

Summary of the Plans Reported by the Commission on a Way Forward to General Conference 2019

THE ONE CHURCH PLAN is the only plan recommended by the majority of Council of Bishops and supported by the majority of the Commission on the Way Forward. The One Church Plan holds The United Methodist Church together to continue mission work around the world. The Council of Bishops remains one body. Support for Central Conference bishops will continue in the same way as in the past. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) and all the other general agencies continue to operate and serve the whole denomination. The Judicial Council remains the same. Each Central Conference adapts their book of discipline based on their context and conscience. This plan focuses on unity in diversity and makes space for global contexts in decisions about the roles of LGBTQ+ people in the church. Based on context and conscience, annual conferences may decide whether to allow ordination of LGBTQ+ people. Clergy may marry same-sex couples without fear of trials. Congregations will decide if they want to allow their facilities to be used for same-sex weddings. Bishops, conferences and clergy are not obligated to ordain or marry anyone.

THE CONNECTIONAL CONFERENCE PLAN divides the United States into three connectional conferences: Traditional, Unity (moderate), and Progressive. Central Conferences align with one of the 3 U.S.-based connectional conferences, or they can form up to five additional connectional conferences, each with their own adapted book of discipline. As many as eight connectional conferences may share pooled UMC general church agencies. The Board of Church and Society, Commission on Status and Role of Women, and Commission on Religion and Race would not continue under this plan. General agency support is provided based on the ability of connectional conferences to pay for their services. The Council of Bishops continues, but each connectional conference has its own college of bishops. U.S. bishops are supported by their connectional conference, while bishops outside of the United States are jointly funded by every connectional conference. The Judicial Council is made up of two representatives from each connectional conference. The Judicial Council has the responsibility of knowing as many as eight modified books of discipline and have ultimate authority over matters of church law. Each connectional conference is free to organize their own judicial body to decide matters related to their modified book of discipline. General Conference retains authority over the constitution as well as the shared administrative agencies and services. This plan requires constitutional amendments, which means that implementation of each amendment requires a two-thirds vote of all members of the annual conferences who are present at the time of the vote. It would take 8-10 years to implement.

THE TRADITIONALIST PLAN was proposed by a small group of bishops, was not recommended by the Commission on a Way Forward, and was not endorsed by the Council of Bishops. This plan would provoke schism and major departures of clergy, congregations, conferences, and jurisdictions in the United States. This plan forces conferences, congregations, and clergy to leave if they are unwilling to sign a vow to obey *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. Leaving the church for any reason will be supported. If clergy are found guilty of breaking disciplinary provisions they will be required to surrender their credentials. Annual conferences that do not certify their compliance with the *Book of Discipline* by 2021 will no longer receive United Methodist funds or use the UMC logo. Active and retired bishops must sign a statement to certify that they will uphold disciplinary restrictions by 2021 or lose all compensation for their expenses.

Highlights of the Three Plans Reported by the Commission on a Way Forward

	ONE CHURCH PLAN	CONNECTIONAL CONFERENCE PLAN	TRADITIONALIST PLAN
Brief Summary	<p>The One Church Plan gives all levels of the church greater flexibility for decision making based on ministry contexts. This is the plan recommended by the Council of Bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward. It allows for contextual decision making for the ordination of LGBTQ+ people and same-sex marriage. “Contextualists want to translate the gospel into the varied settings in which God places us. They see this as a missiological calling and believe that the work of the church can be adapted in a global church.” P2 of COWF Report</p>	<p>The Connectional Conference Plan divides the United States into three connectional conferences: Traditional, Unity (moderate), and Progressive. Central Conferences could align with one of these three U.S.-based connectional conferences, or they can form up to five additional connectional conferences, each with their own adapted book of discipline. The plan would take 8-10 years to implement. “Contextualists want to translate the gospel into the varied settings in which God places us. They see this as a missiological calling and believe that the work of the church can be adapted in a global church.” P2 of COWF Rep,</p>	<p>The Traditionalist Plan was prepared by a subgroup of the Council of Bishops. It was not approved by the Commission on a Way Forward nor endorsed by the Council of Bishops. “Traditionalists value marriage between one man and one woman, and sexual activity within this relationship. [They] also seek greater accountability at every level of the church.” P2 of COWF Report</p>
Impact on local congregations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Congregations are not obligated to allow their facilities to be used for same-sex weddings. ● Following their conscience, this plan allows congregations to decide whether to use their facilities for same-sex weddings. ● Permits congregation to decide if they are open to receive LGBTQ+ clergy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Congregations may choose to align with the connectional conference selected by their region or they may vote by simple majority to join a different connectional conference. ● Decisions on allowing or disallowing same-sex weddings in their facilities will be determined by the policies of the connectional conference with which a local church chooses to affiliate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No local church is required to vote. ● Congregations that disagree with this plan are obligated to leave the UMC or join autonomous or affiliated churches. ● Congregations that leave the UMC would keep their property, assets, and liabilities but must pay their fair share of the conference’s unfunded pension liability.

