

## Report of the Aldersgate Task Force on Denominational Affiliation

### Why is Aldersgate considering denominational affiliation?

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

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### The Goal of Discernment

**Bottom line: very little. Our name, worship styles, branding, logo, leadership structure, ministries, etc. would change**

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

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### The Five Non-Negotiables

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

Last Year's task group determined that the Global Methodist Church is the only Wesleyan denomination that meets all these criteria

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### Remaining Independent

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

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### Remaining Independent

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

## Methodist Distinctives

1. Salvation is available to all
2. Holiness of heart and life - a focus on sanctification
3. A "both/and" faith
4. Accountable discipleship
5. A connectional understanding of the Church

## A Brief History of the Global Methodist Church

1. UMC General Conference 2016 and 2019 - clear that there were two different churches trying to inhabit one "big tent"
2. The Wesleyan Covenant Association formed in 2016 to either seek reform and unity in the UMC or start a new, theologically orthodox Methodist denomination
3. Postponement of UMC General Conference in 2020 led to fracturing of "Protocol" for amicably dividing the denomination
4. Global Methodist Church launched in 2022, disaffiliating congregations began to join

**Salvation is  
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**Holiness of  
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**a focus on**

## The Global Methodist Church - Current

1. 4,615 local churches worldwide as of June 2024, more added monthly
2. GMC Churches present in 12 countries
3. 4,800 clergy
4. Six interim bishops
5. Convening Conference in May 2024. First full General Conference scheduled for September 2026 in Johannesburg, South Africa
6. Mission: The Global Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.

## Differences between GMC and UMC

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

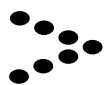
1. Global in character, unified in purpose
2. No cost for disaffiliation - only requires a 90-day discernment period
3. Local church as focus of ministry versus annual conference

## What would change for Aldersgate?

1. Bottom line: very little. Our name, worship styles, branding, logo, leadership structure, ministries, etc. would all remain as they are currently
2. Pastor Bob Kaylor is a GMC Elder, thus Aldersgate has largely been following this approach for the past two years since disaffiliation
3. Presiding Elder would preside at church's annual Church Conference
4. We would pay 4% of our income to support denominational infrastructure; missions giving would be solely at the discretion of Aldersgate
5. Appointed clergy would be on conference health and pension plan

## Summary

1. The key question before Aldersgate Church is whether to remain independent or join the Global Methodist Church
2. 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
3. This decision will be made by a simple majority vote of the congregation's membership at Church Conference in December 2025
4. 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



# FAQS for Aldersgate Church and Potential Alignment with the Global Methodist Church (GMC)

## Non-negotiables:

1. No Trust Clause, No cost exit path
2. Significant input and approval in hiring a Lead Pastor
3. Wesleyan theology and historical beliefs held by Aldersgate
4. An effective organization that is accountably in governance and leadership
5. Cost effective

## What has brought Aldersgate Church to this point in decision-making?

At the conclusion of the disaffiliation process from the United Methodist Church (UMC) in May of 2023, the lay leadership of Aldersgate made the decision to remain independent for at least two years and then consider possible denominational alignment. During this initial period, the leadership decided to continue the basic Documenttheological and governance structure of the UMC as a way of maintaining Aldersgate's Methodist DNA while discerning the church's future.

The first year after disaffiliation saw Rev. Dr. Bob Kaylor, a former UMC Elder who transferred his clergy credentials to the GMC, hired as the Lead Pastor. The lay leadership also established an initial Next Steps task force to examine the positive and negative aspects of either remaining independent or joining a denomination. The task force, in consultation with the lay leadership board, developed a list of five non-negotiables for the church if it were to seek denominational alignment. Those five non-negotiables are:

1. No Trust Clause (no denominational ownership of local church property) and a defined, no-cost exit path from any such denomination if necessary.
2. Significant congregational input and approval in hiring a lead pastor.

3. Wesleyan theology and historical beliefs held by Aldersgate.
4. An effective organization that includes accountability in governance and leadership.
5. Cost effective.

Using these criteria, the task force determined that the only denomination that meets them all is the Global Methodist Church. The decision before Aldersgate Church is thus a choice between remaining independent or joining the GMC.

## Why make this decision now?

The questions listed above are pressing as Aldersgate determines its future. The Leadership Board believes that making the decision on denominational affiliation this year will enable us to move forward confidently with the goal of maintaining the culture, mission, and focus of Aldersgate Church for the long term.

We have been independent for almost two years with Dr. Bob Kaylor as our lead pastor. While we have seen growth and stability in that period, we also need to be looking ahead at a pastoral transition in a few years when Pastor Bob retires. The circumstances of our last pastoral transition coincided with the division of the United Methodist Church, meaning that there were credentialed Methodist clergy like Pastor Bob seeking new

places of ministry. Finding a pastor who has a Methodist background will be a challenge in the future as most clergy with that theological orientation desire to be part of a connectional system.

