

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a compilation of all questions asked during the Question & Answer Sessions facilitated by the Discernment Process Task Force, held at Munholland during the month of October 2022. When duplicate questions were submitted, they are combined into one question. Otherwise, the language of the original question is maintained. Questions have been grouped in categories for ease of reference. There are times when those who want Munholland to stay in the United Methodist Church (UMC) have a different response than those who want Munholland to disaffiliate from (leave) the UMC. In these cases, answers from a Stay UMC/Progressive or Centrist viewpoint are noted by “P” and answers from a Disaffiliate/Traditional or Centrist viewpoint are noted by “T”. Questions answered in the *Forward in Faith-Discerning Our Future* pamphlet will have a reference to the page(s) in the pamphlet that addresses that question.

## **DISCERNMENT PROCESS**

### **1. Why has the issue of disaffiliation come up now and who started the discussion for Munholland—the Pastor or the Church Council?**

**P:** The United Methodist Church (UMC) began in 1968. In 1972 a group of Bishops introduced prohibitive language regarding human sexuality and the fight has gone on since then. In 2016 there was a proposal to address the language, a special conference was called for 2019 where there were such huge demonstrations that nothing was settled, and the situation became worse. In May of 2022 some traditionalist leaders officially started the Global Methodist Church, which had been organizing for several years under the leadership of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and other conservative groups.

At the 2019 called General Conference to address the issue of human sexuality, Paragraph 2553 was adopted. This measure provided a process for disaffiliation while retaining local church property through December 31, 2023 (the only provision of its kind in the UMC Book of Discipline). Thus, many churches are moving to decide as soon as possible if they are in discernment about disaffiliation.

A core group of elected leadership of Munholland was convened in the Spring of 2022 to discuss the future of Munholland with respect to the issue of disaffiliation. This group was composed of Michael Lepper (Chair, Church Council), Ellaine Wilson (Lay Leader), Louis Gilbert (Chair, SPR), Kitty Stulb (Chair, Finance), Ann Gilbert (Annual Conference delegate), Sarah Kreutziger (General Conference Delegate from the Louisiana Annual Conference) and Rob Worley (Chair, Trustees). A meeting was held on June 13 called “United Methodist Church and Louisiana Annual Conference Informational Meeting.” At this meeting members of Church Council, other than At-Large members, were provided information on the following: Issues driving the division within the UMC” (Kreutziger, Gilbert, Wilson), and “How these divisions are being addressed in the UMC denomination” (J. Beck).

After the June 14-17 Louisiana Annual Conference, these leaders led a Church Council Meeting (June 27) presenting a very similar agenda plus reports on what transpired at Annual Conference (Beck, Ann Gilbert, Caroline Sanders). The same leadership group made a similar presentation to a Congregational Meeting on July 31. The Lay Leader and Church Council Chair requested that the District Superintendent (DS) clarify the requirements for

churches considering disaffiliation. The DS requested a Church Council meeting for August 22 at which she presented the document found in *Forward in Faith* pp. 13-14. A Church Council meeting was called for August 30 and the Discernment Process Task Force was proposed and approved with the recommendation of more non-traditional members for balance.

**T:** The debates over human sexuality and disobedience to the Book of Discipline have been ongoing for years, with every General Conference since 1972 becoming more and more contentious. The UMC is at an impasse that won't be resolved by churches staying together in one denomination with increasing disobedience by clergy and bishops. The Church Council heard concerns from laity, including the delegates to General and Annual Conference and committee chairs. They proposed Munholland pursue a vote on disaffiliation and appointed a Discernment Process Task Force to look into the issue. The Pastor did not initiate this process.

**2. What are important things to know about paragraph 2553 besides how the vote is set up?**

The title of paragraph is "Disaffiliation of Local Churches Over Issues Related to Human Sexuality." Para. 2553 became effective at the close of General Conference 2019. It states if a church wants to exit the denomination, it must be done prior to Dec. 31, 2023. The provisions of the paragraph expire after that date. In order to meet the deadline, a church must complete the discernment process, ask the District Superintendent to set a date for a Church Conference, notify all members using all means necessary, and reach the 2/3 super majority vote of professing members present at the Church Conference. The decision must be approved at the Louisiana Annual Conference in June 2023. Paragraph 2553 is the path that allows churches to leave with their property and assets. That fact that 2553 expires at the end of 2023 is the issue that compels churches to leave before that date.

**3. Why can't we wait until General Conference 2024 to see what changes will be proposed to the Book of Discipline?**

As some churches are voting now and into next year, the traditional/centrist voices will become less in the denomination. Once the deadline to disaffiliate with property and assets passes on Dec. 31, 2023, there is no other known avenue to do so. With General Conference not occurring until 2024, decisions have to be made beforehand.

**4. Why and how was the Discernment Process Task Force created?**

**Why-**When the District Superintendent provided guidelines for the discernment process on August 22, there was a requirement for the creation of a process and documents for fair and balanced presentation of the information needed by Munholland members to reach a decision on disaffiliation.

**How-**The Church Council on August 30 appointed the following persons (recommended by the core leadership group and expanded by church council) to a Discernment Process Task Force (DPTF): Jonathan and Mary Kay Beck, Michael

Lepper, Ellaine Wilson, Ann Gilbert, Janet Davis, Julia Lloyd, and Julie Cornett. At that meeting Rev. Jan Curwick, New Orleans District Superintendent, presented “Minimum Parameters for Medium/Large Church Discernment Processes” (see pp. 13-14 of *Forward in Faith*). The DPTF was charged with creating a process and materials in multiple formats that will meet these requirements.

**5. Why is the task force not 50/50 and why is a couple on it?**

Mary Kay Beck was invited because she and Janet Davis had already begun planning the “The Bible, Sexuality, and the UMC” classes in a format that included the full range of opinions on the theology of human sexuality. As an educator, Mary Kay was seen as a valuable resource to the development of the remainder of the materials and process. A fourth person leaning toward staying in the UMC (in addition to Julia Lloyd, Julie Cornett, and Janet Davis) was invited but declined.

