



The Connection

ROCK HILL DISTRICT

139 Elizabeth Lane, Rock Hill, SC 29730

803-328-0218 rhdist@umcsc.org

M-TH, 8am-1pm

Please send info you want included in newsletter to: rhdccm@gmail.com



Steps toward Healing, Growth, & Belonging

Following the historic 2024 General Conference decisions, the Judicial Council ruling to end separation, a tumultuous presidential election, rising racial tensions and a host of other hot topics, we are experiencing a time of not just division, but extreme polarization. Many people in our churches are wrestling with how to move forward as United Methodists, especially when we may now find our fellow congregants hold a vast array of differing beliefs about a great many topics.

How can we make room for such varying tensions and still come together to worship God? John Wesley asked, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works,” (Sermon 39).

In an effort to help navigate the climate in which we find ourselves, this month’s newsletter provides you with resources to help educate yourself and others on matters of foundational Methodist beliefs, Christian Nationalism, and Regionalization. You will also find a guide on facilitating deliberate dialogue within your congregation to help find commonalities that bridge us together even in the midst of division. It is hard work to be united amid such diversity, but with intentionality, honest conversations, and a willingness to learn, we can create spaces of belonging for all.

ST PATRICK'S DAY



What St. Patrick can Teach United Methodists article by Heather Hahn

A PRAYER OF SAINT PATRICK

Christ be with us, Christ before us, Christ behind us,
Christ in us, Christ beneath us, Christ above us,
Christ on our right, Christ on our left,
Christ where we lie, Christ where we sit, Christ where we arise,
Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of us,
Christ in every eye that sees us,
Christ in every ear that hears us.
Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of the Christ,
May your salvation, O Lord, be ever with us.

(SAINT PATRICK, IRELAND, 5TH CENT)

HAPPY
ST. PATRICK'S
DAY

Lessons from St. Patrick for Today's United Methodists

Rev. Rebecca Holland



According to legend, St. Patrick used the shamrock to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity to the Irish people. He pointed to the three leaves of the shamrock and explained that, like the three leaves, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct entities but are also One, just as the three leaves are part of the same plant.

This simple illustration helped the Irish people understand the complex concept of the Holy Trinity, which became a cornerstone of Christian theology. Today, the shamrock is still used as a symbol of St. Patrick and is closely associated with Ireland and its culture.



Open Hearts.
Open Minds.
Open Doors.

The people
of The United
Methodist
Church®

REGIONALIZATION:

EFFECTIVE MINISTRY IN EVERY CULTURE

Regionalization allows United Methodists throughout our connection to best serve their unique communities as they share the love of God, make disciples and transform the world.



WHAT IS REGIONALIZATION?

- Regionalization allows each region of the church to make decisions that will best support outreach and ministry efforts in their specific setting. This ability is already in place in the central conferences; regionalization will bring that ability to the U.S. as well.
- Regionalization was developed collaboratively by United Methodists across the globe.
- It was adopted by an overwhelming majority of General Conference delegates.
- Nine regional conferences will comprise The UMC: one in the U.S. and eight in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.



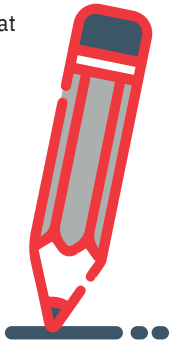
WHAT CAN'T REGIONAL CONFERENCES DO?

- Create their own constitution or adopt any policy in violation of the constitution contained in the General Book of Discipline
- Alter The Doctrinal Standards, Our Theological Task, The Ministry of All Christians or The Social Principles



WHAT CAN REGIONAL CONFERENCES DO?

- Draft and publish their own regional Book of Discipline, hymnals, books of worship and other liturgical resources
- Set requirements for ordination and licensed ministry with respect to their needs and resources
- Set standards for lay membership
- Develop practices around marriage ceremonies, funerals and other rites that align with cultural contexts and laws in each country
- Reorganize their annual conferences, districts or charge conferences to best serve their missional needs and convene their own judicial courts
- Work with annual conferences to ensure policies and practices align with the laws in each country



WHAT NOW?

- The regionalization plan will require amending the United Methodist Constitution. Constitutional amendments must be passed by at least 2/3 of General Conference, which already happened.
- Now, the amendments must be ratified by annual conferences. Amendments must be supported by 2/3 of the total voting members of all the annual conferences combined – this process could last until 2026.
- The Council of Bishops will announce when the amendments have met the threshold to become church law.

“Regionalization is a pathway to make manifest the world-wide nature of The United Methodist Church. It will expand the Church’s witness, embrace the cultural diversity, strengthen the connection and empower each missional context.”

BISHOP TRACY SMITH MALONE, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS





REGIONALIZATION: EFFECTIVE MINISTRY IN EVERY CULTURE

Further Reading:

What is Regionalization?

