

# Options for the Future of A local Church if we Disaffiliate from the UMC

## 1. Independent

- a. Become an independent, non-denominational church, long-term
- b. Become an independent, non-denominational church, short-term

## 2. Loose Congregational Association

- a. The Association of Independent Methodists
- b. Congregational Methodist Church

## 3. Full Connectional Denomination

- a. The Church of the Nazarene
- b. The Wesleyan Church
- c. Free Methodist Church
- d. The Global Methodist Church

### 1.a. Become an independent, non-denominational church, long-term

#### Advantages for A local Church:

- Will own our property free and clear
- No conference tithes (apportionments). Compared with our current conference giving of \_\_\_\_\_.
- No interference from denominational leaders
- Free to create our own identity

#### Disadvantages for A local Church:

- Must find our own pastor(s)
- Must develop our own *Statement of Beliefs* (our own theology)
- Must develop our own governance structure
- Must develop our own membership requirements
- Must develop our own accountability policy
- Must create our own connections to other like-minded churches
- Need strong, consistent, biblically grounded lay leadership to keep the church from drifting
- No denominational support
- This is very unfamiliar territory for A local Church. Will require significant investment of resources (i.e., time and money), to sustain this kind of structure. Mistakes will be made.

### 1.b. Become an independent, non-denominational church, short-term

#### Advantages for A local Church:

- Gives A local Church time to evaluate the best long-term affiliation option
- Gives time for the Global Methodist Church to congeal, aiding in better evaluation
- No conference tithes – saves ~\$42,200. per year for a short time, helping recoup the disaffiliation fee.

### **Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- Continues our period of uncertainty – “stuckness”. Leaves us in a period of prolonged uncertainty.
- Possible confusion and discontent among congregation over uncertainty of future.
- A local Church loses “a seat at the table” of whatever denomination it ultimately joins
- Loss of connection for pastors and lay leaders

## **2.a. The Association of Independent Methodists**

The Association of Independent Methodists is a Methodist Christian denomination founded in 1965 by individuals who had left the Methodist Church because of disagreements on church government and doctrinal matters. As of 2019, the denomination had 40 churches in 8 U.S. states, concentrated mostly in the South. There is **no trust clause**.

US Congregations	40
US Members	3,000 to 4,000
Headquarters	Jackson, MS
Churches in Indiana	0 ( <i>Closest church – 1 in Ohio</i> )

### **Advantages for A local Church:**

- Will own our property free and clear
- Smaller Conference tithes (apportionments), amount unknown

### **Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- Must find our own pastor(s)
- Need strong, consistent, biblically grounded lay leadership to keep the church from drifting
- Very small, no churches in Indiana
- No diversity of membership – almost exclusively white
- Too Southern
- Too fundamentalist

## **2.b. Congregational Methodist Church**

The Congregational Methodist Church was founded in Georgia in 1852 when several churches split from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South out of a desire to blend Methodist doctrine with congregational polity. There is **no trust clause**.

US Congregations	160
US Members	10,000 to 12,000
Headquarters	Florence, MS
Churches in Indiana	0 ( <i>closest churches – 3 in Missouri</i> )

### **Advantages for A local Church:**

- Will own our property free and clear
- Smaller Conference tithes (apportionments), amount unknown

### **Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- Must find our own pastor(s)
- Need strong, consistent, biblically grounded lay leadership to keep the church from drifting
- Very small, no churches in Indiana
- Little diversity of membership – White and Hispanic (Mexican) only
- Too Southern
- Too fundamentalist

### **3.a The Church of the Nazarene**

The Church of the Nazarene is an evangelical Christian denomination that emerged in North America from the 19th-century Wesleyan-Holiness movement within Methodism. With its members commonly referred to as Nazarenes, it is the largest denomination in the world aligned with the Wesleyan-Holiness movement and is a member of the World Methodist Council.

US Congregations	About 7,500
US Members	650,000
Worldwide Members	2,640,000
Headquarters	Lenexa, Kansas
Churches in Indiana	about 200 to 300

### **Beliefs: Nazarene Essentials**

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP We may say with confidence that to worship God is to acknowledge Him as the Rock of our salvation, the great God, the great King above all gods, the creator of all things, and the Shepherd who cares for His people.

