

# Affiliation Discernment Committee

Church Council Meeting  
August 14, 2024



**Bainbridge First Church**

# 5 Non-negotiables in our Path Forward

- Maintaining orthodox Wesleyan theology firmly rooted in scriptural authority.
- Strong pastor network with local involvement in the appointment process.
- No TRUST CLAUSE .
- A church that is streamlined and less complex, with more equitable apportionments.
- Connectivity with other Wesleyan congregations.

# Narrowing Our Focus

- Independent Methodist Networks
- Global Methodist Church (GMC)
- Free Methodist

# Theology

Church	Stance	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	Conservative	Traditional Wesleyan theology. Apostles Creed.	Yes
Global Methodist	Conservative	Traditional Wesleyan Doctrine. The canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the primary rule of authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured.	Yes
Free Methodist	Conservative	Traditional Wesleyan Doctrine The Bible is God's written word, uniquely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Believe the Bible is the trustworthy record of God's revelation, and completely truthful in all it affirms, it holds authority over us in all matters.	Yes

# Clergy

Church	Appointed	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	No	No network or support system for hiring pastors, so the Church will control the hiring process. If joined an Association like AIM, minimal assistance is provided. Any benefits & pension provided to staff are provided by the local church.	No
Global Methodist	Yes	Large network of pastors. Females are permitted. Formal system for clergy education, credentialing, and ordination. Pastor is appointed by the Bishop in consultation with the pastor-parish relations committee. Clergy are held <b>accountable</b> for adhering to doctrine. Pastor and local church will stay together unless one of the parties requests a new appointment. Benefits & pension offered to clergy through Wespath.	Yes
Free Methodist	Yes	Smaller network of pastors. Females are permitted. Appointed after consultation and candidate interviews with local church. Clergy are held <b>accountable</b> . Appointments are generally for longer terms with moves only initiated with the agreement of the pastor, church, or both. Benefits and pension are offered through FMC.	No

# Trust Clause

Church	Trust Clause	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	No	All facilities are owned by the local church.	Yes
Global Methodist	No	All facilities are owned by the local church.	Yes
Free Methodist	Yes	Historically, facilities have been placed in Trust. However, the FMC is now permitting churches to maintain ownership of their existing properties with the idea that any newly constructed or purchased properties after affiliation will be placed in Trust.	No

# Organization Structure

Church	Lean Structure	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	Yes	No Bishops or Superintendents. Local church determines clergy appointments and tenure--Led by Church Council.	Yes
Global Methodist	Yes (For now)	The GMC has Bishops who will serve for defined term limits that will be established at the convening general conference in September. Annual conferences will meet each year and have districts with a presiding Elder.	Yes
Free Methodist	Yes	Only 3 U.S. Bishops, 24 Superintendents, and very few boards and agencies. Bishops can serve up to three 4 year terms. The FMC believes the denomination should serve the church and not the other way around.	Yes

# Denominational Giving

Church	Required	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	No	No Apportionments required. Usually voluntary if join an Association.	Yes
Global Methodist	Yes	Maximum of 6.5% of annual income. 1.5% is paid to General Conference and 5% to Annual Conference.	Yes
Free Methodist	Yes	6% to Annual Conference and 3% to General Conference for a total of 9%.	No

Note: FUMC apportionments were 10% of operating expense, or approx. \$60,000 in '24.



# Connectivity

Church	Description	Meets Criteria
Independent	Lack of connectivity unless join an Association like AIM. Approximately 18 AIM churches in Georgia, most of which are small. More than 100 AIM churches in US.	No
Global Methodist	Approximately 4,500 congregations in the world. Approximately 150 churches in the South Georgia Conference alone, with more affiliations expected.	Yes
Free Methodist	856 congregations in the US. 7 congregations in Georgia with the nearest located in Columbus and Macon. Approximately 5 congregations in the north Florida region, including Chipley, Destin, and Gainesville	No

# Committee's Recommendation

Scriptural Authority

**Connectivity**

Equitable  
Giving



Leaner Organization

**Collaboration on  
Appointments**

No Trust  
Clause

**Accountability**

# Recommended Next Steps

- Place denomination content on BFC website for congregation to view.
- Congregation GMC Q&A with Rev. Nate Lehman on Sunday, August 18<sup>th</sup>.
- GMC Convening Conference held September 20-26 in Costa Rica.
- Church Council vote on recommendation to congregation (TBD).
- Churchwide presentation and vote (TBD).