

# Discernment Insert #1

To help you in your research, reflection, and discernment, here is a list of additional resources pertaining to the history of Methodism in America.

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-brief-history-of-the-people-of-the-united-methodist-church>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Methodism\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Methodism_in_the_United_States)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2021/01/21/why-united-methodist-church-splitting/>

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For more information, please visit [www.jcumc.org](http://www.jcumc.org) and click on About Us, then select UMC Process.

## Some History of Methodism

- Methodism and Methodist practices originated as a revival movement within the 18<sup>th</sup> century Church of England.
- It became a separate denomination of Protestant Christianity based on the doctrine and teachings of John Wesley.
- As Methodism developed, it underwent several splits and mergers. The splits were almost always occasioned by one of three issues:
  - Governance – How involved are laity in leadership? Should there be Bishops? (And similar issues).
  - Race – Can northern churches and southern churches (U.S.) exist as the same denomination? Should African American churches exist separately?
  - Holiness – What did Wesley mean by Christian Perfection and is it achieved gradually or all at once?
- The American church split from Wesley's Methodism (Anglicanism) after his death so that clergy in America would not have to be ordained by the Church of England.
- Methodism is steeped in revivalism, evangelism, and missional theology.
- American Methodism grew into an Episcopal model (Bishops) versus the Presbyterian model (Elders) of English Methodism.
- Bishops have clergy appointment authority (itinerant) and the Christian Church grew out of some Methodist's dissatisfaction with the Bishops' power.
- Other examples:
  - In early 1800s, African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches formed due to slavery issues.
  - In mid-1840s, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection formed in New England.
  - In mid-1840s, the Methodist Episcopal Church formed the south over slavery.
  - In 1852 in Georgia, the new Congregational Methodist movement rejected Episcopal governance.
  - As emphasis on holiness waned, the Church of the Nazarene was formed in 1908 by Methodists and Wesleysans to reclaim the pursuit of holiness.

- In the 1920s, the Methodist Protestant Church formed.
- In the 1930s, integration and slavery mergers and separations.
- In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, and Methodist Episcopal South merged into the Methodist Church.
- In 1968, the Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren churches merged to form the United Methodist Church.

As you can see, throughout its history, the Methodist Church has been marked by differing thoughts which have resulted in separations as well as unifications more frequently than probably most of us realize. This has been the result of well-intentioned peoples seeking to govern a church body that is vibrant and growing. Over the years, some of the differing opinions have been regarding slavery, women's rights, morality, spirituality, and the church governance. Differences have existed before and will in the future. Each person and congregation must work to seek God and pursue His Word and Truth to make their way through these changes. What we as Methodists are navigating now is not unlike things we have encountered before.

### **The Current Situation of the United Methodist Church**

Most believe or have been led to believe the current situation of the United Methodist Church stems from the matter of human sexuality and a few other doctrines that differ from those of the original denomination. The United Methodist Church and its teachings have strayed away from Traditional Christianity and moved closer to Progressive Christianity.

Following is a comparison of Traditional and Progressive Christianity beliefs:

<b>Traditional Belief</b>	<b>Progressive Belief</b>
The Bible is Authoritative and Trustworthy Word of God.	The Bible is a record of thoughts and ideas about God and Human nature from the perspective of an ancient people.
Believes in the Virgin Birth.	Believes Jesus was not born of a virgin.
Believes in the Deity of Christ.	Believes Jesus was a good man, a prophet, and a teacher, but not a deity.
Jesus is the only hope for salvation.	Jesus is among many ways to God.
Atonement through the sacrificial death of Jesus.	Jesus' death is not an atonement for sins because this atonement points to an abusive, violent God.
Bodily resurrection of Jesus.	Jesus was not bodily raised from the dead, and the disciples and other witnesses had some sort of spiritual experience in which they sensed the presence of Jesus, which became known as the Resurrection.
Marriage is between a man and a woman.	Any two people who love each other may marry, regardless of gender.

Of the new Progressive Christianity values, only the belief regarding marriage warranted leaders of the UMC to allow affiliated churches to be able to disaffiliate from the organization. A formal vote by members submitted to the district conference for approval is a decision that churches will have to complete if they choose to disaffiliate.

For more information related to this information based out of the South Georgia Annual Conference of the UMC, visit: <https://www.theadvancenews.com/2022/08/31/the-methodist-divide/>.