

Our Purpose is Love

Fall 2018 District Gatherings
A Conversation on a Way Forward



Gathering Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Hymn	"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"	#400 UMH
Devotions	Philippians 2:1-11 (CEB) "Our Purpose is Love"	Bishop Laurie
Audio	A Letter From a Mother	
Presentation	Mission, Vision, Scope and Theological Framework of the Commission on a Way Forward	Bishop Laurie
Video	A Church Struggles, Yet Finds Hope	Embury UMC
	Questions and Dialog	
Presentation	Commission on a Way Forward Three Plans	Bishop Laurie
	Questions and Dialog	
Video	A Member of Grace UMC Des Moines	Joe Nixon
Prayer	Praying Our Way Forward—Pause for Prayer John Wesley's Covenant Prayer	
Hymn	"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"	#557 UMH

The One Church Plan

Recommended by the Council of Bishops

This plan would allow for contextualization in different parts of the world (adapting some non-essential practices to different mission fields to maximize our witness and success in each place). It is based on the belief that we can be a church with a large enough tent for people to disagree about homosexuality and yet remain together as The United Methodist Church. It allows us to affirm that our unity and mission are more important than our disagreements.

Neither affirms nor condemns LGBTQ persons

- Removes language from The U.S. Book of Discipline that restricts pastors and churches from conducting same-sex weddings.
- Removes the language from The U.S. Book of Discipline that restricts annual conferences from ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexual persons.

Respects local church wishes

- Adds language that protects the religious freedom of pastors and churches who choose not to perform or host same-sex weddings.
- Continues to allow local churches the authority to establish wedding policies.

Relies on pastoral discretion

- Continues to allow Boards of Ordained Ministry to have the authority to discern whom to credential.
- Continues to allow pastors to discern whom they will or will not marry.
- Reduces the threat of clergy trials.

Less disruption and financial impact

- Plan requires a language change in the Book of Discipline.

- All United Methodist institutions, foundations, universities, agencies, and General Boards will continue to offer their ministries without significant disruption or costly legal counsel related to their charters or articles of incorporation.
- Wespeth will be able to continue to offer its services without disruption.

Progressives not satisfied because it does not bar discrimination

- Does not completely satisfy the progressives because it does not bar some kinds of discrimination against LGBTQ persons in some parts of the UMC.

Conflicts with Traditionalist interpretation of scripture

- Does not completely satisfy the traditionalists because allowing same-sex marriage in any form violates their particular interpretation of scripture.

Central Conferences may adapt Book of Discipline

- Central conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe would retain the authority to adapt the Book of Discipline and could continue to include their traditional language and values.

Traditionalist Model

Not recommended by the Council of Bishops

This plan would affirm the current language about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline and seek to strengthen enforcement for violations of church law.

Affirms the current Book of Discipline

- Boards of Ordained Ministry would still be prohibited from recommending LGBTQ candidates for ordination.
- Officiating same-sex marriages would still be a chargeable offense, and being a self-avowed and practicing gay clergy would continue to be a chargeable offense.
- Enforcement measures would be increased in effort to hold accountable those who would disobey the current rules.
- Prepared by a few members of the Council of Bishops.
- Congregations and clergy not able to uphold the Discipline could join a new self-governing church.

Requires no change to current structure

- This is a plan for keeping the status quo.

Disagreements will continue and will be costly

- Our mission will continue to be compromised with bad publicity from costly trials.
- Not a plan for unity and asks progressives to leave or face costly trials.
- The church will lose members who support or are LGBTQ.

Connectional Conference Model

Considered but not recommended by the Council of Bishops

The Connectional Conferences Model is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services, and one Council of Bishops, while creating different branches that would have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization, and justice.

Creates three overlapping branches

- In the U.S., the five geographically distinct jurisdictional conferences would be replaced by three overlapping conferences: one traditional conference, one progressive conference, and one centrist or “uniting” conference.

Annual Conferences can choose

- Each annual conference would choose to be a member of one of the three connectional conferences based on their affinity to the conference’s theological stance on homosexuality.

Local churches can join a different branch than their Annual Conference

- Conferences and local churches could make a clear choice on human sexuality and yet enjoy some of the missional advantages of remaining a global church.
- Any local church that disagrees with the annual conference decision could vote to join a different branch conference.

- Churches may split as they try to determine which branch they will join.

Creates a complex structure

- It would take years of administrative work to put in place.
- More congregational than connectional.
- Would require many constitutional amendments that would be difficult to ratify in annual conferences around the world.

Progressives not satisfied because it does not bar discrimination

- Does not completely satisfy the progressives because it does not bar some kinds of discrimination against LGBTQ persons in some parts of the UMC.

