

**Bishop's Parliamentary Ruling on Resolution #2021-6  
"Vote on Which Post-separation Church to Join"  
Michigan Annual Conference, United Methodist Church  
Bishop David Alan Bard  
June 5, 2021**

Given that resolution 2021-6 was rejected by the legislative committee, normally we would move directly to a vote to see if 20% of you wanted to bring this to the plenary for discussion and action. That is what will happen with two resolutions yet to come.

However, anticipating that I would be asked to consider a point of order as to whether this resolution is in order to be considered by the annual conference during this plenary session – anticipating this because I have been asked about it numerous times already, and knowing that a presiding officer can raise a question of order on their own accord (Robert's Rules of Order, p. 268, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, see also p. 113), I will be ruling this resolution out of order for the following reasons.

The primary reason this resolution is out of order is found in its title, "vote on which post-separation Church to join." An annual conference does not have the authority to vote to leave the United Methodist Church. Such authority may be given it if the General Conference were to enact a resolution such as the Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation, but it does not have such authority now. The Protocol would not be a change in the Book of Discipline but an extra-disciplinary agreement on separation granting annual conferences such authority for a limited period of time.

That the resolution seems to be asking for this kind of decision is reinforced by the language of the rationale, "the results of this vote will then allow discernment and decision process to begin concerning future affiliation for individual Churches, individual members and clergy members." Discernment is always in order and appropriate, but to being a chain of decision-making processes where the initial decision is not in order would not be appropriate.

This is sufficient to rule the resolution out of order. There are additional reasons for concern that I would like to offer as well. The resolution is predicated on incomplete information critical to its central question. (1) The Protocol does not propose only two possible denominational futures, but allows for additional expressions of Methodism to emerge. To be sure, the two most developed alternatives are the continuing United Methodist Church and the Global Methodist Church, but the protocol is not limited to such alternatives. As I mentioned earlier in the conference, there is a Liberation Methodist Connexion emerging which may or may not seek to form itself into an alternative denomination. (2) The resolution provides an adequate description of the Global Methodist Church, perhaps even quoting its documents, but does not sufficiently take account of the variety of proposals which would refine what the continuing United Methodist Church might look like. In addition to the Protocol, there is the Christmas Covenant, which would move the continuing United Methodist Church in the direction of more regional governance. (3) As Don Emmert noted in his presentation, there are complexities

regarding benefits that one may want to consider before making decisions about a denominational direction.

I also want to address an anticipated objection to my ruling this resolution out of order. In 2019 the annual conference conducted a non-binding straw poll that has similarities to 2021-6 in that it asked for person to select a direction for the Michigan Annual Conference relative to LGBTQIA inclusion. While there are similarities, there are also distinct differences which made that resolution in order and puts this one out of order.

- The 2019 resolution was clearly aspiration, “If the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church were offered the opportunity to choose a direction...”
- That “if” was predicated only on a potential change in The Book of Discipline, and not on the passage of an extra-disciplinary agreement.
- The current resolution uses “because” language, assuming that powers will be granted that currently are not in our purview.
- The 2019 resolution was clear in it being a “non-binding straw poll.” The current resolution seems to indicate that it is something more.
- The 2019 resolution indicated a preferred direction, and did not refer to becoming part of a new denomination.

I know some are wondering why I did not rule this out of order prior to it being received by a legislative committee. The legislative committee could have worked with some of the ideas in the resolution and amended it so that it would have been in order. The committee chose not to do so, but instead recommended against its adoption.

Therefore, I am ruling resolution 2021-6 out of order and thus not properly before the body for consideration.