

McFARLIN'S GENERAL CONFERENCE GUIDANCE TEAM

The Mission of our Team: "To strengthen the connection and unity of McFarlin"

ESSENTIAL POINTS

January 2022

References for 3 Levels of Decision-Making:

- General Conference: Worldwide
- Annual Conference: Oklahoma
- Local Church Conference: McFarlin UMC

About the Team:

The McFarlin General Conference Guidance Team was created to strengthen the connection and unity of McFarlin by monitoring developments of and preparing the church to understand, manage, and respond constructively to the impact of decisions and developments by the General (worldwide) Conference of the United Methodist Church with regard to the ongoing debate about marriage, ordination, and human sexuality.

Our General Conference Guidance Team of twelve includes our three pastors, two staff members for administrative and communications support, and nine trusted members of our congregation who lean to both sides of the issues and who are committed to do everything possible to strengthen the connection and unity of McFarlin for our continued and long-term vitality and effectiveness. The co-chairs are Karen Hill and Chris Gentry.

Essential Points of information:

1. **First, while we are monitoring closely and waiting to see what decisions our denomination makes and are also actively working to strengthen the connection and unity of our church, we want to be clear that, here at McFarlin, our primary task is to pour ourselves whole-heartedly into our Jesus-defined mission of *changing lives that change the world*.**
2. The questions under consideration by the General Conference of the UMC are whether or not to allow marriage of LGBT couples in UMC churches and/or to allow ordination of clergy who are "self-avowed practicing homosexuals."ⁱ (See further definition in the endnote.)
3. The rules of the UMC contained in the official Book of Discipline currently do not allow either; and, both McFarlin and McFarlin's clergy continue to abide by the official Discipline that governs churches and clergy. (2016/19 Book of Discipline of UMC, Par. 304.3 and 341.6)
4. September 2022 is the date now set for the General (worldwide) Conference of the UMC for deciding those historic and controversial questions before our denomination with regard to marriage and ordination as related to homosexuality. Due to the hurdles of hosting a large gathering with delegates from across the globe, General Conference may be postponed again.
5. The earliest date that McFarlin could be called upon to make a decision is the fall of 2022, but it is extremely more likely that it would be sometime in 2023. 2023 is more probable because

of the following most likely timeline: Assuming the General Conference completes its work in September 2022, then the Oklahoma Annual Conference would meet to respond in the fall of 2022 or later in 2023, followed by the possible need for local churches such as McFarlin to respond in 2023 or later.

6. No change in the current rules or practice of the UMC with respect to the questions under debate is happening now. Although one wing of the worldwide UMC has unveiled a plan to form a new denomination calling itself the Global Methodist Church, that plan is also on hold awaiting the General Conference in September 2022. News reports about that option or other options that are also in development may create a stir of speculation and conversation, but no major change is happening now.
7. Our McFarlin General Conference Guidance Team is not the group that decides what McFarlin will do. The team will help our church understand what is going on in the denomination and process it together. If McFarlin needs to make a decision by way of a vote, that decision would happen at a Church Conference where all professing members have a vote, subject to any stipulations that may be officially adopted by the General or Oklahoma Conference of the UMC.
8. Our McFarlin General Conference Guidance Team is proactive in leading us to prepare for and work through whatever is decided at the 2022 conference or any other related developments. We are committed to excellence in preparation, management, and communication about these matters. When there is more to share or significant developments arise, the team will communicate with the church.
9. Our team is seeking God's guidance, welcomes your inquiries, and invites you to pray with us. As more information is available, updates will be communicated.
- 10. Now is the time for all of us to focus on our commitment and desire to follow Jesus. God continues to open wide doors for effective ministry here and now. Together, let's do the good and joyful work of *changing lives that change the world.***

ⁱ Statements from the official Book of Discipline of the UMC, 2016, revised 2019.

- ¶ 304.3: The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals [*see below] are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
- ¶ 341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

*definition of "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" added in 2019 is found in:

¶ 304.3, page 226, footnote 1.

1. "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual; or is living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual. See Judicial Council Decisions 702, 708, 722, 725, 764, 844, 984, 1020, 1341.