

## Section 2: Misinformation and Information

In the midst of disagreement, sometimes there is misinformation that gets out there and contributes to the messiness. Let me speak to some of the misinformation. I know I won't answer all the questions, nor do I have time to answer all the questions in this annual conference session. Here is what I know.

General Conference has been postponed till 2024. However, no, the church has not split. The church has not split. Yes, there has been a new denomination that has formed in recent months. It's called the Global Methodist Church. This is a new denomination. It is not a wing or a branch of The United Methodist Church. It is a new denomination.

Do we have some churches and some people that might decide to move to that new denomination? Some may make that decision. If there are some people or congregations that make that decision, then we will work with them so that they might do ministry and mission in the place and with the denomination to which they believe God is calling them. But again, the church has not split.

The United Methodist Church will continue to do the mission and ministry of Christ. Now, is The United Methodist denomination perfect? Well no. As you already know, no institution, no human institution is perfect. There are flaws in all of them. One of the reasons that we meet in General Conference, usually every four years, is that we realize that things need to be tweaked and changed in terms of our guiding rules, which is *The Book of Discipline*. Usually, every four years, at the General Conference, *The Book of Discipline* changes. Every four years the church tends to get messy because changes are made to *The Book of Discipline*. Every four years there are some people that leave, and others that come and join United Methodists that stay and work through the messiness together.

There is a place in The United Methodist Church for the more conservative, more traditional person and there is also a place in The United Methodist Church for the more progressive person, and everybody in between. We all are called to do the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ and we are all called to put Christ first in our lives. If we put Christ first in our lives, we will find that in the midst of our differences we can work together to do the mission and ministry of Christ - even though there are going to be issues and subjects upon which we will need to respectfully agree to disagree.

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball 2022 State of the Church Address  
West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church

This is not new stuff and these are not new challenges. A study of Church history, a study of biblical history will reveal that being the Church has been messy from the beginning. There have been arguments about the practice of Communion. The Bible documents the arguments about Communion and how it is practiced. There have been arguments about how to pray. In fact, there were so many arguments and disagreements about how to pray and what to pray Jesus said when you pray, pray like this. (Luke 11: 2-4 and Matthew 6: 9 - 13) There have been arguments about who can be a part of the church. In the Bible you can read about those arguments and the different perspectives and beliefs people held. Disagreements and struggles within the church are not new. So yes, the messiness of the church goes back to biblical times.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. The United Methodist Church has not split and the mission continues. What new connections or stronger connections does your congregation need to make with the community it serves to both meet people's needs and to make Christ known?
2. What do you know about The United Methodist Church, its beliefs and theology? How about doing a study individually or with a group in your congregation on United Methodist Beliefs? You can find a brief History of the Church beginning on page 11 of *The Book of Discipline 2016*. You can find the doctrinal standards and theological task of The United Methodist Church on pages 47 – 80 of *The Book of Discipline 2016*.
3. Could you or your congregation engage in a Biblical study on dealing with conflict and restoring/reconciling relationships?
4. There is a course on Portico, our conference online learning platform called Conflict Resolution Skills. The leaders of your church could each complete that course and then engage in a discussion about how to best use those principles in your congregation.