**6. What is left in the discernment process and when will there be a vote?**

If you refer to pp. 3 and 4 of *Forward in Faith*, we are at the Listening Sessions with Rev. Craig Gilliam on Friday and Saturday November 11-12. These sessions were required in the District Superintendent’s “Minimum Parameters for Medium/Large Church Discernment Processes” (see pp. 13-14 in *Forward in Faith*). Registration for these sessions is available on the MUMC website or by contacting the church office.

Rev. Gilliam will prepare a report to the Church Council on his observations. Once the report is received, the Church Council will meet to decide whether to authorize the congregation to vote and, if so, request a date from the DS for a church-wide vote (church conference). It is not anticipated that a date before late January or February 2023 will be assigned by the DS.

**7. What additional resources are available to the congregation as we continue our personal discernment process?**

A multitude of resources are available to you at [Forward In Faith — Munholland UMC \(munhollandchurch.org\)](http://Forward In Faith — Munholland UMC (munhollandchurch.org)). They include “40 Days of Prayer”, a “Forward in Faith Decision Making Process” description based on the UMC Book of Discipline paragraph 2553, “Traditional and Progressive Viewpoints” which provides links to a number of resources from a variety of perspectives, “Frequently Asked Questions” – a listing of questions and answers created by the DPTF (many of the questions in this list are also addressed there), and the complete *Forward in Faith: Discerning our Future* Booklet. Members of the DPTF are also available to respond to you in person if you have additional questions.

## **THEOLOGY**

**1. Is the church to follow the current culture or should we expect the culture to follow the church?**

**T:** John Wesley and the Methodist movement have always considered the Bible to be the foundation of our faith. Cultural ideas and ethics must always be considered in light of what God teaches us in Scripture. Sometimes those coincide, and other times they are diametrically opposed. The key is that all doctrine and practice be based on the unchanging truth found in Scripture. The Church must always follow Christ who will lead her in the way, the truth, and the life.

**P:** The church has always functioned within its cultural context, and it has always been a counter-cultural movement. Life and civilization changes and we have been coached to avoid turning from God just to fit in with the crowd. Scripture asks us to accept others, reach out to the marginalized as Jesus did, and treat others with respect – to even love our enemies! Jesus' message of radical inclusion offended the orthodox religious and political leaders of his day, and it continues to be an unpopular message today.

**2. Society tries to rationalize certain immoral sexual behaviors and gender alterations. Isn't it our responsibility to look to, follow and teach Biblical truths?**

**P:** At Munholland and in the UMC all are strongly encouraged to study Scripture and its interpretation and apply Biblical teaching to all areas of one's personal and communal life. The reality is that faithful people, informed by excellent scholars and religious leaders throughout history, still reach different understandings of Biblical guidance applied to certain issues in modern life.

Examples of the process of ongoing discovery of the Bible's application to modern life include the debates over the understanding of scientific discoveries regarding the origin and timing of life on earth, evolution, the acceptability of slavery, the role of women in church, and many others. None of these debates challenges the authority of scripture, but they do lead to different understandings of how to apply the eternal underlying truth of scripture to modern life. Jesus modeled this in his famous "You have heard it said...but I say..." passages, where he quoted Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and expanded on its application for his listeners.

**T:** As humans, we are masters of self-justification and rationalization. Since the beginning we have tried to live life our way and reaped the consequences of broken relationships with God and others. Scripture reveals God's character, humanity's condition, and God's plan for redemption. All Christians are called to study and follow those biblical truths. We do that as individuals and in community on the shoulders of the saints who have gone before. By prayerfully considering the role of the church in society and the world, we need to hold fast to the teachings in Scripture and proclaim the good news that is for all people.

**3. Does the United Methodist Church leadership feel that Jesus is more tolerant to homosexuality-a Biblical sexual immoral behavior? Please consider Jesus' letters in Revelation warning the churches at Thyatira and Pergamos condemning sexual immorality.**

**T:** The UMC doctrine reminds us that Jesus calls everyone, no matter their sin or their past, to come to Him, repent of their sin, and lead a new life in Christ. UMC doctrine states "The

United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”(Par 161 BOD) United Methodist draw this conclusion from passages throughout the Scriptures. Unfortunately, many of the US Bishops do not believe or teach a Biblical norm of monogamous marriage being between a man and a woman.

**P:** Jesus was not tolerant of sexually immoral behavior (adultery for example), but Scripture doesn’t quote Him with respect to homosexuality. The Book of Revelation is not authored by Jesus. It is attributed to the Apostle John. In Revelation 2:18-29 he writes to “the angel of the church in Thyatira” concerning a woman named Jezebel who calls herself a prophet, but who teaches sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. He says she is a prostitute, and that she and those committing adultery with her will be punished. No mention of homosexuality.

In Revelation 2:12-17 he writes “to the angel of the church in Pergamum” condemning them for following teachings of Balaam that resulted in eating food sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality. It does not specify the type of sexual immorality. One source says that the teachings of Balaam infer that Christians compromise their beliefs for the sake of popularity, money, sexual gratification, or personal gain.

#### **4. Where does Jesus say that we are allowed to judge others’ rights to marry?**

**P:** Jesus famously says in Matthew 7:1-4 (CEB), “Don’t judge, so that you won’t be judged...Why do you see the splinter that’s in your brother’s or sister’s eye, but don’t notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother or sister, ‘Let me take the splinter out of your eye,’ when there’s a log in your eye?”

In Matthew 19:5, Jesus referenced a man leaving his father and mother to be joined to his wife. This certainly reflects the understanding of marriage during Jesus’ lifetime. Jesus also speaks to divorce in Matthew 5:31-32 where he reinterprets the Old Testament requirement that a man give a woman a certificate of divorce, followed by “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.” At that time, the punishment for adultery was stoning. If we apply this teaching literally today, many in our church would be subject to stoning.

**T:** Jesus asks his followers to judge right from wrong. He wants them to know God’s will through Scripture and His teaching. Jesus has many parables about judgement – wheat and tares, tree by its fruit, sheep and goats, fish in the net, unmerciful servant, etc. Many people take this passage out of context: “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” (Matt 7:1-2) Jesus is actually teaching about how to judge *rightly* with *humility*. He goes on to say, <sup>3</sup> “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” (Matt 7:3-5). Jesus expects his followers to humbly judge right from wrong.