These are our sources for THEOLOGICAL COHERENCE: Scripture, Christian Tradition, Reason & Personal Experience

PASSIONATE EVANGELISM is our response to Jesus' love and grace for humanity. The Church of the Nazarene started with passionate evangelism. It continues to be the heart of who we are.

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP is helping people develop obedient intimate relationships with Jesus. In these relationships, Christ's Spirit transforms their character into Christlikeness— changing new believers' values into kingdom values and involving them in His mission of investing in others in their homes, churches, and world.

CHURCH DEVELOPMENT We believe a church is a cluster of believers, not a building or property.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP We seek to develop leaders through a model of Christlikeness. Jesus is our example.

PURPOSEFUL COMPASSION We do every act of service, generosity, or mercy in Jesus' name, and we offer our efforts to reveal Jesus' love.

### **Advantages for A local Church:**

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice

### **Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- Nazarene churches are subject to a **trust clause** when they join the denomination.

- Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (10 to 15% of income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years
- The Church of the Nazarene has a significant presence of progressive clergy and members and appears to be starting to fight the same battles internally as the UMC – they may only be 10 to 15 years behind the UMC.

### 3.b. The Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church, also known as the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Wesleyan Holiness Church depending on the region, is a Methodist Christian denomination in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Indonesia, Asia, and Australia. The church is aligned Wesleyan-Holiness movement and has roots in the teachings of John Wesley. It adheres to Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine and is a member of the World Methodist Council.

Near the end of 2014, the Wesleyan Church had grown to an average of 516,203 adherents weekly in around 5,800 churches worldwide and is active in almost 100 nations. In 2017, there were 140,954 members in 1,607 congregations in North America, and an average worship attendance of 239,842. The growing statistics for 2015 reveals the church has around 1 million members worldwide.

US Congregations	1,600
US Members	150,000
Worldwide Members	550,000
Headquarters	Fishers, IN
Churches in Indiana	about 175

#### **Beliefs:**

**BIBLICAL AUTHORITY:** The Bible is God's holy Word. It uniquely and infallibly reveals God's plan for His people and how to live out that plan, individually and corporately. Beliefs, practices, priorities, and our mission are to be anchored in clear biblical teachings.

**CHRISTLIKENESS:** Jesus Christ is the defining feature of God's will and relationship with all humankind. In Christ is found both newness of life and the highest and clearest example for godliness. People made new in Christ find Him to be the source of faith, hope, and love in both the inner life and in our outward actions engaging a world desperate for hope and life.

**DISCIPLE-MAKING:** Making disciples is a clear mandate from Christ. This requires a strong missional focus on evangelism and training in spiritual growth and holy living. Done effectively, this will produce and promote growth and health in and among the churches.

**LOCAL CHURCH CENTERED:** The denomination exists to help local congregations grow and multiply, be more healthy, and more authentically reflect God's plan. Local churches are the most fundamental and strategic points of evangelism and discipleship. The challenge of the denomination is to keep finding the best ways to serve, strengthen, and multiply congregations.

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP:** Wesleyans respect leadership that is placed over them, while realizing that the authority and effectiveness of spiritual leadership is not primarily bestowed, but earned, and is characterized by a loving and willing heart of obedience that serves God and mankind gladly. Wesleyans desire to be leaders in serving.

**UNITY IN DIVERSITY:** There is intrinsic value in every person. Biblical unity becomes all the more important and beautiful in the light of the wide-ranging differences in personalities, cultures, races,

languages, talents, and perspectives. Finding unity and mutual love in Christ eliminates devaluation and deprivation of life to one another.

#### **Advantages for A local Church:**

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- Headquarters in Fishers, IN

#### **Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- Wesleyan Churches are subject to a **trust clause** when they join the denomination. They do have a seldom used Affiliate status for some churches that doesn't require a **trust clause**.
- Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (10 to 15% of income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years
- If very many disaffiliated UM churches join the Wesleyan, they will quickly be overwhelmed

### **3.c. Free Methodist Church**

The Free Methodist Church was organized at Pekin, New York, in 1860. The founders had been members of the Methodist Episcopal Church but were excluded from its membership for earnestly advocating what they saw as the doctrines and usages of authentic Wesleyan Methodism. Under the leadership of the Rev. Benjamin Titus (B. T.) Roberts, a graduate of Wesleyan University, the movement spread rapidly. Societies were organized, churches built, and the work established.