ResourceUMC information
about Regionalization.



Link to the Regionalization Webinar from 2/20/25.
Skip over to 9:00 for it to begin.

REGISTER FOR ANNUAL
CONFERENCE NOW!

SEE THE POSSIBILITIES, LIVE THE PROMISES!



**2025 SOUTH CAROLINA
UNITED METHODIST
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**



See The Possibilities of a Seed: "Plant gardens and eat what they produce." Jeremiah 29:5-7

June 8-11, 2025 | Greenville Convention Center

PODCAST



"Methodism and American politics: A historical look at the interplay"

Understanding the historical intertwining of religion and politics in America, particularly from a Methodist standpoint, helps us navigate contemporary situations.

Discover how Methodism impacted Revolutionary War-era Manhattan and Boston when Dr. Ashley Boggan welcomes the Rev. Stefanie Bennett and Rev. Emily Nelms Chastain as guests on "Un-Tied Methodism."



An American flag with 50 stars waves on a flagpole to the left of a large, weathered wooden cross. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM


EDUCATE, EQUIP, & EMPOWER
yourself & others

What is Christian Nationalism?

[Link to UMC article](#)

Leading Among Christian Nationalism

by Lovett Weems

A blurred background image showing a group of people sitting around a table, engaged in conversation. The focus is on the text overlay.

Links to UMC Discipleship “Courageous Conversations” guides:

Talking with youth **about Christian Nationalism**

Conversations about Christian Nationalism

FAITH & FACTS

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

What does the Bible say?

Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (**Acts 10: 34-35**)



You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (**Deuteronomy. 16:18, 20**)

What does the United Methodist Church say?

The United Methodist Church has for many years supported the separation of church and state. In some parts of the world this separation has guaranteed the diversity of religious expressions and the freedom to worship God according to each person's conscience. Separation of church and state means no organic union of the two, but it does permit interaction. The state should not use its authority to promote particular religious beliefs (including atheism), nor should it require prayer or worship in the public schools, but it should leave students free to practice their own religious convictions. We believe that the state should not attempt to control the church, nor should the church seek to dominate the state. (**Book of Discipline, ¶164C, "Church and State Relations"**)



In participating in the arena of public affairs, churches are not inherently superior to other participants; hence the stands that they take on particular issues of public policy are not above question or criticism. Another norm of responsible behavior derives from the fact that no particular public policy that may be endorsed by churches at a given point in time should be regarded as an ultimate expression of Christian ethics in society. Churches should not assume that any particular social pattern, political order, or economic ideology represents a complete embodiment of the Christian ethic. Finally, churches should not seek to utilize the processes of public affairs to further their own institutional interests or to obtain special privileges for themselves. (**Book of Resolutions, # 5102, "A Statement Concerning Church Participation in Public Affairs"**)



CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living FAITH Seeking JUSTICE Pursuing PEACE

Find [this pdf](https://umcjustice.org) and others at
umcjustice.org

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

What do the facts say?

- Christian Nationalism is a political ideology that seeks to merge Christianity and U.S. citizen identities, distorting both the Christian faith and the United States constitutional democracy. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation (Christians Against Christian Nationalism).
- The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution established the free exercise of religion while also prohibiting any establishment of religion by the state.
- The U.S. Constitution guarantees that religion can never be a requirement for holding public office.
- People in the United States who are supportive of Christian nationalism generally hold less favorable views of immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and are less likely to believe that racism remains a problem in the United States.
- 40% of Christian nationalism adherents agree with patriots resorting to violence to save the United States (Brookings Institution).



Brookings Institution –
Scan Here for More

What do You say?

Take **ACTION** for justice...



Foster Public Interfaith Relationships in Your Community.

Discuss the topic in your Church at bible studies, workshops or meetings.

Sign "Christians Against Christian Nationalism" statement on their website
www.christiansagainatchristiannationalism.org

Call for legislative policies that strengthen federal law for the protection of religious freedom.

For more information contact:
advocacy@umcjustice.org

www.umcjustice.org

General Board of Church and Society

100 Maryland Ave, NE Washington, DC 20002

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The United Methodist Church

SERMON SERIES RESOURCE

Roots give us the stability and nourishment we need to grow and break new ground. As we seek to grow in our faith as individuals and as the church, looking back at the deep roots of the Methodist movement can help us look forward to our future. More than mere traditions or rituals, our Methodist roots are evidence of God's Spirit moving through our history, the same Spirit who is breathing life into us today.