Anyone can be married before the law in our country. Legal, same-sex marriage is not the discussion. The question is whether same-sex practice in the church is right according to Scripture. Since the time of Christ, the church has uniformly said same-sex practice was not consistent with Scripture. The vast majority of Christian denominations around the world will not perform same-sex weddings or ordain those involved in same-sex practice. That is a matter of biblical conviction of the boundaries God places on human sexuality.

**5. How does marrying gay people in your church affect your relationship with God?**

**T:** Christians seek to know God's will through Scripture and to conform their lives to that. Likewise, denominations corporately seek to know and be conformed to their understanding of Scripture. When the doctrine of the church does not permit marrying same-sex couples, then congregations and clergy must abide by that. Ultimately God is the final authority that we are accountable to. Disobeying God and disappointing people are painful. However, we must live according to our understanding of Scripture even if it is difficult. God is the highest authority and the One we must obey.

**P:** We answer this question with respect to Munholland UMC. Since Munholland is part of the UMC, pastored by one ordained to follow the UMC Book of Discipline, marrying gay people when it is prohibited by the Book of Discipline affects the covenant of ordination and the church's affiliation with the UMC. In a church where there is no restriction on same sex marriage, one's relationship with God would be impacted no differently from performing heterosexual marriages.

**6. Why can't a friend of mine get married in this church, we are all children of God?**

**P:** Please refer to response to question # 5.

**T:** Same sex couples cannot be married in United Methodist Churches because the denomination has determined that it is not in accord with Scriptures.

**7. Why aren't those who committed adultery banned from remarrying in this church, it is a commandment?**

**T:** In Matthew 8, a woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus. The leaders wanted to give her the harshest punishment, death. Jesus quietly wrote on the ground then asked, 'The one without sin can cast the first stone.' The leaders began to walk away one by one. Jesus turned to the woman saying, 'I do not condemn you either. Go and sin no more.' Jesus has mercy on the woman and tells her to move forward in her life without sinning like that again. The UMC doctrine takes the same approach to have mercy on those who have committed adultery, and asking them to repent and leave that sin behind. The goal is to have people, married or not, live forward within the boundaries of biblical sexuality.

**P:** A clergy person who commits adultery is subject to disciplinary action up to losing his/her ordination. For non-clergy couples, it is up to the pastor choosing to perform the wedding to assess the suitability for marriage and decide whether to perform the ceremony.

**8. Please address the concern that some of the seminaries are offering courses and/or training for our United Methodist elders and deacons in non-traditional Christian theology and/or worship.**

**P:** All UMC seminaries are separately incorporated, with their own boards of trustees, and their own faculty committees who set policies – including curriculum. The denomination as such does not control those kinds of basic administrative decisions. Many seminaries receive public funding which may have additional requirements for diversity in curriculum and free speech. They also provide training for many students from other faith traditions. This offers a helpful experience for future clergy to experience ecumenical dialogue and develop tools for real-world ministry among the church and unchurched. The role of the denomination with these seminaries is accreditation for purposes of preparing UMC clergy. Approval by the University Senate of The United Methodist Church enables students to apply for Ministry Education Funds (scholarship funds for approved UMC candidates). These funds are only available to UMC students attending an approved seminary.

**T:** It is a concern that UMC seminaries are teaching, equipping and exposing future clergy to practices that are inconsistent with the official doctrine of the UMC. UMC seminaries see themselves primarily in the terms of an academic institution which values free inquiry above all. The goal should be to raise up ministers to know, accept, teach and practice Methodist doctrine so they can lead congregations with Methodist integrity.

Iliff School of Theology as well as Duke Divinity School are just two that promote and permit doctrine that is contrary to the Book of Discipline. Iliff has a course focusing on “Queer Spirituality in the Visual Arts”. Professor Jacob Kinnard at Iliff describes himself as a “lapsed Buddhist, and a current atheist”. Duke has annual “Pride Worship” with prayers and responsive worship invoking “God is mother, father and parent, drag queen, transman, and gender-fluid”. Universal Unitarianism is being taught in several of the seminaries as well. Universal Unitarianism claims that all religions and concepts of god are equal.

### **DISOBEDIENCE TO THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE**

**1. If bishops and congregations do not wish to abide by the Book of Discipline, why aren't they the ones disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church and called Global?**

**T:** The UMC has been informally divided over the years. In 2016, The General Conference upheld the Book of Discipline stance on human sexuality, and was going to allow a way for progressives churches to amicably exit. Just a couple months afterwards, the clergy and 6 Bishops of the Western Jurisdiction broke the doctrine established by General Conference by electing and consecrating Bishop Oliveto who was in a same sex marriage. In 2019, the General Conference created Paragraph 2553 to allow congregations who didn't want to abide by the Book of Discipline to leave the UMC with their property and assets. Paragraph 2553 was a formal way that progressives could leave the UMC with their property and assets instead of disobeying the UMC.

Clergy, Bishops, Annual Conferences, and even Jurisdictions openly defied and disobeyed the Book of Discipline instead of disaffiliating. In 2021 Bishop Haller of the Iowa Annual Conference wrote a progressive agenda for her annual conference which opposed the

General Conference. Bishop Haller told clergy and congregations that didn't agree with this new progressive agenda that they could leave the Annual Conference by using Paragraph 2553. Other progressive Bishops and Annual Conferences took the same approach. They would break the discipline and tell the traditional congregations to leave if they didn't go along with it. What was meant to provide an avenue for progressives to leave, became the only avenue by which traditionalist could leave.

**P:** Those choosing to advocate for changes in the Book of Discipline (BoD) regarding homosexuality want to keep the UMC together despite the differences and continue to be in dialogue, even though it is difficult and painful, because they believe in the power of unity despite diversity when it comes to the ministries of the UMC.

Those who find the ongoing debate at General Conference regarding homosexuality, and the potential for future changes to the BoD regarding human sexuality, intolerable began organizing a new denomination years ago, anticipating that the 2020 General Conference would offer a helpful way to leave the UMC. When General Conference was postponed due to COVID they (led by the Wesleyan Covenant Association) decided to go ahead and launch the Global Methodist Church in May 2022.

