

Huge Texas Megachurch Votes to Leave UMC Over Homosexuality Issue

Two large Texas Methodist churches, including a megachurch located north of Houston, voted to disassociate themselves from the United Methodist Church (UMC) because of its ongoing debate over homosexuality.

The Woodlands Methodist Church has around 14,000 members. The congregation voted Sunday to leave the UMC Texas Annual Conference.

The Woodlands Church announced the results of the vote on the church's website. Out of more than the 3,000 members who voted, 2,678 voted in favor of disaffiliation—96.3% of the total ballots cast. The ballots were collected, counted and certified by the independent accounting firm of Harper Pearson, Company, PC, of Houston, Texas, the website noted.

The UM News reported the Woodlands Methodist is among the denomination's very largest churches, ranking fourth in membership and second in worship attendance in 2018. The church is known for its ties to Good News, a longtime traditionalist caucus within the UMC that has opposed same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQ people.

In a video to members posted to the church's website, Woodlands Methodist Senior Pastor Mark Sorensen said, "We are ready to move on past the division and the differences that have been an ongoing distraction in our denomination for far too long."

"We are changing to stay the same," Sorensen noted. "With this vote, we are preserving the ministry that we know and love."

Below the video of Sorensen, the church posted a verse from the Bible's Old Testament—Isaiah 43:18-19 which reads: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

Faithbridge Church's Membership Also Votes to Leave Denomination

Just a few hours after the Woodlands Church's vote, all 549 members present at the Faithbridge Methodist Church, located in Spring, Texas, also voted to leave the Texas Conference, according to UM News.

Faithbridge Senior Pastor Ken Werlein noted the "bittersweetness" given his family's tradition in the UMC and other denominations in videotaped remarks to the congregation on Aug. 7, according to the outlet.

"On the other hand, I'm also realistic about where the denomination is heading, and so I have no second thoughts," he said. "We've done the right thing, the smart thing, the wise thing to keep Faithbridge Faithbridge."

Both Woodlands Methodist and Faithbridge will remain in the UMC until Dec. 3, when the Texas Conference has a special session to consider approving the churches' disaffiliations as well as others, UMC News reported.

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