



On Sunday, April 28 The Church Council sponsored a presentation by Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, President of Wesley Theological Seminary, to share his perspective on next steps in the UMC. The Council invites you to a follow up session June 2 (see below).

Key Points from Dr. McAllister-Wilson's Presentation

Initial reactions to the 2019 General Conference of the UMC vote and UMC Judicial Council decisions that have declared the Book of Discipline's current language and the ban on ordaining clergy or allowing clergy to marry same sex couples constitutional, have been wide ranging. Some have accepted the ruling as final while others have decided to engage in "holy resistance," defying the decision.

Disaffiliation: The UMC expects to permit local church disaffiliation through 2023. A process for this will need to be worked out at the next General Conference in 2020. David McAllister-Wilson confirmed that Wesley Theological Seminary will not disaffiliate due to its ecumenical posture and breadth of theological perspectives. The seminary serves

Korean, AME, British, and Mexican Methodist groups, as well as 22 other denominations. Because of its diversity and reach the seminary can be an important venue to continue to educate from a theological perspective.

The Issue of Disobedience is complex. Large numbers of clergy disobeying the Book of Discipline may so overwhelm the system that their actions create a different catalyst for change. Financial leverage through adjusting apportionments is unlikely to be significant enough to have an impact in time for the 2020 General Conference. While ending second mile giving that currently helps Africa or the larger UMC may be more effective as a means of protest that might come at the cost of not supporting programs for the poor globally, something that is a core value for Methodists.

Current Options

- Stay together as one UMC under a paradigm that all ideological groups can live under – closer to the One Church plan model;
- Create a new Methodist denomination (this is complex and the church does not yet have a process in place for this);
- Become independent as a local church (complicated by resources, pension and health benefits for staff and property issues); or
- Choose a gracious exit, originally designed for traditionalists, and now an option for others too (terms have not yet been set for this option).

Broader Issues Including the Impact of Schism

- When the church is debating who is or can be a member it is in trouble.
- The loss of LGBTQ and allied members would be a significant blow to the enrichment they provide.
- The impact on mission and seminary work that UMC currently supports, that benefit from economies of scale, will be severely hampered.
- The impact of young people in the ordination pipeline is already slowing down and young people, in general, are beginning to disaffiliate. This does not bode well for growth.
- UMC started as a grassroots movement and has become an "institutionalist" and clergy-centric organization. Neither is serving us well. If centrists/progressives split off, the slow, incremental advances re women, African Americans, Filipinos, Koreans and others would be negatively affected. We need the courage to stay together despite our differences.

UMC Next: Special Report Sunday, June 2 at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall

UMC Next is a gathering of 600 centrist and progressive United Methodists who are discerning a response to the Traditional Plan passed at the 2019 Special General Conference. They are envisioning a Methodist movement where All God's Children are included. FUMC member **Mark Elder** and members of the Virginia Conference will share their experiences at the gathering and discuss next steps. There will also be time for conversation and soliciting feedback from those who attend. Light refreshments will be provided. For more info, contact Mark at markuselder@gmail.com.

Our Virginia Annual Conference will be held on June 20-22 in Roanoke. Our clergy will be attending as well as our lay members **Wray Sexson, Mark Elder and Beth Strausser**. Election of lay and clergy delegates to the 2020 General Conference will be held. Fairlington member **Roma Sexson** is on the list of nominees to be considered for election as a General Conference Lay Delegate. It is quite possible that petitions will be considered to be sent to General Conference 2020 regarding the future of the church. A special offering will be gathered from all our churches, with FUMC's offering to be taken up **Sunday, June 9**. Recipients are: Africa University Scholarships / Cambodia Pastors Training / Mozambique Lay Leadership Training / Brazil "Shade and Fresh Water" children's program / Just Neighbors Matching Funds Grant for Immigrant Legal Counsel in our districts.