Week 1: Baptism | Mark 1:4-12

Week 2: Grace | Ephesians 2:4-10

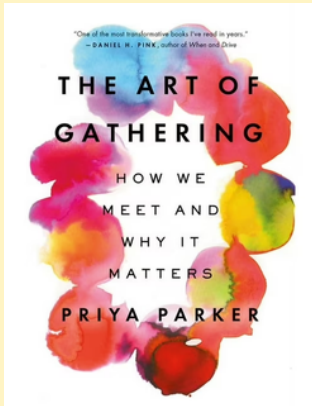
Week 3: Personal and Social Holiness: Missional Connection | Micah 6:6-8

Week 4: Holy Conferencing | Colossians 3:12-17

Week 5: Communion | 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

[Find resources here
from breakthroughseries.org](https://breakthroughseries.org)

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker

This book offers insight into how we can approach any gathering--with friends and family, at home or in the workplace--with intentionality so that we spend our time more wisely and more fruitfully. These insights will transfer will into our churches as we welcome people into our gatherings.



The Beautiful Community by Irwyn Ince

In this thought provoking book, Ince challenges us to see the the beauty present in all the diversity of the church. He encourages us to take steps to help heal and fracture the brokenness that plagues the relationships in our lives so that we might pursue beautiful community.

Believing the church is at its best when it pursues the biblical value of unity in diversity, Ince guides us toward our true hope for wholeness and reconciliation. The gospel imperative to pursue the beautiful community—unity in diversity across lines of difference—is rooted in reflecting the beautiful community of our triune God. This book calls us into and provides tools for that pursuit.



DELIBERATE DIALOGUE

Congregations are wrestling with how they might respond to decisions that have been made by The United Methodist Church (UMC) General Conference (GC) regarding full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, asexual, intersex, gender-fluid, pansexual (LGBTQIA+) persons in the life of the church. Undoubtedly, congregations find themselves navigating tensions around how these changes may impact their church.

Historically, Methodists have fiercely debated issues such as whether to have bishops, views on slavery, whether to ordain women, and whether to have racially integrated churches. For more than 50 years, the UMC has achieved unity by addressing important issues in the world around us through serious theological reflection and the use of the resources of Christian faith that help us discern Christian truth in ever-changing contexts.

WHAT IS DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE? Deliberative dialogue is a form of civil discourse that brings people together from diverse experiences and viewpoints to share their concerns about an issue, discern their shared values, and suggest steps for moving forward. This is not a debate, and there is no predetermined outcome. Rather, this is an opportunity to listen deeply, share openly and respectfully, and build community together, even when there are strongly held opinions from many perspectives.

The purpose is to provide a tool for creating respectful, structured, and productive space for listening and sharing, praying and discerning how to move forward. The hope is that respectful and grace-filled conversation will undergird our efforts to find commonalities amid our diverse opinions, ideas, and beliefs. This guide is simply a starting point to create space for listening, respectful sharing of ideas and experiences, and discerning how the Holy Spirit might be working among us as we seek to live into our mission to create disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

As we engage in this deliberation together, we recognize that no matter our views, we are each created and redeemed by God. Regardless of the decisions we make around how we serve God, we know that we do not nullify God's decision to love us. Christ's life, death, and resurrection has power to heal and cast a vision for the future of God's Kingdom, even if we cannot immediately see what the future holds.

Setting Dialogue Ground Rules

Choose for yourself when and how to participate

Participants are invited to join in the discussion, never required or pressured to do so. This is not a “share-or-die” event! Being fully present and listening with care is as important a contribution as speaking with care.

Listen to hear; listen with empathy

Remain respectful and remember that maintaining relationships is a priority.

Make space for silence and reflection

The discussion should not be fast and furious. Slow down and pay attention to the “inner teacher” that is trying to speak in you and in others. You can “press pause” to cool off, if needed.

No debating

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s convictions does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Seek instead — through listening deeply and asking honest, open questions — to help each participant find their own clarity and resourcefulness.

Embrace differences

Speak from your experiences and viewpoints with “I statements,” not mountain-top declarations or overgeneralizations. Listen with an open mind to others’ experiences.

When the going gets rough, turn to wonder

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry: “I wonder why he or she feels/thinks this way?” “I wonder what pushed my buttons in what he or she just said?”

Learn to ask honest, open questions

Instead of judging or debating what people say or asking leading questions, ask questions that are free of judgment or advice, questions that come from a simple desire to help the speaker explore more deeply what he or she has said. “Is there a story from your life that helps explain why you feel or believe what you do?” is an honest, open question. “How could you believe something like that?” is not!

Be clear about what you would like to stay within the group

This is a public discussion, but if you are sharing personal information that you would like to stay within this forum, be clear about that. By the same token, if you hear a story or personal information that another shares in this discussion, ask permission first if you wish to talk about it outside the group.