Bishops and congregations who have chosen to disobey the BoD have done so out of their deeply held convictions about the call of Jesus to love everyone and share ministry with those who are marginalized, as Jesus did. They believe that the religious version of civil disobedience is justified because the desired change in language regarding homosexuality hasn't occurred.

- 2. Why have the bishops and clergy who have clearly disregarded the Book of Discipline statute established in 1972 regarding same sex marriage and electing practicing homosexual clergy not received any disciplinary action? It appears to me that they are being applauded and encouraged in their words and actions while the traditional church members holding true to the 1972 statute are being vilified, under fire and under the gun forcing them to vote on whether to stay or leave a highly dysfunctional institution. This doesn't make sense to me. Please explain.**

**P:** According to Is The UMC really... ? (Part 2) "Bishops do not apply "punishments" as part of the complaint process. Rather, bishops oversee the process to its conclusion. If a church trial is necessary, bishops preside at the church trial. If guilt is found in a church trial, it is not the bishop who imposes a "sentence." It is the jury of peers who both reach a verdict and set a sentence. The BoD names a mandatory minimum sentence the jury must apply to those found guilty of having conducted a same-sex marriage or union ceremony: one year suspension without pay. No other offense has a mandatory minimum sentence. Since bishops do not "punish" in the complaint process, this statement does not ignore the requirements of the BoD.

While there are examples that come close to "ignoring the Discipline," a number of bishops and some cabinets (Annual Conference leaders) have indicated their commitment to "hold in abeyance" all administrative and judicial complaint processes addressing restrictions in the BoD regarding gay and lesbian clergy and/or same-sex weddings until after the General Conference meets and action related to the separation of the denomination can be considered. Abeyance means delay. It does not mean a refusal to implement the BoD. This



approach began with the development of “Protocol Legislation” with broad input from across the spectrum of Traditionalist through Progressive representatives and was announced in January 2020. This legislation has no effect unless or until a General Conference approves it, which was expected to occur at the 2020 General Conference. The 2020 General Conference is now delayed until 2024. To those on all “sides” who indicated their support for abeyance effective in 2020, abeyance in processing such charges was not seen as a refusal to implement the BoD. A more detailed response is available on the website cited above.” See p. 8 in *Forward in Faith*.

**T:** There are various reasons that those disobeying the Book of Discipline are not being corrected. For example, if a clergy is charged with disobeying the Book of Discipline, he/she is brought before a jury of his/her peers. However, those peers may not wish to punish the offender. Sometimes they give only a verbal reprimand or a week paid leave. Some have been stripped of their ordination, but the vast majority have received little to no disciplinary action. The disciplinary actions vary depending on the culture of that particular Annual Conference.

In 2016, something different happened. The Western Jurisdiction (8 Annual Conferences) elected Karen Oliveto to become a Bishop. However, the election was in defiance of the Book of Discipline since Oliveto is in a same-sex marriage. Her election and consecration was challenged and went to the Judicial Council (the UMC ‘supreme court’). The Judicial Council ruled that her election was in violation of the Book of Discipline. It sent the matter back to the Western Jurisdiction charging them to investigate the matter and correct it. The Jurisdiction ignored the Judicial Council. Bp. Oliveto and the Bishops who consecrated her remain Bishops in ‘good standing’. Bp. Oliveto continues to preside over the Mountain Sky Annual Conference. The Council of Bishops’ website introduces each of the Bishops with a short bio: “Bishop Oliveto is the first openly lesbian bishop in The United Methodist Church. Her wife, Robin Ridenour, a nurse anesthetist, is a deaconess in The United Methodist Church.” This indicates the widespread support for progressive disobedience.

The General Conference makes law. The Judicial Council rules on law. The Bishops implement the law. The problem comes when those who are supposed to implement the law police themselves. (Par 413) The responsibility to correct Bishops is given to the Jurisdictional College of Bishops and the Episcopacy Committee (Par 413, BOD). That works if the Bishops adhere to the Book of Discipline. However, since all the Bishops of the Western Jurisdiction refused to obey the Discipline, they circumvent the law by ignoring the charges. The Bishops who disobey are responsible to make themselves obey. While the Council of Bishops can take responsibility to correct the College of Bishops, they never have in the history of the UMC. The Council has had 6 years to call for the College of Bishops to handle the matter appropriately. They have not. Bishops and denominational committees use legal tactics to undermine and delay appropriate application of the law. Ultimately, it is not a problem of law, but a problem of integrity. Denominational leadership is breaking their vows and encouraging others to do the same.

### **3. Why does the leadership not follow the Book of Discipline?**

**T:** That is precisely the question that needs to be asked. Why? Because they disagree with the United Methodist denomination but still want to be called United Methodists. Bishops think their 'righteous cause' must be enacted even if it tears apart the denomination they vowed to support. They believe that the ends justify the means.

**P:** A large majority of leaders in the UMC do follow the BoD. See "P" answers to #1 and #2 for a possible explanation of why some do not and appear to be unpunished.

**4. Why are more traditional congregations leaving the United Methodist Church when the Book of Discipline has traditional doctrine?**

**P:** Those choosing to leave are concerned that in the future General Conference will amend the BoD with respect to same-sex weddings and ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. They are also opposed to the actions taken by Jurisdictions and Bishops with respect to these issues that appear out of compliance with the BoD. See p. 8 of *Forward in Faith*.

**T:** It doesn't matter what the Methodist doctrine is if clergy and bishops decide to disobey it. When enough clergy disobey the doctrine without consequences, what is written becomes irrelevant. Bishop Talbert disobeyed the Book of Discipline in 2013 without disciplinary consequences.

In 2016, The General Conference told progressive clergy and Bishops to obey the Book of Discipline so that the matter could be solved in an orderly fashion at the next General Conference. The conflict was intensified that year when 8 conferences of the Western Jurisdiction elected and consecrated a bishop who was in a same-sex marriage. The Bishops had been entrusted to create a solution to the impasse, yet 6 bishops immediately broke that trust by consecrating Bp. Oliveto. The disobedience was never corrected, and Oliveto remains a bishop today – 6 yrs. later.