## Why not remain as an independent church?

Some churches who have disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church have made the decision to remain independent. While this is certainly an option, it raises a number of key questions that would have to be answered for the church's long term future:

- What will be the congregation's doctrinal commitments?
- What are the congregation's beliefs about historically controversial topics like:
  - Gifts of the Holy Spirit
  - Ordination of women
  - Infant or believer's baptism
  - Baptism by immersion or sprinkling
  - The way of salvation
  - Predestination
  - Episcopacy
  - The nature of Holy Communion (e.g.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>transubstantiation, real presence, consubstantiation, memorialist)</li> <li>• Frequency of communion</li> <li>• Authority of Scripture</li> <li>• Human sexuality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the congregation's mission?</li> <li>• Who is responsible for fidelity to the mission?</li> <li>• What other churches do you recognize as being in mission or full communion with you?</li> <li>• How do your clergy and lay leaders find inspiration and continuing education?</li> <li>• How do you pick partners for local, regional, and international mission?</li> </ul>	<p>connotation for some, given the recent conflict within the United Methodist Church, it's important to remember that the Methodist movement and its emphasis on holiness of heart and life transcends the conflicts of the past. Aldersgate's best chance of retaining its Methodist roots, doctrine, and practice for the long term is to affiliate with a larger connectional Methodist body.</p>
<hr/> <p><b>No Trust Clause.</b></p> <p><b>More Congregational input in hiring new clergy.</b></p> <p><b>Consistent faithfulness in doctrine</b></p> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can the congregation's doctrinal commitments be changed or amended and by what body?</li> <li>• Who is authorized to administer the sacraments?</li> <li>• Who decides that a particular person should be so authorized?</li> <li>• Who decides on the credentialing of clergy and by what standards?</li> <li>• If theological education for clergy is required, what educational programs are approved and who decides about the programs?</li> <li>• What body takes action when a clergy is accused of moral failure or problematic behavior?</li> <li>• When there is a change in senior pastor, what process is used to decide on the new one?</li> <li>• From what pool of candidates will the selection process draw?</li> <li>• How are associate pastors chosen?</li> <li>• From what pool of candidates will associate pastors be chosen?</li> <li>• How are other staff chosen?</li> </ul>	<p>These are just a few of the questions that independent churches must address, and often the laity of the church do not have the historical and theological background to make decisions about these key issues. The result is that many of these decisions are deferred to the pastor and are changeable when there is a change of pastors. Churches that become independent after a long-term denominational affiliation are thus at greater risk of seeing their theological DNA change significantly over time.</p> <p>Aldersgate Church has had roots in the Methodist and related German pietist movements for more than 160 years. The church's very name reflects John Wesley's own conversion experience on Aldersgate Street in London in 1738 where he felt his heart "strangely warmed" by the truth and assurance of the gospel. Methodism has always been a connectional movement, where congregations are connected in shared doctrine, practice, and mission. An "independent Methodist" church has thus always been an oxymoron. While the name "Methodist" has a negative</p>	<p><b>What are some of the Methodist distinctives we desire to maintain?</b></p> <p>The Methodist tradition maintains theological and doctrinal connections and agreements with all orthodox Christian denominations, including the doctrine of the Trinity, the ancient ecumenical creeds of the Church (Nicene and Apostles' Creeds), the human need of salvation from sin and death, the atoning death of Christ, resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. While Methodists would not claim to have the only "true" witness of the Christian faith, we do have some doctrinal commitments that we emphasize:</p> <p><b>Salvation is available to all.</b> Methodists believe that God's offer of salvation extends to all persons through prevenient grace. Those who respond with faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ experience justification, forgiveness of sins, new birth, the beginning of sanctification, and eternal life. Human beings thus have the ability to exercise choice through a will freed by the grace of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Reformed tradition, on the other hand, believes in predestination—that God, in his sovereignty, has chosen who will be saved and who will be damned from the beginning. Most of the major Protestant denominations and now independent churches hold to</p>

the Reformed view in varying degrees. The Methodist tradition is thus optimistic that the grace of God can actually work in human lives to enable them to respond and be saved no matter their current state. The Reformed tradition believes in “irresistible grace”—that God’s salvation cannot be refused if one is “elect.” This is the idea of “once saved, always saved.” The Methodist tradition, on the other hand, believes that following Christ is not merely a one-time decision, but a constant growth in grace that enables us to be more like him. Salvation in the Wesleyan tradition is thus not just a past decision or a hope for someday in the future, but the good news that we can be “saved to the uttermost” right now, with the goal of becoming more like Jesus in this life in addition to the next.