— Adapted from The Center for Courage & Renewal

Facilitating Deliberate Dialogue

TOPIC: LGBTQ+ Inclusion & Belonging

Opening prayer and ground rules

1

Begin the session with prayer and review the ground rules together one by one. Create a safe space. To be clear, deliberate dialogues is not a time or space for debating people's humanity. Those who participate in this dialogue will locate themselves somewhere along the spectrum of human sexuality and have friends, family members, or co-workers who identify as LGBTQIA+. So this dialogue is not designed to deal with questions about their worth as human beings in the eyes of God and the church. Rather, this guide is to be used as a tool for listening deeply, sharing respectfully, and discerning what it means to be the church together in the midst of these important issues.

Name Personal Stake

2

After agreeing to the ground rules, invite participants to very briefly (one or two sentences) answer the question, "**What are your concerns for your congregation related to denominational decisions around LGBTQIA+ marriage and clergy?**" Or, "What is at stake for you in this discussion?" Responses should be from the heart and no more than about 30 seconds so that everyone has time to share. Record these concerns on a large sheet of paper for the group to see (or on a Google document with a shared screen if the discussion happens via Zoom).

Discuss how to move forward

3

How will we **educate** ourselves about the spectrum of human sexuality? Book study, discipleship class, invite a panel of people, other ideas? How do we move toward being **accepting** of an LGBTQ+ pastor? How do we make our churches more **welcoming** to people of all sexual identities? How do we not only welcome, but create spaces of **belonging** for all persons?

Shared Values and Common Ground

4

Once you have had good, **fruitful** discussion, take some time to think about the underlying **values** your group seems to share, regardless of where people locate themselves in terms of their politics or positions on the issue. Where is our **common ground**? What are our common values? What are biblical and theological principles that we can agree are important to consider?

Next Steps

5

Brainstorm about what next steps your congregation could take based on the dialogue. During the discussion were there actions that seemed to generate interest and energy? Are there other ideas that came up during the discussion? Would it be beneficial to continue the conversation around these suggestions?

Final Prayer & Evaluation

6

End the dialogue with prayer giving thanks for the guidance of the Holy Spirit during this dialogue. Ask for feedback about how to improve dialogue.



District-wide

Safe Sanctuaries

Best Practices Training

Sunday, March 23

3-5pm

Wesley Memorial UMC, Chester

Sunday, April 27

3-5pm

Trinity UMC, York

All churches should have a Safe Sanctuaries policy that has been updated and approved within the last five years. Remember, all children and youth workers must have annual training.

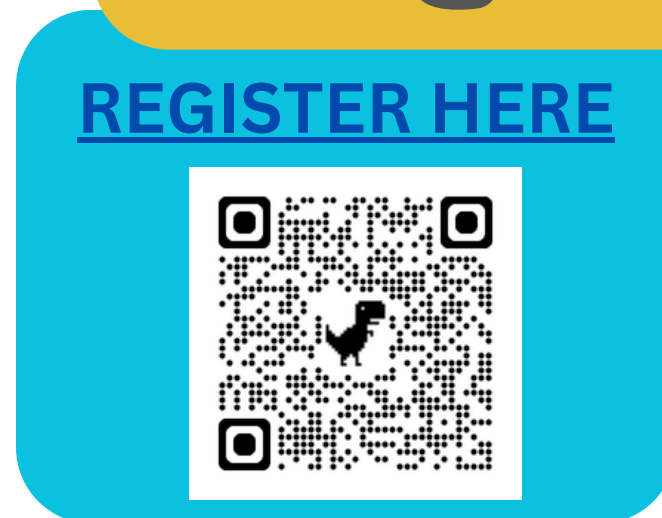
District Trainers

Juliette Philpott

jphillpotwumc@comporium.net

Michael Jerrell

lmjarrell@umcsc.org



Building Bridges for Ministry

Rock Hill District Committee on Connectional Ministries

Register here to attend
and/or reserve table
for Ministry Fair



**District-wide
Ministry Fair &
Workshop Event**
**Saturday,
May 3, 2025**
Woodland UMC, Rock Hill
9-11:30am

Engage in meaningful conversation as you connect and collaborate with other ministry leaders across our district. Set up a table in the ministry fair to share the great work you are doing! Share ideas, establish friendships, explore ways to join together to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

SESSION 1

Building Bridges with other churches

Let's explore ways we be better stewards of God's resources as we learn to engage in cooperative ministries with other churches.

SESSION 2

Building Bridges into your community

Together we will learn new ways to engage with our communities, as we seek to share the good news with everyone!

SESSION 3

Building Bridges with the world

Embrace technology and unlock its potential to connect your ministries with the world!



BETHEL UMC SOUP KITCHEN

Every Thursday
January 9 to March 27

11 am - 1 pm

1232 Curtis Street,
Rock Hill, SC 29730

We hope to see you
soon!

**CURRENTLY LOOKING
FOR VOLUNTEERS**
FOR MORE INFORMATION:
CALL 803-327-4881
EMAIL
BETHELROCKHILL@GMAIL.COM