The word "Free" was suggested and adopted because the new church (1) was anti-slavery; (2) wanted pews to be free to all regardless of status, rather than sold or rented (as was common); (3) promoted freedom of worship in the Holy Spirit, as opposed to stifling formality; (4) upheld the principle of "freedom" from secret and oath-bound societies (in particular the Masonic Lodge), so as to have full loyalty to Christ; (5) stood for "freedom" from the abuse of ecclesiastical authority (due to the bishop's action in allowing expulsion of 120 clergy and lay); and (6) desired its members experience "freedom" of transformation in sanctification via the Holy Spirit due to personal consecration and faith, rather than 'sin-management' or gradual growth following justification.

US Congregations	828
US Members	67,000
Worldwide Members	1,200,000
Headquarters	Indianapolis, IN
Churches in Indiana	about 40

#### **Beliefs:**

##### **The Free Methodist Way**

In response to numerous national conversations with FM leaders at all levels, in 2021, the Free Methodist bishops introduced: *The Free Methodist Way: Five Values that Shape our Identity*. These five values express the distinctives that set Free Methodist apart from other faith families in the body of Christ. They are as follows:

- Life Giving Holiness: GOD'S CALL TO HOLINESS was never meant to be a burden, but a gift that liberates us for life that is truly life by delivering us from the destructive power of sin.
- Love-Driven Justice: LOVE IS THE WAY WE DEMONSTRATE GOD'S HEART FOR JUSTICE by valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children, acting with compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding Creation.
- Christ-Compelled Multiplication: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST — the message He proclaimed, the life He lived, and the ministry He modeled — set into motion a redemptive movement destined to fill the whole earth.
- Cross-Cultural Collaboration: FROM THE BEGINNING, GOD'S INTENT WAS TO HAVE A PEOPLE FROM EVERY NATION, culture and ethnicity, united in Christ and commissioned to carry out His work in the world.
- God-Given Revelation: WE HOLD UNWAVERINGLY to our conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

### Church Affiliation Steps (*Steps to Join the Free Methodist Denomination*)

#### PHASE ONE: Exploratory Phase

The first step for those seeking affiliation with the Free Methodist Church is that of exploration.

#### PHASE TWO: Decision Phase

In the decision phase, the congregation or group desiring to affiliate with the Free Methodist Church processes all the information gathered during the exploratory phase to reach a point of decision to affiliate or not to affiliate.

#### PHASE THREE: Affiliation Phase

The affiliation relationship officially begins when church leaders and the pastor join FMC Conference leaders and representatives to sign the Affiliate Covenant (MOU). This is a public declaration that the church and the FMC are affiliated. The signing of the covenant agreement should be viewed much like an engagement ring.

#### PHASE FOUR: Full Membership

The Affiliation Process concludes when the church leaders and leaders of the FMC express mutual desire to welcome the church as a full member of the Free Methodist Church. The congregation would then be presented at the following Annual Conference gathering to be welcomed as a Free Methodist Society.

### Advantages for A local Church:

- Well established denomination
- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- Headquarters in Indianapolis

### Disadvantages for A local Church:

- Has a **trust clause** when churches reach the Full Membership level of affiliation. The affiliation process is expected to last no more than 3 years. Might be able to negotiate exemption from **trust clause**.
- Denominational financial support expectations are similar to the UMC (10 to 15% of income)
- An established church culture that may be somewhat unfamiliar to us
- We will no longer be affiliated with churches and pastors we have known for years

- If very many disaffiliated UM churches join the Free Methodists, they will quickly be overwhelmed.

### 3.d. The Global Methodist Church

The Global Methodist Church (shortened to GM Church, or GMC) is a Protestant denomination based in the United States founded on conservative Methodist precepts. The denomination launched on May 1, 2022. The Romania-Bulgaria Conference had already voted to leave the UMC, and in June the Evangelical Methodist Church in Croatia joined as a member church of the GMC.

As Annual conferences continue to meet across the US and around the world, local churches are joining the GMC. Many are still in process and awaiting church conference meetings which would need a follow up approval vote at their next annual conference. As of July 1, 2022, there are scores of GM churches in the US who have joined with 4 in Indiana, all reasonably large ones:

Gathering Point Church, Dayton, IN (formerly Dayton UMC)  
 The ConneXion Church, Kokomo, IN (formerly St. Luke's UMC)  
 First Methodist Church, Martinsville, IN (formerly First UMC)  
 The Garden at Gethsemane Church, Muncie, IN

Mission – To make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.

