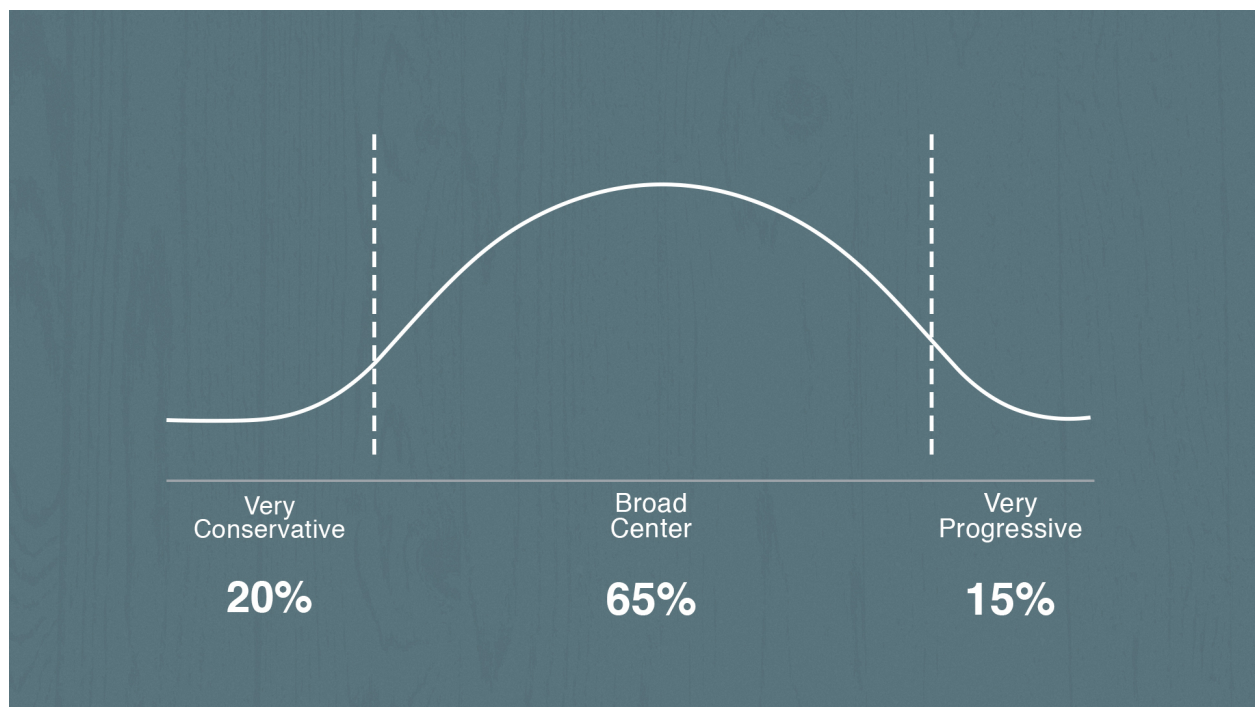


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Enote Excerpt
March 29, 2019

Denomination Update

I wrote much of this enote while on a plane last night, returning from Dallas. Yesterday I was teaching at my alma mater, Southern Methodist University, but on Wednesday night I participated in the first of two small gatherings of some of the key leaders in the United Methodist Church to discuss the future of the denomination. I thought you might find it helpful to understand a bit more of what is happening in the denomination that has led to the current state of conflict.

If you think of a classic bell curve, this gives you a sense of the United Methodist Church's spread across the theological spectrum, and how we interpret scripture regarding same-sex marriage. 20% of our churches tend to be very conservative, 65% tend to be in the broad center and 15% tend to be very progressive. 21,000 of our 32,000 churches in the US are in the broad center of the bell curve.

