

Along With Asbury, 3 More Seminaries Lose UMC Approval in Sweeping Shake-Up

Just days after the United Methodist Church removed four theological schools from its list of approved seminaries, denominational leaders are providing additional insight into the decision.

According to Baptist News Global, the United Methodist Church's University Senate voted during its regular four-year review process to remove Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky; Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan University in Rochester, New York; Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota from its list of approved schools for educating candidates for ordination or licensed ministry.

According to Baptist News Global, Roland Fernandes, who is the top executive of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry for United Methodists, said the decision followed an extended review process that included conversations with each institution's leadership.

"The University Senate takes this kind of vote seriously," Fernandes stated.

Susan Clark, the director of communications for the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, shared that the reviews are designed to ensure that approved seminaries continue to meet the denomination's expectations for ministerial education.

"The reviews are designed to verify that candidates for ministry are formed in institutions that embody a United

Methodist ethos and provide regular, substantive instruction in United Methodist history, doctrine and polity,” Clark said.



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According to Baptist News Global, Fernandes said the primary concerns with these universities included the absence of a full-time United Methodist-affiliated professor to teach United Methodist history and polity, as well as an increased reliance on distance learning. Fernandes also said Asbury’s published institutional views on sexuality, marriage and gender were incompatible with the denomination.

As Charisma previously reported, Asbury’s removal quickly became the focal point of the announcement because of the seminary’s longstanding influence and its close association with the 2023 spiritual revival that captured the attention of Christians worldwide. The revival that broke out at Asbury University transformed Wilmore, Kentucky, into a destination for thousands seeking prayer, repentance and spiritual renewal.

In a statement released by Asbury Theological Seminary, President Dr. David Watson said Asbury complied with every request made during the review.

“We engaged fully and faithfully in the process and honored every request from the Senate in a timely manner,” Watson said. “We were forthcoming with the requested documents and information. Throughout the process, we were honest and clear about our doctrinal and ethical standards, even when those differed from the recently amended Social Principles of the UMC. Their final decision to delist us was unilateral. While we had hoped for a different outcome, our focus remains steadfast on our unchanging calling.”

Watson also reaffirmed the seminary’s longstanding doctrinal

position on biblical marriage.

“The Senate’s requirements, particularly those related to the UMC’s 2024 Social Principles concerning ‘Human Sexuality’ and ‘Marriage,’ are not aligned with Asbury Theological Seminary’s institutional ethos and the historic witness of the Christian faith,” Watson said. “We affirm marriage as sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union for life, as delineated in Scripture, and provides the sole context for sexual intimacy, helping to ensure the blessings of that relationship as God intended.”

As the UMC continues to see major shifts and separation happen within the denomination, only time will tell what happens next to the United Methodist Church.

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