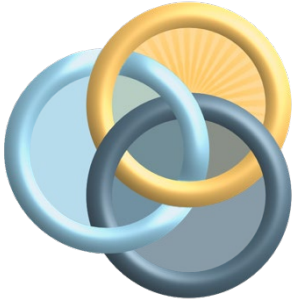


WPAUMC Intentional

MISSIONAL

Alignment Process

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Introduction

The June 2022 Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference approved RS 701, the Actively Waiting Task Force Petition for the Intentional Missional Alignment Process (“IMAP”). The adoption of the legislation has left many who did and did not attend Annual Conference with lots of questions. In fact, the news of this monumental legislation has not reached many of the members of our local churches.

To provide information and clarity about IMAP to local churches, laity, and clergy, the IMAP Task Force has already established a resources page on the Conference website (<https://www.wpaumc.org/imap-task-force>) which will be updated frequently as the Task Force leads the Annual Conference in this very important work. These resources should assist those who are trying to discern their way forward and believe they have no options other than disaffiliation or remaining in the status quo.

This FAQ list is a “living” document and will continue to be updated as the IMAP work progresses. Please check the Conference website (<https://www.wpaumc.org/imap-task-force>) periodically for new information. Also, please submit any additional questions you might have to the IMAP Task Force at missional.alignment@wpaumc.org. Thank you!

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In plain English, what was the primary driver behind this piece of legislation (RS701)?

- In short, this legislation was put forth as a way for the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference to take agency over, and play a more active role in, its future within the United Methodist Church. With continued delays in the scheduling of General Conference, and the uncertainty regarding any legislation which might be adopted at the next General Conference now scheduled for 2024, RS701 provides an alternative path for those seeking an opportunity to remain united, and continue to focus on the shared mission and ministry to which we have all been called.

As a local church congregation trying to wrap our heads around this legislation, what does it mean to us?

- Good question! Although not a complete answer, the following Vision Statement may help in providing some additional clarity:

“As the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church continues to work together, we will discern our potential future. Keeping God at the center, we will envision, create and live into three interrelated households in which local churches, clergy and laity can affiliate where they best can be in mission and ministry in Christ. Throughout this process, the WPAUMC will hold sacred love of neighbor, respect, grace, transparency and frequent communication.”

Why did Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi set up a task force to start a division process in our Annual Conference (dividing congregations between Progressive-Centrist-Traditional groups)?

- There are few things to “unpack” in this question. The task force was not established by the Bishop. The IMAP Task Force is the result of the legislation that was adopted by the Annual Conference. The Task Force is amenable to the Annual Conference, and will report to the Connectional Leadership Table. The intent of this work is not about division, but rather unity! It is about unity in the belief that we can live in harmony and serve Christ alongside one another, while also acknowledging and respecting our differences. The creation of households allows clergy, congregations and lay members to align with a group in which there are shared beliefs regarding human sexuality, while remaining in communion with our entire body on other fundamental, shared beliefs. Again, an opportunity to remain interrelated in our mission and ministry in Christ.



How will local churches be provided with, or have access to, information and progress pertinent to the work of the IMAP Task Force?

- While the IMAP Task Force will communicate with WPAUMC in a few different ways, the easiest way to get information regarding our work and our progress will be posted on the webpage at <https://www.wpaumc.org/imap-task-force>. In addition, we will post available updates in the WPAUMC enews and send communications via email.

What sorts of information will be included on the Conference website?

- In addition to this FAQ, the webpage will include updates, videos produced by the IMAP Task Force, plans for frequent communications, coordinated timing for action steps by groups across the annual conference, etc.

Why was the “Continuing United Methodist” Household renamed?

- All households will remain in the United Methodist Church. Therefore, all three households will be part of the “Continuing United Methodist Church”. In addition, while this household is a place for those with a centrist perspective it also encompasses those that simply do not want to vote to align with a specific household and congregations with differing voices and perspectives. As such, it was decided that “Blended” was the best way to describe this particular household.

Is the Intentional Missional Alignment Process temporary until General Conference happens in 2024 or will it be permanent?

- The Intentional Missional Alignment Process is a way for WPAUMC to discern our way forward regardless of what happens at General Conference 2024.

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How will the Intentional Missional Alignment Process remain in place in our Annual Conference regardless of what happens at General Conference in 2024? Changes in Episcopal Leader? Other changes?

- The Intentional Missional Alignment Process is a result of RS701 that was passed by the 2022 Annual Conference. Additional legislation will be presented to the 2023 session of the Annual Conference to further define the process as well as the households. Legislation passed by the Annual Conference will remain intact through changes as long as it does not violate the Book of Discipline. Further, WPAUMC has two individuals representing us on a committee that determines episcopal changes. During these conversations, our representatives will consider our process and ensure that any episcopal leader will live into this process.

I saw a brochure that indicated the “Traditional” and “Progressive” households would be working in the mission field “only” with members who have the same perspective on human sexuality. Is this true?

- The wording in the brochure was taken from the RS 701 legislation, as it was written. However, an underlying premise of RS 701 is that the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference will work towards a structure that allows all of us to remain together. In remaining together, this does not preclude any of the households, or those that identify with a particular household, from working in mission and ministry for Christ, together. Additionally, the applicable brochure that is available on the IMAP web page has also been adjusted.

As a lay person, will there be a formal process for me to “register” as a member of one of the three households?

- Initially, the focus will be on the discernment processes that allow clergy and local churches to identify with one of the households. This will be critically important to ensure that the appointment processes can effectively match pastoral assignments with congregational needs and perspectives. While the methodology for official “record keeping” of an individual lay person’s household alignment selection has not yet been determined; the Task Force recognizes the critical nature of caring for individual members that may be displaced or disenfranchised by the household alignment of their local church (e.g., my church discerned an Traditional household alignment, while my personal alignment is Blended).

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If my local church chooses to align with a household different from my personal discernment, will I still be able to keep my membership with that church?

- A church's decision to align with a particular household does not require changes to individual membership. The choice to remain a member of your local church, or transfer your membership to a church that better aligns with your aspirations and theological perspectives is up to each individual member. Part of the work of the IMAP Task Force will be to develop processes that will care for and assist individual members; not only assistance in finding a new church home, but with any healing needs that may also exist.

Is my household alignment selection permanent? How often can this be changed?

- Churches will be required to report their household alignment each year on your charge conference paperwork. If a church wishes to change their household alignment this can be done through the charge conference process and paperwork. Clergy will need to report their household annually on their clergy profile. This will provide the necessary input to the Cabinet for their appointment making process.

Even in our initial discussions, our church feels that the conversations around aligning with a single household have been divisive. Do we have to make a choice?

- Any church that cannot reach a decision, or does not want to make a choice will initially default to the Blended household. Going forward, that alignment can be affirmed or changed on an annual basis during the charge conference process.