

Messenger

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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March 5, 2023

Vol. 50 No. 10

Comparing Our Options: Part 2

How do the different Wesleyan/Methodist denominations compare? What are their differences? That's the question we started to look at in last week's *Messenger*. So, we compared 5 different denominations: the newly forming Global Methodist Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Church, the Nazarene Church, and the Congregational Methodist Church. And we looked at their theology, use of the trust clause, bishops, apportionments, and the appointment of pastors to churches. This week we want to look at two more things:

Size:

While the size of a denomination isn't everything, it is an important factor to consider. As United Methodists, we've been accustomed to being part of one of the largest Protestant denominations in the world. In 2020, the UMC had around 30,000 churches with 6.2 million members. Any other denomination we join will by comparison be much smaller.

So, the Free Methodist Church has around 1.5 million members worldwide, 62,516 of which are in the U.S. According to their website (fmcusa.org), they have **836 churches** in the U.S.

The Wesleyan Church is a bit larger with 231,339 members and **1,731 churches** in the U.S. with 5,800 churches worldwide.

And the Nazarene Church has roughly 2.6 million members worldwide with around 580,000 in the U.S. So, they have 23,670 churches worldwide with **4,474 churches** in the U.S.

The Congregational Methodist Church has around **150 churches** total with roughly 15,000 members. And just to add another denomination some may mention, the Association of Independent Methodist Churches, which was founded in 1965, has a total of **47 churches**.

The Global Methodist Church is new and growing every day. So, precise numbers are hard to come by. But, as of January 1, one of their chief officers, Keith Boyette, reported that they had at

least **1,100 churches** that had already joined. And it is expected that they will have many more.

Those who watch the United Methodist Church closely are estimating that somewhere between 3,000 to 5,000 churches will disaffiliate by December 31, 2023. While not all of those will choose to join the Global Methodist Church, it is expected that somewhere between 2,000 to 3,000 will. So, if roughly 2,500 churches join the Global Methodist by the end of the year, that would mean they'd have **around 3,600 churches** with roughly 300,000 members.

If that's the case, then the Global Methodist Church would end up being one of the larger Wesleyan/Methodist denominations, especially in the U.S. It's also why most of the other denominations are only selectively taking disaffiliating United Methodist Churches.

Clearly, if 2,500 churches were to join the Congregational Methodist or Independent Methodist Churches, the former United Methodists would dwarf the preexisting church members. Likewise, even in the larger denominations like the Free Methodist, Wesleyan, and Nazarene Churches, this kind of influx of former United Methodists would significantly alter their denominational culture as well as their political structure. That is, we'd bring a lot of our United Methodist history with us, and we'd expect equal representation among elected leaders. My suspicion is, that might not always be well received.

Geography:

Size is one thing. Where your churches are located is another. The 'where' matters. Because of when and how they were founded, both the Free Methodist Church and the Wesleyan Church are mostly northern denominations.

The Wesleyan Church was founded in 1843, right before the Methodist Episcopal Church divided into northern and southern churches in 1844. Since one of their main reasons for leaving the Methodist Episcopal Church was the abolition of slavery, they mostly broke away from the northern church.

Likewise, the Free Methodist Church was founded in 1860, right before the Civil War. And again, one of their main reasons was the abolition of slavery. So, they almost exclusively broke away from the northern Methodist Episcopal Church.

It's why you seldom see any Free Methodists or Wesleyans in Mississippi or Alabama or Georgia. The few churches they now have are mostly former United Methodists.

Why does this matter? Where most of your churches are determines where a lot of your pastors come from. Churches that are mostly centered up north have mostly pastors who were born and raised up north.

Sooner or later, every church needs a new pastor. In the Free Methodist Church or the Wesleyan Church, that new pastor is as likely to come from Michigan or Ohio or Kansas. Theology matters. But culture matters, too. How do you explain the culture and history of Mississippi to someone raised in Michigan or Ohio?

