One Church Plan, their loss of membership actually accelerated to 4-5% per year. (<https://juicyecumenism.com/2019/02/19/personal-testimonies-pcusa-elcas-one-church-plans/>). Since its peak, the PCUSA has lost 72% of its members (<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2021/4/21/pcusa-2020-statistics-show-no-change-decline-rate/>).

The Episcopal Church has suffered a similar fate, losing over half of its membership since its peak (<https://www.generalconvention.org/fast-facts>). Its membership was relatively stable in 1990s and then after adoption of the Episcopal version of the One Church plan in 2000 and 2004 deep decline set in. Marriages declined 84% in last 20 years from 38,913 to 6,128. (<https://covenant.livingchurch.org/2020/10/19/facing-episcopal-church-decline-the-latest-numbers/>) Child Baptisms declined 70% in last 20 years from 56,167 to 17,672. Currently only 14% of its members have children under 18. Ryan Burge PhD, researcher from Eastern Illinois University stated in a demographic analysis the Episcopal church will be dead in two decades. Rev. Dr. Dwight Zscheile, an Episcopal priest and professor stated: “The overall picture is dire, not one of decline as much as demise.” (<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2020/10/16/2019-parochial-reports-show-continued-decline-and-a-dire-future-for-the-episcopal-church/>)

### **How is sexuality different from role of woman than “what the bible says” when Paul says women should be silent?**

#### Answer:

There are 2 incorrect assumptions in this question. The first assumption is that the Bible teaches women should not be leaders, preachers, teachers, evangelists, etc. The Bible simply does not teach this. This incorrect assumption comes from what is called proof texting. Proof texting is improper Biblical interpretation caused by taking a verse out of context and creating a theology or teaching from it. One must read the entire Bible, taking all verses regarding a topic into account. In doing this, we can arrive at a more complete understanding. This also allows us to see what appears to be a contradiction is not. The verse from 1 Timothy 2 referenced in the question is a perfect example. How could Paul make that statement and then in many, many other places in scripture specifically state women are to be leaders in the church?

For a good primer on this subject, watch the following 3 videos. The last video specifically addresses the passage from 1 Timothy 2 referenced in the question.

Women and Ministry, Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2M6HswlH3A>

Women and Ministry, Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5VQe\\_nuNJg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5VQe_nuNJg)

Why Women Must Learn in Quietness and Submission: Xenophon of Ephesus and 1 Timothy  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsyQlaC0btY>

The second incorrect assumption in this question is that we are applying the Bible differently regarding these two topics, i.e., that we are applying Biblical teaching regarding homosexuality as written but are not applying Biblical teaching regarding women in church leadership as written. This is not accurate. First, as seen in the videos above and the scriptural references below, the clear teaching in the New Testament is that from the earliest founding of the church women were in fact church leaders. This was a radical counter-cultural teaching by Jesus and Paul in the context of first century Palestine. Unfortunately, the church moved away from this Biblical teaching due to cultural influences and then ultimately moved back to what the Bible had always taught. The opposite is true of homosexual behavior. The clear teaching of the Bible is against homosexual behavior. The church maintained that teaching for almost 2,000 years. It is only in the past 50 years that cultural influences are seeking to cause a change. In both instances, traditional orthodox theology resists cultural forces attempting to change the clear teaching of the Bible.

There are five categories of teachings in the Bible proving women were leaders in the early church.

A. Clear biblical reference to women in church leadership roles in New Testament.

Prophets-daughters of Philip

Teachers- Priscilla taught Apollos Acts 18

Deacons- Phoebe Romans 16 and Tabitha Acts 9.

Apostles- Paul called Junia great among the apostles. Rom 16:7

Church organizers/planters: Lydia Acts 16

Women missionaries: Rom 16:3,7,15

B. Paul recognized women as church leaders

1-Junia was called an Apostle Rom 16:7

2- Euodia and Syntyche called “co-workers” by Paul in Philippians 4. The word he used was “sunergos” which he used when referencing male apostles.

3- Paul expected them to “prophecy” in church. 1 Cor 11:5-10.

C. Bible describes women as disciples; see Acts 9:1-2 and Acts 9:36.

D. The case of Tabitha

Tabitha-Acts 9:36-43; called a disciple; at her death Peter came to Joppa immediately because she was a leader of that community; brings her back to life. Luke calls her by 2 names, Tabitha and Dorcas, one Greek and one Aramaic, meaning she was minister to Jews and Greeks.

E. Positive statements about women- counter/cultural for that time.  
Gal 3:28 and Rom 16

### **Have some other national UMC groups already announced disaffiliation?**

#### Answer:

Only churches and pastors can disaffiliate using Paragraph 2553. So national UMC groups cannot disaffiliate. However, all traditional UMC groups (WCA, IRD, Good News, etc.) have stated support for disaffiliation.

### **How do the centrist and progressive branches square/reconcile their views of biblical inaccuracy and relevance based on the century’s long canonization of scripture?**

#### Answer:

For the most part, centrists and progressives adopt the view of scripture being espoused by Adam Hamilton. First, Hamilton states scripture can be placed into one of three buckets. One such bucket is that the scripture was true for the people of that time but is no longer binding on us today. This allows him to ignore as passe or outdated scripture passages contrary to his views. Second, he holds a view of inspiration of scripture which allows for current “inspiration” to take precedence over the traditional/historical teaching of the Bible. In that way, current cultural views allow the reader to ignore scripture or reinterpret it based on the “new and more enlightened” thinking.

### **What happens to the Elders and PT Local Pastors who should have pensions?**

#### Answer:

Clergy transferring from the UMC to the GMC will have their pensions transferred to the plan established by the GMC. Wespath (the pension and benefit company



that currently handles those matters for the UMC and will also for the GMC) has affirmed this will occur.

**For the GMC what is the plan to protect potential victims of abuse?**

Answer:

There are many forms of abuse to which this question could be referring. I am not able to reply without knowing specifically what is being asked. See the GMC Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline for more information.

**The February study of 2019 seems to have several issues with internal logic. Have there been any challenges to the results?**

Answer:

The “issues with internal logic” are not specified so I cannot comment on the question. The survey simply reports what the respondents reported to the surveyors. I am not aware of any challenge to the accuracy of this study.