

Progressive UMC Leaders Vow 'Resistance Tactics' to Fight Church's Support of Biblical Marriage

Hundreds of left-leaning United Methodist leaders and activists gathered in Kansas this week for the "UMC Next" conference to voice their opposition to the denomination's official rejection of homosexuality and gay marriage.

Denomination leaders voted earlier this year to strengthen their embrace of marriage between one man and one woman, laid out in the church's "Traditional Plan." The UMC Book of Discipline affirms that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." It prohibits same-sex marriages and the ordination of non-celibate homosexuals.

United Methodist clergy who disagree vowed this week to employ a "wide variety of resistance tactics" to fight back.

"For some of us, resisting the Traditional Plan means violating the Book of Discipline. For some persons in their context, it might not," said Ginger E. Gaines-Cirelli, senior pastor of Foundry United Methodist Church of Washington, during a press conference on the last day of the UMC Next.

"For some, resistance is putting up a banner saying all are welcome; and for others, it may mean participating in a same-gender wedding. The hundreds of participants are all thinking about what does resistance look like in their particular context," he said in a statement.

All of the leaders at the conference agreed the denomination is divided.

“Every movement has a tipping point, a game changer, a watershed moment; this is one of them,” said convening team member Rev. Junius Dotson. “In a moment none of us have experienced before and could never have fully anticipated, we have come together and held many important things in tension. We have managed ambiguity and cared for the waves of our own emotions and reactions. It has been intense, challenging, powerful, beautiful work we have engaged together.”

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