These aren't the most important things. Theology and polity matter far more. But, size and geography certainly are something to consider as we prayerfully discern our way forward.

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

SUNDAY, MARCH 5

- 9:00 a.m. Contemporary Service
- 9:50 a.m. Sunday School
- 11:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service
- 11:00 a.m. Live Stream Worship
- 6:00 p.m. Bro. Lauren's Bible Study
- 6:00 p.m. Solid Ground Youth

TUESDAY, MARCH 7

- 6:00 p.m. Ladies' Bible Study

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

- 4:30 p.m. Ladies Handbell Choir
- 5:15 p.m. W.O.W. Children's Ministry
- 6:00 p.m. Chancel Choir
- 6:00 p.m. Bro. Lauren's Bible Study
- 6:00 p.m. Snack Supper
- 6:00 p.m. Youth

SATURDAY, MARCH 11

- 9-12 noon Methodist Market



5. JoAnne Collins

6. Clairbeth Martien

6. Mr. & Mrs. Tommy Woodard

DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis

- Fast from hurting words and say kind words.
- Fast from sadness and be filled with gratitude.
- Fast from anger and be filled with patience.
- Fast from pessimism and be filled with hope.
- Fast from worries and have trust in God.
- Fast from complaints and contemplate simplicity.
- Fast from pressures and be prayerful.
- Fast from bitterness and fill your hearts with joy.
- Fast from selfishness and be compassionate to others.
- Fast from grudges and be reconciled.
- Fast from words and be silent so you can listen.

Day Care News!

This week is Dr. Seuss week. Our Day Care celebrated with dress up day.





Hiskidz and Bible in Life

Last Sunday we completed our series *What Jesus Said*. This week we will begin a brand-new series for the month of March. The series is called, *The Final Days of Jesus*. The lessons will prepare us for the Easter season. The lesson this Sunday will come from the book of Mark.

W.O.W. Wednesday

W.O.W. Wednesday meets this week and begins a new series. Our new study will be The Ten Commandments.

"The Ten Commandments" are the heart of the Old Testament and are the core expression of God's rules for his people. Christians have always looked to the commandments as simple directions for life and worship as the basis of right living. In this series, children will learn that God's rules show us our need for Christ and how we can express his love in how we live. Last week first lesson we learned *Commandment 1 - Put God First!* Next week we will begin with *Commandment 2 - NO IDOLS!*



Confirmation

Confirmation Retreat will be held Thursday, March 9- Friday, March 10. Information has been sent to the Confirmand and their parents regarding the Retreat.



Youth Sunday School

As we begin our new series, *The Final Days of Jesus*, we will be discussing the final days in the life of Christ as we prepare for the Easter season.

Youth Bible Study and Small Group

Sunday and Wednesday Night Youth Group has picked back up with Bible Study at 6:00 p.m. We have been tackling multiple topics on the World's agenda, and what the world is pushing towards us and what the world wants to see pushed out of our lives. It is so important for the youth of this world to not be afraid to stand up and proclaim the name of Jesus.

Spring Break Trip

Spring Break will begin on Friday, March 10 for the children and Youth of our community. Several of our youth will be leaving on Monday March 13 for our Spring Break Trip to Orange Beach, Alabama. We will return on Thursday, March 16.

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Greeters	Wanda & Tommy Woodard/ Brenda & Denny Paul
Scripture	Luke 5:33-39
Sermon	“New Wineskins”
Flowers	Marilyn & Walter Burnett

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

MARCH

5. 2nd Sunday in Lent	Mark 1:9-15
6. Offer justice and righteousness	Amos 5:18-24
7. Suffering for the Lord	Psalm 69:6-9
8. No useless idols	Habakkuk 2:18-20
9. Commandments of a loving God	Exodus 20:1-17
10. God’s silent witnesses	Psalm 19
11. Christ the power of God	1 Corinthians 1:18-25