Disobedience was so widespread between 2016 and the 2019 General Conference, that traditionalists provided a way for progressives to leave the UMC under Para 2553. But the progressives were not interested in leaving. Immediately after the 2019 General Conference, even more Bishops and Annual Conferences disobeyed the General Conference. The eight Annual Conferences of the Western Jurisdiction wrote a formal letter saying, "We cannot comply with the actions of the 2019 General Conference."

In 2021, Bp. Haller and the Iowa Conference leaders wrote 'Leading Now and Into the Future' which went far beyond the issue of same-sex practice. It promotes a full array of identities and practices deemed appropriate for clergy: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transexual/Transvestite, Queer, Asexual, Intersex, plus (LGBTQAI+). At the end of the document, it told traditional churches that didn't want to follow their progressive movement that they could leave using Par. 2553.

That is when it all flipped. Progressives changed the denomination by their actions telling traditionalist to leave if they didn't like it. When that happened, all trust was gone. All attempts at negotiation had failed. With this impasse, traditionalists decided that they had to take advantage of Par 2553 in order to separate with property and assets. What was meant to provide an avenue for progressives to leave, became the only avenue by which traditionalist could leave the untenable breakdown of the UMC.

## MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

### **1. What would happen to Methodist Children's Home, Centenary College, Wesley Center, UMCOR, Camp Istrouma, and missions if many larger churches vote to disaffiliate?**

**T:** Many larger churches are leaving nationwide and in Louisiana. The two largest churches in LA, St. Timothy and Live Oak, already voted to leave. 58 churches are disaffiliating in Dec. 2022. More will follow in 2023. The loss of many churches will affect denominational finances and missions. However, the Methodist Children's Home, Centenary College, Wesley Center, UMCOR, and Camp Istrouma will continue strong. The Methodist Children's Home is supported by private individuals and churches. Support for Centenary College is coming to them from the Annual Conference in the form of an endowment which is almost fully funded. Munholland's local and foreign missions will not change. At the denominational level, missions such as Africa University and the Lydia Patterson Home could still receive Munholland gifts. Every Methodist mission is glad to receive support from any church. They don't have to be UMC.

**P:** Both international and local ministries beyond Munholland (MUMC) depend upon the support of a large organization's ability to project and collect funding on a predictable basis. It is the UMC's "connection" that has created ministries that impact the world and make disciples of Jesus Christ beyond the ability of a local church or small affiliation. Should MUMC choose to disaffiliate from the UMC, decisions about support of ministries outside of Munholland will depend upon the annual budget process in the local church rather than the apportionment process that currently supports the global ministries of the UMC (e.g., United Methodist Committee on Relief - UMCOR - and United Methodist Volunteers in Mission – UMVIM). UMCOR and UMVIM provided over a million dollars in hurricane and other natural disaster recovery work in Louisiana in 2021 alone, not to mention organizing thousands of hours of volunteer work. The Louisiana organizations named in the question receive funding from many sources within and outside of the UMC. The financial health of MUMC if disaffiliation is chosen will determine the level of support to be provided. See pp. 6, 9, 11 of *Forward in Faith*.

### **2. Why would the Wesley Center, UMCOR and Camp Istrouma be accessible to a church that is not United Methodist?**

Use of the Wesley Center and Camp Istrouma is not limited to members of the UMC. In fact, they depend upon outside entities for a significant amount of their budgets. UMCOR does not limit its donors or recipients to members or affiliates of the UMC. A significant amount of disaster response work is funded through grants from other organizations in addition to donations from within and outside of the UMC.

## CHURCH COUNCIL

## **1. How are members of Church Council selected?**

**P:** Per paragraph 252.5 of the BoD “The charge conference will determine the size of the church council. Members of the church council shall be involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation as defined in p. 252.2...The council shall include persons who represent the program ministries of the church as outlined in p. 243. The membership shall include but not be limited to the following: a) the chairperson of the church council; b) the lay leader; c) the chairperson and/or a representative of the pastor-parish relations committee; d) the chairperson and/or a representative of the committee on finance; e) the chairperson and/or a representative of the Board of Trustees; f) the church treasurer; g) a lay member to annual conference; h) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Men; i) the president and/or a representative of the United Methodist Women; j) a young adult representative; k) a representative of the United Methodist Youth; l) the pastor(s).” Munholland’s Nominating Committee can also recommend members at large. The slate of committee/council officers, chairs, and members are presented by the Nominating Committee to the Charge Conference each year for approval or nominations from the floor.

**T:** The Nominations Team selects the administrative leaders and presents the slate to the Church Council for a vote. The Church Council discusses and may add or change some names. The Church Council then votes on the leadership for the following year. The Church Council consists of the ministry leaders, administrative committee leaders, at large members, and staff. Individuals are selected because of their participation in worship and ministry, areas of expertise, and their general support of Munholland.

## **2. What is the ratio of those wishing to stay or leave?**

The Church Council has not requested a vote on this issue from its members.

## **3. How many Church Council members have left in the last 9 months?**

One Church Council Member has resigned from the Church Council in the last 9 months, but is still a professing member of Munholland.

# **VOTING PROCESS**

## **1. What criteria are used to determine who can vote on disaffiliation?**

Paragraph 2553 was added to the BoD and became effective at the close of the 2019 General Conference. See “Discernment Process” question # 2. Among its other provisions it states that “the decision to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the professing members of the local church present at the church conference.”

Paragraph 215 Definition of Membership in the BoD states: “The membership of a local United Methodist church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith...The professing membership of a local United Methodist church

shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith, through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant I ritual, or by transfer from other churches.”

The list of “professing members” is maintained by the church office. Only those on Munholland’s list of professing members as of the date that the District Superintendent provides a date for Munholland’s vote on disaffiliation are eligible to vote at the church conference. You can determine if you are on the list by calling the church office. No proxy, mail in or call-in votes will be allowed. Of those present and voting, a 66 2/3 majority is required for disaffiliation

**2. When is the cut off for the membership list?**

Only those on Munholland’s list of professing members as of the day that the District Superintendent provides a date for Munholland’s vote on disaffiliation are eligible to vote at the church conference. Our District Superintendent Rev. Jan Curwick has told us: “When I am sent the membership roll with the request to call a church vote, the membership roll is ‘frozen’.” You can determine if you are on the list by calling the church office. Any members joining after the roll is frozen for purposes of the vote on disaffiliation will be a member of Munholland but not eligible to vote.

