

Report of the Aldersgate Church Task Force on Denominational Affiliation

Why is Aldersgate considering denominational affiliation?

A process of discernment

- Aldersgate disaffiliated from the UMC in 2023
- Leadership Board made decision to take at least 2 years to discern the question of remaining independent or affiliating with a different Wesleyan denomination
- Task group assigned from Leadership Board to vet potential denominational partners
- Discussion of theological and practical issues of remaining independent
- Task group and Leadership Board determined five non-negotiable items for considering a new denomination

The Goal of Discernment

“Keeping Aldersgate Aldersgate”

- The last two years since disaffiliation have seen growth in numbers and mission
- Aldersgate has been part of the Methodist/Pietist tradition since its inception more than 160 years ago
- Key question: How do we maintain the identity and culture of Aldersgate Church into the future?
- Looking ahead to future pastoral transitions and the challenge of finding pastors who match Aldersgate’s DNA
- Addressing key theological and practical questions concerning the present and future
- Developing a sustainable structure for mission and accountability

The Five Non-Negotiables

For considering denominational affiliation

1. No trust clause (no denominational ownership of church property)
2. Congregational input and approval in hiring a lead pastor
3. Wesleyan theology and historical beliefs held by Aldersgate
4. Effective organization that includes accountability in governance and leadership
5. Cost effective for Aldersgate
 - The task group determined that the Global Methodist Church is the only Wesleyan denomination that meets all these criteria

Remaining Independent

Significant questions to consider

1. Doctrinal commitments - sources, content, process to change or amend
2. Sacramental authority - who is authorized to administer
3. Pastoral leadership - credentials, education, recruiting, vetting, accountability
4. Missional focus - who is responsible for maintaining the church's mission and vision
5. Governance - how are leaders elected, decision-making process, checks and balances
6. Ecumenical considerations - what churches are recognized as partners, share full communion

Remaining Independent

A Potential Long-Term Change in Aldersgate's Culture

1. Independent churches tend to be more Reformed in theology and practice vs. Aldersgate's historic roots in the Wesleyan tradition
2. Pastors and leadership boards tend to have more power in independent churches
3. Finding pastors who match Aldersgate's DNA and culture will be more challenging and take longer
4. Without strong accountability structures, church can be vulnerable to leadership problems
5. Doctrine and practice will tend to shift based on the gifting and preferences of pastors

Differences between GMC and UMC

Significant changes

1. Doctrinal clarity - intentionally Wesleyan and orthodox, biblical authority
2. Reclaiming accountable discipleship - emphasis on small group discipleship
3. No Trust Clause - local churches retain full ownership of property
4. Term-limited episcopacy - maximum 12-year term
5. More congregational input on clergy selection - choosing from 2-3 candidates
6. Leaner organization - less overhead, less apportionments (4% vs. 13% in UMC)
7. Streamlined pathways for church planting and ordination

Differences between GMC and UMC

Significant changes

- 8. Global in character, unified in purpose
- 9. No cost for disaffiliation - only requires a 90-day discernment period
- 10. Local church as focus of ministry versus annual conference

What would change for Aldersgate?

If Aldersgate joins the GMC...

- Bottom line: very little. Our name, worship styles, branding, logo, leadership structure, ministries, etc. would all remain as they are currently
- Pastor Bob Kaylor is a GMC Elder, thus Aldersgate has largely been following this approach for the past two years since disaffiliation
- Presiding Elder would preside at church's annual Church Conference
- We would pay 4% of our income to support denominational infrastructure; Mission giving in the GMC is not centralized in the denomination. The local church determines its own mission projects to support as we do now.
- Appointed clergy would be on conference health and pension plan

Shares of Ministry

Can be phased in

- The GMC is willing to work with churches coming on board
- Current formula is 1% to General Church, 3% to Annual Conference
- Conference Shares of Ministry (Connectional Funding) can be phased in based on agreement with the annual conference
- That phasing can take place over a couple of years

Summary

An important decision

- The key question before Aldersgate Church is whether to remain independent or join the Global Methodist Church
- The key consideration concerns which option allows Aldersgate to retain its culture and DNA for the long term, provides support for mission, and ensures accountability for both clergy and congregation
- This decision will be made by a simple majority vote of the congregation's membership at Church Conference in December 2025
- A series of Town Hall meetings will be held in advance of Church Conference, including a meeting with Rev. Steve Taylor and Bishop Leah Hidde-Gregory of the Global Methodist Church on October 8 at 6:30pm

Process and Timeline

An important decision

- Step 1: Aldersgate Leadership Board receives recommendation from the GMC Task Force (July 22, 2025).
- Step 2: Aldersgate Leadership Board votes on resolution for recommending GMC membership. The resolution being as follows:
 - The Leadership Board recommends that Aldersgate Church become a member congregation of the Global Methodist Church, that it affirms and endorses the doctrinal standards (Part One), Social Witness (Part Two) and church governance of the Global Methodist Church as set forth in its *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, and agrees to be accountable to such standards, witness, and governance.

Process and Timeline

An important decision

- The Leadership Board will also need to define the parameters for voting (threshold, membership, date of Church Conference)
- The Leadership Board will hold a series of Town Hall meetings in September and October to answer questions from the congregation, the most important of these being a meeting with the Bishop and Conference Superintendent of the Northeast Conference of the Global Methodist Church on October 8 at 6:30pm.
- Congregation takes vote at called Church Conference (Date TBA)
- If vote passes, Leadership Board makes application to join the GMC, effective date to be determined.

Important Documents to Review

Before taking vote on Leadership Board recommendation

- ***The Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church***, especially Parts One and Two (online at globalmethodist.org/books-of-doctrines-and-discipline)
- **Benefits and Insurance** - (globalmethodist.org/benefits-insurance)
- **Catechism** - <https://globalmethodist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Catechism-for-the-Global-Methodist-Church.2023052496.pdf>