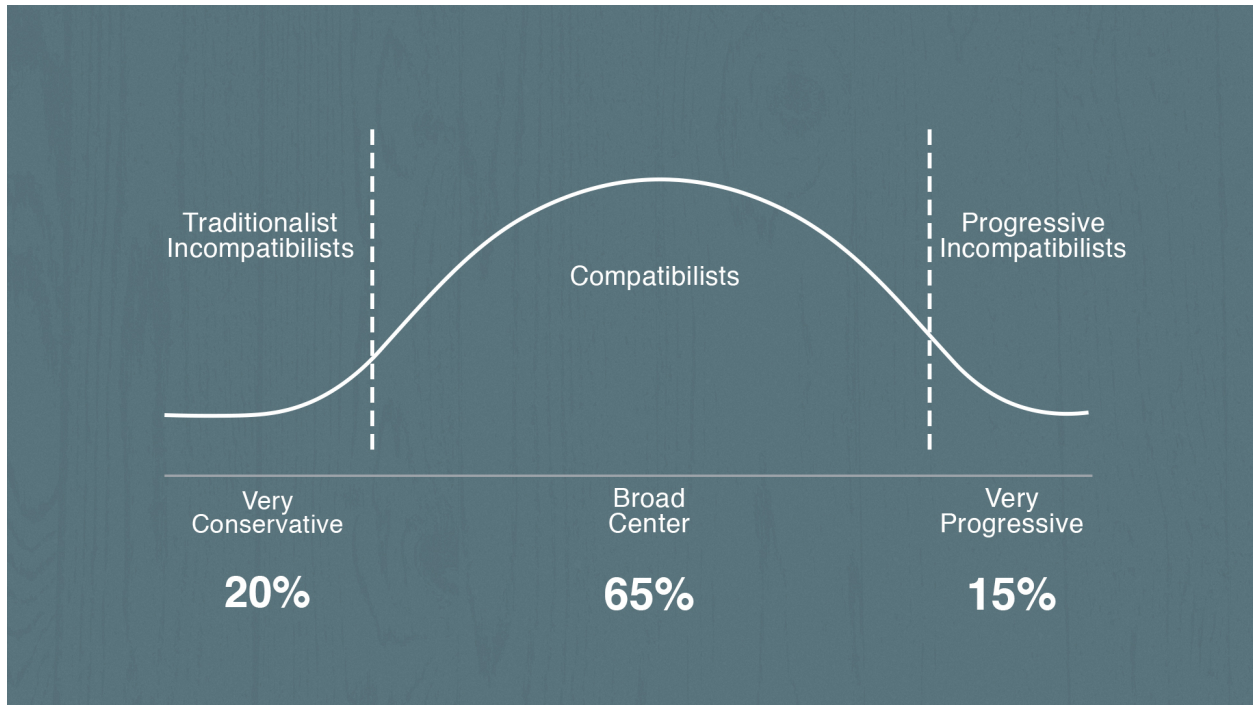


There have been four words/categories that have been used to describe where United Methodists stand on same-sex marriage in the church:

- Traditionalists: "Marriage is between a man and a women"
- Progressive: "God allows his gay and lesbian children to marry, as well"
- Incompatibilist: "I cannot be in a church where others disagree with me and are allowed to do something different than what I believe is right regarding same-sex marriage"

- Compatibilist: "I can be in a church where others disagree with me and are allowed to do something different than what I believe is right regarding same-sex marriage."

So, if you're not totally confused yet, imagine the bell curve again. On one end of the bell curve are the traditionalist-incompatibilists – marriage is between a man and a woman and they cannot be in a denomination where any United Methodist anywhere is allowed to hold same-sex weddings). On the other end of the bell curve are progressive-incompatibilists – those supporting same-sex marriage but who cannot be in a denomination where every pastor and every church is not required to officiate same-sex weddings.



Most traditionalists and progressives believe there is room for Christians to disagree in how they read and interpret scripture regarding same-sex marriage. These are compatibilists.

Traditionalist-compatibilists are willing to allow for same-sex marriage in other churches, provided they are not required to officiate. Progressive-compatibilists are willing to allow traditionalists to not marry same-sex couples, provided they are allowed to do so. Again, on our bell curve, most UM congregations and pastors are compatibilists.