**3. Will my voice or vote make a difference?**

Your voice and vote are critical to Munholland’s decision. In some congregations who have already voted, as few as 1-2 votes has been the deciding factor in whether the 2/3 majority is reached. It is important that every member of Munholland research all the issues, discuss their concerns and engage in the discernment process.

**4. How will the voting process be handled on the day of the vote?**

The day of the vote will be announced well in advance by the District Superintendent (DS). Those wishing to vote must be present on the day and time established by her with proof of identity. Your membership will be confirmed using the professing membership list referenced above. Counting will be by someone from outside of MUMC who has been appointed by the DS to assist her with the voting process. There will be a paper ballot. The ballots will be counted by the DS and her team from outside of MUMC while we are there waiting. The results will be announced as soon as the count is complete.

## **POST VOTE QUESTIONS**

**1. After a vote is taken if one is allowed, and the vote is to disaffiliate, when will we decide an affiliation?**

**P:** The vote to affiliate with another denomination or group will be held at a later date.

**T:** Our suggestion is that Munholland take time to research and explore options. Munholland could join the Global Methodists, Free Methodists, or a Methodist Association. Since the Global Methodists will meet in 2024 to finalize their new Book of Doctrine and Discipline, it is wise to not make a decision before then. Several Methodist Associations anchored by large former UMC churches will have the organization ability to bring Methodist churches together during an interim period of discernment. These associations would help member churches find Methodist clergy and leadership during the interim and provide other support. They may create opportunities to hear from various Methodist denominations. These associations will be created in January 2023.

**2. What other Methodist options in the area do members have if the vote does not go to their liking?**

**P:** The list of Methodist and United Methodist options will not be final until 2023. There are congregations that are in the discernment process or have already voted to disaffiliate, and others that have declared their intention to remain UMC and not enter a period of discernment. No one will be required or asked to leave regardless of the voting outcome. See p. 10 of *Forward in Faith*.

**T:** If the vote is to disaffiliate, those who wish to stay UMC can choose from several churches in the NOLA area that are more progressive, including Rayne Memorial, First Grace or St. Luke's. If the vote is to stay UMC, those who wish to find a traditional congregation would not find another Methodist church our size in the New Orleans metro area.

**3. Will the current membership of Munholland switch automatically or is there a sign-up process after our decision is affirmed?**

The Munholland membership roll will go with Munholland if there is disaffiliation. The members on the list submitted to the DS for the purpose of the vote on disaffiliation will be removed from the rolls of the United Methodist Church once MUMC's disaffiliation is approved by Louisiana Annual Conference (probably June 2023). Those wishing to remain in the United Methodist Church connection would need to seek another UMC congregation that resonates with their theology, mission, and core values. See p. 8 of *Forward in Faith*.

**4. What happens if you vote to disaffiliate and that is not the majority?**

**P:** If the congregation votes to stay UMC, that means that at least 2/3 of the current membership will probably be the same. As one who voted to disaffiliate, you will have to make a choice about where you wish to worship and be in shared ministry. While the congregation will probably be somewhat smaller, and the budget more constrained, it is likely that life together will look a lot like it does today. All will be welcome to stay, no matter how they voted.

**T:** Our desire is that Munholland would stay together so we can strengthen our continuing ministry. Munholland will stay essentially as it is. After all, Munholland is presently living out the traditional doctrine and practice of the UMC. Disaffiliating won't change who we are, it will ensure that we stay who we are. No one will be asked to leave Munholland. However, everyone must discern their place of ministry that aligns with their beliefs and values.

## **FUTURE OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

### **1. Besides ignoring the Book of Discipline on the homosexuality rules concerning marriage and church leadership, what other “progressive” changes do you anticipate from the United Methodist Church?**

**T:** It is anticipated that all language about sexuality that prevents same-sex marriage will be eliminated from the Book of Discipline. This would include language defining marriage as well as prohibitive language around ordination and marriage. Several Jurisdictional Conferences are proposing language permitting all LGBTQIA+ practices and identities in the life and leadership of the denomination. We don't know what will change in the Book of Discipline but we can already see teaching contrary to Methodist doctrine in seminaries and conference leadership.

**P:** It is likely that a General Conference with fewer traditional/conservative delegates will at some point pass legislation removing the restrictions on ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals and same-sex ceremonies.

### **2. If we disaffiliate how will the life-time appointment of the bishops and disciplinary procedures for disobedience to the tenets of our faith be handled?**

**P:** If Munholland disaffiliates, as an independent church there will be no bishop. All decisions and accountability will be in the local, more fully traditional church. Part of a decision regarding future affiliations will be whether the issue of governance is acceptable to Munholland's leaders and members.

**T:** Since the breakdown in our denomination is primarily due to disobedience of the Bishops, with little to no accountability imposed by the regional College of Bishops and Committees on the Episcopacy, it is important to consider how other denominations consecrate and appoint bishops. The Free Methodists and the Global Methodists do not consecrate Bishops for life. They are term limited. Global Methodist Bishops will be directly accountable to their general conference rather than only to other bishops in their regions. Both the Free Methodists and Global Methodist polity have accountability policies in place to keep Bishops from leading churches away from the doctrine of these denominations.

## **FUTURE OF MUNHOLLAND**

**1. What will happen if Munholland votes to stay in the United Methodist Church?**

**T:** Munholland's property and assets would continue to be held in trust by the Conference. UMC churches will most likely see changes in doctrine and theology come out of the 2024 General Conference. The plan that is being pushed by the current UMC leadership will demand inclusion of all LGBTQIA+ identities and practices in all areas of ministry, including clergy. Most traditional pastors are leaving with their congregations. With fewer traditional pastors in the Conference, Munholland's pastoral leadership will most likely be progressive. Munholland will continue to pay yearly apportionments of around \$75,000. Unfortunately, some members will decide to go to a more traditional church.

**P:** While all will be welcome to stay, it is likely that some who feel strongly about disaffiliation will leave. Others may choose to stay and see what happens during the next General Conference in 2024. The life of the church should be very much as it is today. Perhaps some who have left Munholland because of the leadership's position on homosexuality may choose to return. Munholland will learn to manage with a smaller budget and congregation until the church can heal and grow again.