**Holiness of heart and life.** The most distinctive doctrine of Methodism is that of “entire sanctification” or “Christian perfection.” It’s a doctrine that is optimistic about the work that God, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, can do to shape us more into the image of God, the image of Christ, that we were created to be, with the goal of perfectly loving God and neighbor. This holiness is not something we achieve on our own, but we cooperate with the Spirit in daily growth and Christlikeness. While sin is still a part of our human life, growth in sanctification and holiness enables us to resist the power of sin and choose instead the way of Christ. Salvation in the Wesleyan tradition is thus not just about being free of the guilt of sin, but also free from its power over us.

**A “both/and” faith.** Some Christian traditions are focused on contrasts: “faith” versus “works,” personal ver-

sus social, men as leaders versus women as supporters, doctrine versus experience. Methodists have long held to what theologian Ken Collins calls a “conjunctive” faith—that the Christian life is about both faith and works working together as we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Faith is also about personal and social holiness; that we live out our faith in both personal ways and in cooperation with others in the Body of Christ. The Methodist tradition has long seen men and women as equal partners in ministry, pointing back to the very beginning of the Bible when God created Adam and Eve as side-by-side partners in living out the image of God. Women are thus full participants in the life of the church, including ordination as pastors. Methodists take seriously the commandment of Jesus to love God and neighbor through acts of piety and devotion and acts of mercy and justice. We believe that the gospel is about more than just what we believe, but also about what we do with that belief.

**A connectional understanding of the Church.** While many Christian traditions emphasize the response of the individual in faith, Methodism recognizes that “it is not good for [human beings] to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). The “method” in Methodism has long been about growing disciples of Jesus in small groups for mutual support and accountability. We are all part of the Body of Christ and each of us has a role to play. We need one another to grow as disciples. That also means that each individual congregation also needs a larger body with whom they relate for mutual mission, support, and accountability. The local church sees itself as part of a move-

ment rather than an isolated community of faith.

These and other distinctions are vital parts of the Methodist theological DNA. While not necessarily unique or more “true” than other Christian traditions, these doctrinal commitments provide a congregation with a guiding vision that moves them beyond themselves and into a wider movement that emphasizes an optimistic view of God’s grace that can transform people and transform the world.

### How is the GMC different from the UMC?

There are several distinct differences that distinguish the Global Methodist Church from our former denomination:

#### Consistent faithfulness in doctrine.

While the UMC desired to maintain a large, theologically diverse, and pluralistic “big tent” that incorporated a wide range of understanding about the nature of theology, the Church, and moral and ethical issues, the GMC is focused on taking the basic beliefs of Christianity from being merely suggestive and historic documents and making them authoritative standards for life and ministry. The GMC’s beliefs and practices are rooted in historic Christianity and ensure that the denomination maintains continuity with the global and orthodox Church as the Body of Christ. To that end, the GMC has developed a catechism as a tool for instructing doctrine, has codified its doctrinal commitments in the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*, and require its clergy to be examined for adherence to the Church’s doctrine and polity. Bishops are also tasked with maintaining the doctrinal and spiritual integrity of the Church rather than being primarily administrators.

Churches in the GMC will have a more consistent doctrinal connection that extends beyond paper but is incorporated into the DNA of each local church.

#### Reclaiming Accountable Discipleship.

From its birth in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the “method” in Methodism was focused on gathering people together in small groups to “watch over one another in love,” and help one another grow in faith and practice. The GMC intentionally reclaims this method and encourages churches to become centers of disciple-making using small groups as well as biblical preaching and meaningful worship.

**Term-Limited Episcopacy.** In the UMC, Bishops are elected for life and gathered into regional “colleges” where they exercise immense power over clergy appointments and set the Church’s agenda. In the GMC, Bishops are elected by the General Conference and can only serve a maximum term of twelve years, after which they must retire or return to the local church. Retired Bishops do not sit on any decision-making body as they do in the UMC. Bishops in the GMC are accountable to the General Conference and not a regional body, eliminating the regional and theological biases that there present in the UMC debates of recent years. Bishops in the GMC are focused primarily on spiritual matters, while each Conference has an appointed Superintendent to handle administration. Bishops are the final authority on appointments in the GMC, but clergy and local churches also have significant authority to propose, accept, or reject candidates for pastoral appointments.

**No Trust Clause.** In the UMC, the Annual Conference owned all local

church property in trust, which is why the costs to exit the denomination were so high. In the GMC, there is no trust clause, meaning that the Annual Conference holds no ownership over the local church's property. The local church fully owns the property and can do with it what it wishes. If a church chooses to exit the GMC for whatever reason, it only requires a ninety day discernment period before taking a vote on disaffiliation. No costs are involved with a church disaffiliation from the GMC.

