

McFarlin's General Conference Guidance Team

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

Essential Points

December 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 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 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 Chad Ely 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. April 2024 is the date now set for the General (worldwide) Conference of the UMC set for deciding those historic and controversial questions before our denomination with regard to marriage and ordination as related to homosexuality.

5. No change in the current rules or practice of the UMC with respect to the questions under debate is happening now. Given the delay of the General Conference to 2024, a traditional wing of the worldwide UMC has formed a new denomination called the “Global Methodist Church.” In addition, some UMC churches have begun a process of disaffiliation under “Paragraph 2553” rules passed at GC2019 which relaxed some of the requirements of disaffiliation. To date, around 29 of the more than 400 UMC churches in the Oklahoma Conference have disaffiliated.
6. Our McFarlin General Conference 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 vote, that 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.
7. Our McFarlin General Conference Team is proactive in leading us to prepare for and work through whatever is decided at the 2024 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.
8. 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.
9. **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.