#### Hopes for the GMC articulated by founding leaders:

The Global Methodist Church hopes to be a movement of warm-hearted, like-minded, Jesus-loving, spirit-filled, Wesleyan, evangelical, orthodox, covenant-keeping Methodists who are joined together in mission.

- A church that is all about Jesus
- A church focused on discipleship using Wesleyan practices to “build up one another in love”
- A church with empowered and engaged laity
- A global, ethnically diverse church
- A church serious about evangelism and church planting
- A missional church pursuing Wesley's goal of social holiness (*this is not social justice as pursued by the current UMC*)
- A growing church with an exciting future!!

The GM Church is something we all will recognize (*familiar feel*). It will be similar to the UMC in many ways. But it will fix the things that blatantly need to be fixed that we currently experience in the UMC. The following habits need to be kicked:

- The most expensive clergy deployment system on the planet aimed at giving jobs to tenured leaders regardless of their effectiveness.
- Keeping congregations in the fold by holding their property ransom.
- A top-down administrative system paired with a bottom-up method of funding.
- Crippling administrative overhead.
- No Accountability for bishops, pastors, conferences, and congregations who do not follow the Book of Discipline.

Add to the above list some new positive areas of focus:

- Church planting
- A strong mission partnership model
- Better catechesis
- Renewal in the areas of prayer, worship, and the sacraments.
- Focus on young adults and communities of color.

**Expected features of the Global Methodist Church:**

- Start with a transitional organizational structure and polity, then hold a convening General Conference in 2024
- Very little bureaucracy, low overhead cost
- Lower apportionments (more \$ stays in the local church)
- No **trust clause**. Congregations will own their property / assets
- Churches will have more control over pastoral appointments
- Bishops' power and their terms will be limited, and their accountability assured
- Doctrines and practices will be classically Wesleyan – unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials
- Doctrines and practices will be grounded in orthodox, historical Christianity
- By the end of 2023, estimated between 250,000 and 500,000 US members
- By the end of 2023, 100 to 200 Indiana Churches will disaffiliate. 40 to 80 will join the GMC

**Advantages for A local Church:**

- Traditional, orthodox theology and practice
- We will own our property free and clear
- Smaller conference tithes (apportionments), 6.5% max. (current \$\_\_\_\_\_ is reduced to \$\_\_\_\_\_). The \$\_\_\_\_\_ savings helps defray disaffiliation cost.
- Familiar church culture, theology, worship practices, denominational polity, etc.
- A Wesleyan/Methodist re-boot
- A chance to be in on the formation of a new denomination
- Connection with churches, clergy, and laity we know and love
- A truly global denomination. Within 5 years the GMC will have churches in Africa, Europe, Asia, South America, Central America, etc.
- There is no cost to join the GMC. Only a majority vote of church members
- It is simple and free to leave the GMC. Only a majority vote of church members

**Disadvantages for A local Church:**

- New denomination, not fully formed
- Very little administrative structure in place for the first few years. For example, currently no bishops or district superintendents.
- Many details of the church's Book of Discipline will be added at the first General Conference. Additions and changes will be significant in the first decade.
- Denominational service agencies (the equivalent of UMW, UMM, Board of Global Ministries, etc.) will take time to get in place. Most will be in the form of strategic partnerships.



There are over 80 other Wesleyan/Methodist denominations world-wide with 80,000,000 members

Examples in the US:

Allegheny Wesleyan Methodist Connection	About 100 churches
Bible Methodist Church	90 Churches, 4 in Indiana
Evangelical Methodist Church	About 85 churches in US, 5 in Indiana, Headquarters in Indianapolis, IN
Southern Methodist Church	About 80 churches in US, 60% in South Carolina
Primitive Methodist Church	About 60 Churches
First Congregational Methodist Church	About 50 churches
Methodist Protestant Church	About 40 churches, mainly Mississippi
Southern Congregational Methodist Church	About 30 churches
Evangelical Wesleyan Church	About 25 churches
Missionary Methodist Church	14 churches in North Carolina
Fundamental Methodist Conference	13 churches
Lumber River Conference of the Holiness Methodist Church	10 churches in North Carolina
Bethel Methodist Church	5 churches in Texas