

## 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](http://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 April 23-May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, NC. The General Conference may debate the current *Book of Discipline* language regarding questions of ordination of self-professing homosexual clergy or the performance of weddings of same-sex couples, either re-affirming or strengthening the current restrictions on these practices, or relaxing these restrictions.

#### 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?

Any proposed legislation presented can go through a process of amendments and deletions of legislation before the final, approved version. The elected delegation from the Oklahoma Annual Conference (elected by the Conference not by McFarlin) 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 since January 2021 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. 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* (i.e., McFarlin property would belong to the Oklahoma Annual Conference if the church ceased to be a UMC church). When a church chooses to leave the UMC, fair negotiations about property are conducted between the local church and the conference board of trustees. Paragraph 2553 of the *Book of Discipline* allows for disaffiliating churches to leave with their property until December 31, 2023. After that date there is a procedure that may be used with regard to property and assets of disaffiliating churches, found in Paragraph 2549.3.b in the BOD.

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

Yes, they can if proper disaffiliation protocol is followed as named above. There are some provisions in the *Discipline* for local churches to leave the UMC 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 of clergy to churches made by the bishop 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, abilities and experiences 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 McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church?**

The discernment of McFarlin's General Conference Guidance Team is that the future of McFarlin Memorial United Methodist Church is brighter than ever, no matter what the ramifications of the upcoming General Conference bring! 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 is worked out with regard to the matters discussed above, 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 (assignments) 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.