**2. If we stay United Methodist, will Munholland be forced to hold same sex weddings on campus?**

No recommendations at General Conference over the years of this debate have required a pastor or congregation to offer same-sex weddings. There is no evidence that such a measure would be proposed in the future. Currently pastors have a significant amount of discretion about whose weddings they perform.

**T:** That will be determined at General Conference in 2024. The plan the Bishops are seeking to pass would allow all clergy and congregations to make their own decisions. That sounds good on the face of it, but it will be difficult when clergy and congregations are at odds in their theology and practice. A progressive church may have a traditional clergy who won't do a marriage of same-sex members seeking that. If a traditional church has a progressive clergy, the clergy would have to do the same-sex wedding at another church that does allow it. Both of those situations would undermine the respect of the clergy and bring confusion over the inconsistency between congregation and pastor. If the progression is like other denominations that went progressive, performing same-sex weddings will not be required at first. The requirement might change and pressure increase to conform to the denominational stance.

**3. What will happen if Munholland votes to disaffiliate? What are the plans for the church if it leaves the United Methodist Church? Can the church remain independent?**

**P:** Any decision about whether to stay independent or join another denomination or affiliation will happen after the vote on disaffiliation. MUMC could choose to remain independent. See p. 8 of *Forward in Faith*.



**T:** If Munholland votes to disaffiliate, we would leave the UMC denomination structure. However, we would still be in our church buildings and retain our Methodist heritage. Munholland would pay an additional two years of apportionments, unfunded pension liabilities, and would own all her property and assets. There are three options. First, Munholland would automatically become independent and could stay that way. However, that is not recommended since Methodists are connectional and there is strength and accountability by being part of a larger denomination. Second, the church could affiliate with another denomination like the Free Methodists or Global Methodists. Third, we could join a Methodist association in the interim, which would give our congregation a place to land while maintaining relationships with other Methodists. Being part of an association gives needed time to investigate different denominational options. A Methodist Association will be created once large UMC churches disaffiliate at the end of this year, 2022.

**4. What is the proposed course of action upon disaffiliation, and how will doing so impact the finances of Munholland? If we vote to disaffiliate and members leave, how will we fund operating expenses and pay off the buyout amount?**

**T:** Operating expenses are a yearly endeavor with pledge drives and other gifts. These figures change depending on people leaving or coming to Munholland. If members leave, it will make it difficult to fund the budget at current levels. Remember that some people will leave if Munholland stays United Methodist, and some people may leave if Munholland disaffiliates. If we vote to disaffiliate the \$371,142 buyout will be due on the date of the vote. Individuals are invited and some have pledged the necessary money to cover it. The money cannot come from present Munholland assets since the Annual Conference owns it. These contributions are gifts offered as a vote of confidence in Munholland's. Also, Munholland would no longer be paying \$75,000 to the UMC in apportionments. This will help meet the budget.

**P:** Munholland's finances will be impacted whether or not the vote is for disaffiliation. Those who are not happy with the outcome may choose to find another church. Page 9 of *Forward in Faith* speaks to the financial impact if the vote is to disaffiliate. In addition to the \$371,142 estimate of expenses to be paid to the Annual Conference, there will be other yet undefined expenses associated with establishing an independent 501 (c)(3) entity, legal requirements, and physical changes to remove the UMC cross and flame logo from the campus and printed materials. Leaders are considering commitments by individuals to secure loans that are not using current UMC properties as collateral.

**5. Will there be a place for diversity of thinking about Scripture in a Traditional Methodist Church?**

**P:** Many traditionalists hold to a literal interpretation of Scripture, but not all. Options for diversity of thinking depend upon the leaders and members of the new entity.

**T:** Absolutely. As diverse people of God, we all will have beliefs that may be different from one another. Just as there is diversity of thinking now in our congregation, there always will be no matter the affiliation. There are many things that the Bible is clear about and others

that produce differences of opinion. However, even diverse opinions must be measured by the plumbline of Scripture.

**6. Will there be a Trust Clause if we disaffiliate?**

No, unless MUMC chooses a future affiliation with an entity with a Trust Clause. There will not be a Trust Clause if we disaffiliate; Munholland will own her property and assets.

**7. Thoughts on how this will impact youth [ministry]?**

**T:** Youth can strongly identify with the culture they are in at school and at home. They are a mix of conservative and progressive, though on the whole tend to be more progressive. We don't know if traditional young families will leave if we vote to stay, or if progressive young families will leave if the vote is to disaffiliate.

**P:** Today's youth tend to be more tolerant of those with non-binary gender identities. If we disaffiliate, parents of young people who identify as LGBTQI+, or have friends who do, may be hesitant to participate in a congregation where full inclusion is not taught. We do know that some youths have left MUMC because of this issue.

**8. What do we have in common as members of Munholland? How can we be peacemakers over the next several months? How can we be in service within and on behalf of Munholland in the days ahead:**

**P:** After the Listening Circles in early November, we have the remainder of November, December, and January (at least) to celebrate the coming of Christ, and to live into the life of the church to which we are committed as it is today. We are told that the District Superintendent is not likely to set a date for a vote before February. Let us be peacemakers, focusing on our love for another and all that makes Munholland a place of welcome and joy. Release the debates and negativity, the labels and divisiveness, and just live into our call as Christians during this holy season. Let's pay our pledges for 2022, make our pledges for 2023, and volunteer to serve in one or more of the many ministries and missions of the church during the holidays. Once the vote approaches and is taken, there will be time to make decisions about your support of Munholland going forward. But for now, while nothing has changed, let's BE the church.

**T:** As members, we have one faith, one baptism one Lord, One God and Father of all. We have all professed our faith in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus His only son, and in the Holy Spirit. The desire to live a life each day as a disciple of Christ unites us. Peace means "God's highest good to you" and this is a lofty goal for all of us, no matter how you feel about what our congregation is going through. With Thanksgiving coming up, think of the gratitude we have for each other and all the beautiful friendships we have. During Advent, we celebrate God Incarnate, and we are called to love as shown in 1 Corinthians 13. Continue to attend worship, participate in small groups and Bible Studies, give of your time and resources, and PRAY. Pray for God's will to be done for this congregation. Munholland

will continue to exist whether it votes to stay or leave. However, we need to take seriously how a vote will shape our congregation.