**More Congregational Input on Clergy Selection.** In the UMC, the Bishop appointed pastors to local churches, often with minimal consultation. Churches were not generally involved in the selection process and while clergy were guaranteed an appointment, they could be penalized for not taking an appointment offered them. The GMC eliminated guaranteed appointments for clergy, meaning that clergy must perform to standard or potentially be out of a job. Gone are the days when a pastor could be moved without warning and a new one appointed without the congregation having had significant input in the process. In the GMC, churches are presented with two or three candidates to consider, and both the local church and the clergy person must consent to the move, with the Bishop having final authority on making the appointment. The goal in the GMC is to have longer pastoral tenures, with moves initiated only when necessary by the local church or the pastor. Congregations in the GMC have more options from which to choose and more say in

who will be their next pastor.

**A Leaner Bureaucracy and Lower Shares of Ministry.** The UMC was famous for an extensive General Church bureaucracy that required congregations to fund it at levels as high as 13% of the local church's income. In 2023, for example, Aldersgate paid nearly \$120,000 to the UMC as the church's Shares of Ministry. The GMC has intentionally structured itself with less bureaucracy and overhead, capping its Connectional Funding for the local church at a maximum of 4%. For Aldersgate, that would amount to about \$37,000 in 2025. That money is primarily earmarked to fund Bishops, Conference Superintendents, and necessary staff to maintain the administrative and connectional functions of the denomination. In terms of mission funding, local churches are free to choose their own mission partners, with the GMC offering a list of approved mission agencies as additional possibilities.

**Streamlined Pathways for Ordination and Church Planting.** In the UMC, it took at least seven years for a candidate to move from inquiry to ordination as an Elder in the Church, including candidacy, educational requirements, and probationary periods. The GMC still has rigorous requirements for its clergy, but offers several different pathways to ordination from seminary to a course of study. This pathway opens the door financially and practically for younger and second career clergy to begin serving churches sooner under the mentorship of more experienced Elders. The GMC also has a vision for planting churches and equipping church planters,

providing training and support for both individuals and local churches who want to exploit new opportunities for ministry.

**Global in Character, Unified in Purpose.** The jurisdictional system in the UMC created silos for regional areas of the world, with the regionalization plan adopted in 2024 allowing each jurisdiction to effectively create its own rules. The GMC, by contrast, has expanded into more areas of the world than the UMC and intentionally functions more as one unified body. The global nature of the Church invites cross cultural experiences and sharing in a new way. As a testament to this focus on a global church, the GMC held its first General Conference in Costa Rica, and the 2026 General Conference will be in South Africa. Every UMC General Conference since its inception in 1968 was held in the U.S.

The bottom line is that the Global Methodist Church has intentionally put things in place to prevent it from becoming a version of United Methodism 2.0. The GMC has sought to retain what is best about the Methodist connection while eliminating what no longer worked. The focus is on unity in doctrine, discipline, and practice, with a focus on the mission of "spreading scriptural holiness across the globe."

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**If Independent:**

**What will be the congregation's doctrinal commitments?**

**What are the congregation's beliefs about historically controversial topics?**

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**Please send your questions to: [questions@aldersgateyork.com](mailto:questions@aldersgateyork.com)  
Or  
to any member of the Leadership Board.**

**Task Force on Denominational Affiliation Members:**

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**Global Methodist Church:**

**Our Mission | The Global Methodist Church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.**

In our worship, we desire to surrender to and be fully devoted to one God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are passionate about what is important to God.

Jesus calls those who follow Him to love God wholeheartedly and love their neighbors as themselves. Our desire is to demonstrate to the world the extravagant love of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

We have been entrusted with a lifesaving and transforming message that we must share with others. Our witness is bold, compelling and fearless. Our mission advances when individuals become disciples of Jesus Christ and join God's mission to make more disciples.

**Our Vision | Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Global Methodist Church envisions multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the earth who flourish in scriptural holiness as we worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.**

Through our ministries, we desire to share the whole counsel of God with all peoples and to advance the presence and fulfillment of the Kingdom of God in every part of the world and at all levels of societies and cultures. The Global Methodist Church is committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and the work of the Holy Spirit in conveying God's truth and grace to all people.

**We are a global church that recognizes and deploys the gifts and contributions of each part of the church, working as partners in the gospel with equal voice and leadership.** Our witness to the world is marked by mutual love, concern, sharing, and a focus on those who are most vulnerable. We watch over one another in love and bear witness to the transforming power of the Good News as we humbly, but boldly, strive to serve others as ambassadors of Christ!