Violates Traditionalist interpretation of scripture

- Some traditionalists would still be upset that LGBTQ people are being affirmed in some parts of the UMC.

Praying Our Way Forward – Pause for Prayer

UMCprays.org

The Council of Bishops encourages intentional engagement by all United Methodists by asking them to pause and pray each day for the special-called General Conference from 2:23 through 2:26 a.m. or p.m. or at another time convenient for you. The council felt praying specifically at 2:23-2:26 p.m. which represent the dates of the special session of General Conference would be a helpful, effective, and unifying discipline for all United Methodists.

Invitation: We will begin with a moment of holy silence to allow for centering, settling, and focusing.

Minute #1: Prayer of Adoration

Good and great God, we recognize and celebrate that you are loving, kind, and faithful. You are everywhere in this world and beyond. You are also as close as our next breath. With John Wesley we rejoice knowing, “Best of all, you are with us.”

Silence, concluding with unison prayer: “Hear our prayer, O God.”

Minute #2: Prayer of Thanks

God of grace, we thank you that you hear us when we pray and are ever ready and able to act in ways beyond anything we could ask or imagine. Thank you for our brothers and sisters around the world, and especially for those who have offered to serve by attending the special-called General Conference. Thank you for ordering our steps and for preparing a way.

Silence, concluding with unison prayer: “Hear our prayer, O God.”

Minute #3: Prayer of Confession

Forgiving God, we confess that we have allowed fear and distrust to place distance between us and our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. Forgive us for making idols of our own thoughts, voices, and opinions. Thank you for forgiving us and for your perfect love that casts out all fear.

Silence, concluding with unison prayer: “Hear our prayer, O God.”

Minute #4: Prayer of Asking

God of peace and wisdom, from this time forward, may we walk with you in trust and peace, and with our brothers and sisters in the love and unity you desire. May we truly sing together in harmony a song of praise that draws all to you. Even now, may you bless those who will attend the special-called General Conference, assuring them of your love, filling them with your wisdom, preparing them with your peace. May they and we become more sensitive to the voice of your Holy Spirit, so that all we do will please you and bring you glory.

Silence, concluding with unison prayer: “Hear our prayer, O God.”

All of these prayers we offer in the name of the Risen Christ. Amen.

Local Church Gathering Agenda

Exploring options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of
The United Methodist Church in light of our differences regarding human sexuality.

Welcome

Summarize the purpose of the gathering as noted above.

Hymn

“Bind Us Together”

#2226 TFWS

Introductions

Glory Sightings

Share your name and a recent experience of God.

Devotion

Philippians 2:1-11

General Conference Proposal

Present COWF Three Plans

One Church Plan *(Recommended by the Council of Bishops)*

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Connectional Conferences Model *(Not recommended by the Council of Bishops)*

The Connectional Conferences Model is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services, and one Council of Bishops, while creating different branches that would have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization, and justice.

Traditionalist Model *(Not recommended by the Council of Bishops)*

This plan would affirm the current language about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline and seek to strengthen enforcement for violations of church law.

Questions and Dialog

Speak the truth in love, sharing differences yet honoring one another.

In what ways does this proposal reflect your values as a United Methodist Christian?

What concerns do you have about these proposals and their effect on the ministries of our local churches?

How do you feel the Spirit is calling the Church at this time in our history?

Prayer

**Praying Our Way Forward
John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer**

Hymn

“In Christ There Is No East or West”

#548 UMH

Benediction



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward



(515) 974-8907

www.iaumc.org/commissiononawayforward

Resource List

Books

- Browson, James V. [*Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*](#)
- Carter, Ken. [*Embracing the Wideness; The Shared Convictions of The United Methodist Church*](#)
- Covey, Steven. [*The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything*](#)
- Cramer, Philip F. and Harbison, William L. [*The Fight for Marriage – Church Conflicts and Courtroom Contests*](#)
- DeYoung, Kevin. [*What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*](#)
- Field, David N. [*Our Purpose is Love; The Wesleyan Way to be the Church*](#)
- Field, David N. [*Bid Our Jarring Conflicts Cease; A Wesleyan Theology and Praxis of Church Unity*](#)
- Hansen, Adolf. [*Is It Time? – Helping Lay and Clergy Discuss Homosexuality One Question at a Time*](#)
- Hirsch, Debra. [*Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality and Spirituality*](#)
- Huertas, Juan, Rawle, Matt, and Simpson, Katie McKay. [*The Marks of Hope*](#)
- Job, Rueben P and Alexander, Neil M., eds. [*Finding Our Way-Love and Law in The United Methodist Church*](#)
- Milford, Brian K., ed. [*Holy Contradictions; What's Next for the People Called Methodists*](#)
- Oliveto, Karen P. [*Our Strangely Warmed Hearts*](#)
- Renfroe, Rob and Fenton, Walter. [*Are We Really Better Together; An Evangelical Perspective on the Division in The UMC*](#)
- Schmidt, Thomas. [*Straight & Narrow? Compassion & Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*](#)
- The Arbinger Institute. [*The Anatomy of Peace; Resolving the Heart of Conflict*](#)
- VanderWal-Gritter, Wendy. [*Generous Spaciousness: Responding to Gay Christians in the Church*](#)