## **PASTOR AND STAFF**

- 1. If the church disaffiliates from the United Methodist Church, does our pastor have the option to disaffiliate and remain with Munholland and what would happen to his current benefits and pension?**

**T:** Dr. Beck is in a time of discernment about where he will continue in ministry, within the UMC or not. He does have the option to disaffiliate from the UMC and remain with Munholland. What Munholland decides to do will be an important part of Dr. Beck's discernment. His current benefits are provided through his salary, and the pension is handled through a separate group called Wespeth. The pension follows the pastor. That would not change either way.

**P:** The pastor's choice is separate from that of the congregation. Dr. Beck is in his own time of private discernment. He has the option to stay or leave Munholland no matter how the vote on disaffiliation turns out. If Munholland stays UMC, Dr. Beck will continue under the annual appointment system of the Louisiana Annual Conference with unchanged benefits and pension. If Munholland disaffiliates, and is an independent entity for some period, pastor and staff benefits and pension will be determined by the leadership of Munholland.

- 2. Will Jonathan stay if we disaffiliate? This is a legitimate concern and question of those considering disaffiliation.**

**P:** Those considering disaffiliation must weigh the pros and cons without influence of the pastor. His discernment is private and will be shared after the vote.

**T:** Dr. Beck is in his own period of discernment. His theology is traditional, and he is committed to strengthening Munholland's ministry. What Munholland decides is an important part of his discernment.

- 3. Is there a Methodist-Wesleyan based seminary where we can find pastors for Munholland if the decision is to disaffiliate?**

**T:** Asbury in Kentucky provides many UMC pastors rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, although it is not an official UMC seminary. United Theological Seminary in Dayton is also a strongly Wesleyan seminary. However, pastors who adhere to the Wesleyan tenets of faith can be found in many different seminaries.

**P:** If Munholland votes to disaffiliate, Munholland will have full responsibility for recruitment and vetting of pastors. Leaders will be able to make their own choice of qualifications, including seminary training. We are told that other churches (such as Baptist,

Lutheran, non-denominational) experience significant delays when trying to fill pastoral vacancies. As part of the UMC, Munholland is always guaranteed a qualified pastor.

**4. What happens with the pastoral guidance and the staff that might vote to disaffiliate?**

If the vote is to stay, there is no reason to believe that members of staff or the pastor would experience retribution/retaliation based on a vote to disaffiliate. If staff members decide to stay and the finances allow, non-clergy staff compensation would remain the same and staff employment terms would not change.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**1. Why does “Open doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds” not pertain to our church anymore?**

**P:** All are sad to think that anyone would come to Munholland without experiencing “Open doors, Open hearts, open minds.” Certainly, current leaders and members subscribe to this philosophy, but we may not always live into it as completely and effectively as we wish.

**T:** It depends on how individuals interpret this phrase. The phrase was developed by the traditional UMC to encourage all congregations to have an outward posture toward the world, and to intentionally invite and welcome all people to come to worship, small groups, and missions no matter who they are or what they have done. Those who are more progressive see it as call to change the standards for Christian marriage. Some see it as inclusion of all Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/transvestite/transsexual, Queer, Intersect, Asexual, and many other (LGBTQIA+) identities and practices at all levels of leadership from clergy to bishops.

**2. Can a list of questions be published after the meetings end?**

This is it.

**3. Can we hear from members of an already disaffiliated church?**

The only New Orleans area church that has disaffiliated is Lake Vista, and that was effective last June. Also, St. Timothy on the North Shore has voted to disaffiliate. You are welcome to contact them with your questions. There are no plans for a meeting of this type to be arranged by MUMC.

**4. How many have left since we entered discernment?**

This is a difficult question to answer. We urge you to look around and determine who you are missing. Contact them and tell them they are missed. Ask them if there is anything we can do to get them back in fellowship with Munholland. One Church Council member has resigned and one family that we know of has left during the discernment process.

**5. Has Munholland had a LGBTQIA+ committee chair or member in the last three years?**

The Nominating Committee selects persons for administrative positions and presents the list to the Church Council for a vote; Nominations does not ask people about their identities and practices when they ask people to serve.

**6. What defines a medium size church?**

One that has roughly 200-600 in attendance, like Munholland.

**7. How many United Methodist Churches are there in Africa as of now?**

**P:** Most recent numbers published are for 2017-18. There were 12,869 local/organized United Methodist Church in Africa, Asia & Europe, compared to 30,543 in the United States. The UMC has approximately 6.3 million members overseas in Africa, Europe and the Philippines; Africa has the most UMC members abroad.

**T:** the UMC has a total of 12.7 million members of which 6.3 million are overseas in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. Africa has the most UMC members abroad by far. There are 76 Annual Conferences overseas and 56 in America. There are 46 Active Bishops in the US and 20 Active Bishops overseas even though they have double the numbers. The fastest growing area is Africa where, in 2016, they sought to have 5 new Annual Conferences added. The number of churches in Africa is growing every year.

**8. How many Global Methodist Churches are there in Africa as of now?**

**P:** None. A search of the GMC website does not result in a list of congregations that have applied for membership in Africa or in America. The convening General Conference of the GMC is expected to be held in 2024. The Global Methodist Church is not divulging membership during this time of discernment.

**T:** We don't know. The Global Methodist Church is not listing its growing membership during this time when UM churches are voting on disaffiliation.

**9. Why did this church allow 2 gay members to teach Sunday School to their most precious children but will not allow a gay clergy to lead the church?**

**P:** Everyone who volunteers with or leads children and youth here at Munholland are required to follow Safe Sanctuary rules and to pass a background check. There is nothing in the BoD that prohibits members of the LGBTQIA+ community from serving in the church as Sunday School Teachers or Youth Chaperones/Volunteers.

**T:** Everyone is invited to participate in the life of the church, including ministry. Each service area has its own requirements depending on personality, interests, talents, etc. The leaders of ministry areas use their judgement in building their teams. Clergy, however, have

their own requirements in the UMC including being faithful in marriage – defined as between one man and one woman – and celibate in singleness.