

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GENERAL CONFERENCE

McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church

- Adapted from the Oklahoma Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC): www.okumc.org/newsdetail/frequently-asked-questions-about-general-conference-15184135
- Please see page 4 for a glossary of terms

1. What is the status of General Conference?

The Commission on General Conference has re-scheduled the postponed 2020 General Conference to August 29-September 6, 2022 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is expected that the upcoming General Conference will pass legislation that allows graceful circumstances for individual churches to leave the United Methodist Church denomination if that church has disagreements with the denomination on questions of ordination of self-professing homosexual clergy or the performance of weddings of same-sex couples. The General Conference may also debate the current Book of Discipline language regarding these issues, either re-affirming or strengthening the current restrictions on these practices, or perhaps relaxing these restrictions.

The Commission continues to monitor the Covid-19 pandemic to determine if this meeting can move forward as planned. Because delegates come from all over the world, one concern is potential travel restrictions that may preclude travel from certain countries. It is hoped that the Commission can make a final decision in the first few months of 2022 on whether to hold the meeting as scheduled or postpone it once again.

2. What does all this mean for McFarlin?

Until the General Conference meets, nothing in the United Methodist Church's Doctrine or Discipline has changed. Therefore, nothing has changed for McFarlin. United Methodism continues under the 2016 Book of Discipline until the General Conference meets again. Therefore, no church at this point will be asked by the denomination to make any decisions or take a vote regarding alignment with any particular group.

3. When the General Conference meets, what will be the choices for McFarlin?

There are several proposed pieces of legislation, and any legislation presented can go through a process of amendments and deletions of legislation before the final, approved version. Our elected delegation from the Oklahoma Annual Conference will be involved in voting and debate on the legislation considered by the General Conference.

If legislation is passed that relaxes restrictions on these questions of human sexuality, it is reasonable to assume that local churches such as McFarlin will have the freedom to be more restrictive than what may be permissible in the denomination's Book of Discipline, or it may be left to McFarlin or the Oklahoma Annual Conference to make any determination at all.

4. How can the McFarlin family keep up with what is happening with the denomination?

McFarlin's General Conference Guidance Team has been meeting for several months to keep apprised of the developments within the denomination. The principal goal of the Team is to communicate important developments with the McFarlin congregation at regular intervals leading up to the General Conference and beyond in order to strengthen the unity and connection of the McFarlin congregation.

It is vitally important for the congregation to know that the General Conference Guidance Team is not the body that will make decisions for McFarlin on what McFarlin will do in the future and its relation to the United Methodist Church; that responsibility will remain with the congregation.

While there may be some communication pieces circulating from various groups, the Oklahoma conference website will contain official regularly updated information: <https://www.okumc.org/gc2020resources>. All communications sent to Oklahoma United Methodists regarding any decisions will come from the Oklahoma Conference official email system and will be clearly identified with the conference logo.

5. When General Conference does act, will McFarlin have enough time to decide what to do?

Again, it may not be necessary for any church to take any action, or just limited action, depending on what is passed. However, most proposals that have been submitted contain a transition period for action, if needed. The Oklahoma Annual Conference will be prepared to help with any needed transitions.

6. Will the Oklahoma Annual Conference be voting on any choices?

The Oklahoma Annual Conference will not be voting on any of these matters unless legislation is passed by the General Conference giving the Annual conference options to vote on matters related to its actions.

7. What about McFarlin's church property?

United Methodist Church property is currently covered by the trust clause of the 2016 Book of Discipline (ie, McFarlin property would belong to the Oklahoma Annual Conference if the church ceased to be a UMC church). Unless that is changed, all United Methodist properties will continue to be under those requirements. Many pieces of legislation to be considered in the upcoming General Conference will seek to shift control over church property to the local church, particularly in matters dealing with separation from the United Methodist Church. It is likely some extent of local control will be provided in any approved legislation.

8. Can churches join a new denomination before General Conference action?

There are some provisions in the Discipline for local churches to leave the UMC, buy their property and join another church body. However, those details must be negotiated and worked out with the presiding district superintendent, the conference board of trustees and the Annual conference.

9. With the uncertainty within the denomination, are appointments being considered differently at this time?

Appointments are being considered as they have always been considered:

- First, the consultation process begins with the needs of the church as the priority.
- Second, the prayerful consideration of the available clergy person(s) who have the gifts and graces that best fit the needs.
- Third, the context of the appointment is taken into consideration.
- Fourth, the placement of the person into the congregation or other settings of ministry.

10. Will apportionments be affected by what is going on in the denomination or Oklahoma Conference?

The budget and the apportionment formula used to assess local churches are developed by various Annual Conference committees and presented to the Annual conference by the Annual Conference Council on Finance and Administration. We do not anticipate any changes in how this is currently being done. Therefore, apportionments will continue to be assessed with the expectation that churches will give their best faith effort in fulfilling their obligation in the area.

11. What's the bottom line for the future of the McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church?

The discernment of McFarlin's General Conference Guidance Team is that the future of the McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church is brighter than ever, no matter what the ramifications of the upcoming General Conference brings! Our congregational family understands the important responsibilities that McFarlin has to serve God and the Norman community and beyond. Our missional impact has blessed countless lives and will continue to bless many more. Whatever structural body that the McFarlin congregational family chooses to be a part of, we are confident that McFarlin will continue to Change Lives that Change the World!

Glossary of Terms

General Conference: The worldwide conference of the United Methodist Church that consists of clergy and lay delegates from each Annual Conference. The General Conference meets every 4 years (except in extraordinary circumstances such as the current pandemic) to establish denominational policies and doctrines.

Oklahoma Annual Conference: One of the many regional conferences, of which McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church is a part of, that make up the worldwide General Conference. Clergy and lay delegates from each local church meet each year at their respective Annual Conference for legislating regional policies. Each Annual Conference is led by a bishop appointed by General Conference.

Local church/Local conference: Local churches such as McFarlin meet annually and as needed, which can be either through an annual Charge Conference consisting of clergy and elected lay leadership, or a church-wide Conference of all bona fide members for major decisions.

Appointments: Annual Conference bishops are in charge of making all appointments of lead clergy to each local church.

Apportionments: The proportion of local church tithing revenue that is expected to be sent to the Annual conference (and General Conference) to support regional and worldwide operations and missional work.

Book of Discipline: The book that outlines the law, doctrine, organizational work and procedures of the worldwide United Methodist Church. The Book of Discipline is able to be modified through approved legislation at each meeting of the General Conference.