Small Group Study

- Missio Dei and the United States; Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness*
Living Faithfully – Human Sexuality and The United Methodist Church:
<https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9781501859779#.W5rBCy3MxTZ>
- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. [*Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality*](#)
[*Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness \(Study Guide English Translation\)*](#)
- Is It Time? Helping Laity and Clergy Discuss Homosexuality One Question at a Time*

Resource information

- Official information regarding Way Forward Commission: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward>
- JustPeace: Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation: Engaging Conflict. Welcoming Conversation. Honoring Relationships. Transforming Community. <http://justpeaceumc.org/>
- Information regarding news releases from the Way Forward Commission: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-news-and-updates>
- Nonviolent Communication, a process by Marshall Rosenberg. Available at: www.ayahuasca-wasi.com.

Praying Our Way Forward

- Information and to sign up for Praying Our Way Forward: <https://umcprays.org>

Videos

Berlin, Tom. *Sugar Packets*. <https://vimeo.com/217081225>

Commission on a Way Forward video resources. www.umcom.org/news/way-forward-commission-offers-videosource-for-2019-general-conference

Carter, Ken. *Why I Believe The United Methodist Church Will Remain United*.

<http://www.flumc.org/videodetail/why-i-believe-the-united-methodist-church-will-remainunited-8384939>

Commission on a Way Forward video resources

- Rendle, Gil. *A parable for today*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8ZGS6Dpl9g&feature=youtu.be>
- Rendle, Gil. *An Overview of the Work of the Commission on a Way Forward*.
<https://youtu.be/j9sDqunec2o>
- Hagiya, Grant. *Reflections on "The Anatomy of Peace."*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6trW2HJuwP8&feature=youtu.be>
- Pritchard, Donna, Salsgiver, Tom, and Taylor, Leigh. *Reflections on the work and relationships formed while serving on the Commission*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMBuw4vFL1w&feature=youtu.be>
- Steiner Ball, Sandra, Yemba, David, and Carter, Ken. *Commission on A Way Forward moderators overview*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tOGnPrLqKg&feature=youtu.be>
- Smothers, Jasmine, Hager Love, Julie, and Berlin, Tom. *Reflecting on the experience of being on the Commission*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85KP5qxfCpA&feature=youtu.be>
- Nuckols, Dave and Cunanan, Helen. *Commission on a Way Forward experiences*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJCPnFqOgUU&feature=youtu.be>
- Palmer, Gregory, and Schnase, Robert. *The Work of the Commission points to the larger mission of The United Methodist Church*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52EVb7wuva8&feature=youtu.be>
- Miller, Patricia and Berryman, Matt. *Experiences serving on the Commission on a Way Forward*. <https://youtu.be/xbR96EBI5Qk>
- Machinga, Mazvita, Field, David, and Lee, Myungrae Kim. *Thoughts about the work of the Commission*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfl-en8wnho&feature=youtu.be>
- Patricia Miller and Matt Berryman <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbR96EBI5Qk>

Council of Bishop on the One Church Plan (5 minute

video): <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f03rtma3lqm952o/AACnrW8UuCiQ48vFRMX6o0h8a?dl=0&preview=COB+on+the+One+Church+Model+Large.mp4>

Timeline on UMC stance on homosexuality <http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/gc2016-tackling-44-year-stance-on-homosexuality>

Other Resources

Patterson, Grenny, et al. *Resources On Healthy Dialogue Crucial Conversations* is a how-to book on having healthy, transformative conversations when the stakes are high. A helpful summary is available here: <http://www.peace.ca/crucialconversations.pdf>.

Hats Exercise for Discussion of Difficult Topics, adapted by WNCC Leadership Development.

Available at: <http://leadwncc.org/hats-exercise-for-discussion-ofdifficult-topics/>.

Gallo, Amy. "How to Make Sure You're Heard in a Difficult Conversation," in the Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2015/11/how-to-make-sure-youre-heard-in-a-difficult-conversation>.