<p>Impact on clergy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of trials against clergy in the United States for celebrating same-sex weddings. ● Clergy are free to decide whether they are willing to preside at same-sex weddings or not, based on individual context and conscience. ● Gracious exit is permitted for clergy who are unable to continue serving in the UMC, including provisions for protecting individual pensions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clergy may choose to affiliate with one of as many as eight conferences ● Clergy must meet qualifications and abide by the standards of conduct established by the connectional conference(s) they choose. ● Clergy choices regarding affiliation will become a factor in the appointive process, which will still be led by the cabinet of each conference. ● Ordinations will be recognized jointly by all connectional conferences. However, permission to affiliate is decided by each connectional conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clergy who reject disciplinary provisions around same-sex marriage and ordination must leave the denomination or join an autonomous or affiliated church. ● Clergy who perform same-sex marriages and are guilty at trial will be required to surrender their credentials. ● The plan mandates that any just resolution reached during a clergy complaint process must include a commitment not to repeat the offense.
<p>Impact on Central Conference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Same gender weddings may be conducted in conferences where civil law permits them, but a conference is not obligated to allow such weddings even when they are permitted by civil law. ● Central Conferences will be able to act according to their beliefs and will expand their ability to adapt the <i>Book of Discipline</i> to fit their contexts, including language pertaining to human sexuality, marriage, and ordination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Conferences can choose to affiliate with a U.S.-based connectional conference or create up to five additional connectional conferences of their own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Conferences that do not certify compliance will be required to leave the UMC or join autonomous or affiliated churches.

	ONE CHURCH PLAN	CONNECTIONAL CONFERENCE PLAN	TRADITIONALIST PLAN
Impact on General Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General agencies will remain the same. ● Relationships to all annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, and the general church are maintained. ● Judicial Council, Council of Bishops, and General Conference will continue operating with no changes. ● General church will not provide funds to LGBTQ+ ministries and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Boards and agencies would be reorganized based on the needs of connectional conferences, and services will eventually be on a fee basis. ● This plan eliminates the General Board of Church and Society, the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and the Commission on Religion and Race. ● Each connectional conference would adopt its own book of discipline and include the Articles of Religion, Confessions of Faith, and the General Rules. ● Judicial Council would have two representatives from each connectional conference and oversee as many as eight books of discipline. ● Each connectional conference may organize their own judicial body. ● General Conference would be shorter and retain authority over the UMC Constitution and administrative agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Traditionalist Plan does not detail the impact it will have on General Church agencies. ● Given the loyalty certification required of bishops, conferences, and clergy, it is reasonable to expect loyalty certifications from general agencies' employees and boards of directors. If they are unwilling to certify, they will be subject to expectations to leave the UMC or join autonomous or affiliated churches. ● This plan eliminates the General Board of Church and Society, the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and the Commission on Religion and Race. ● United Methodist seminaries, universities, and colleges may find their funding determined by their willingness to sign a certification of obedience to the <i>Book of Discipline</i>.

For the full report in multiple languages go to:

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/way-forward-report-released-in-all-four-official-languages-of-general-confe>

Available in English, French, Portuguese, and Swahili

Why the One Church Plan is THE Way Forward

The One Church Plan is the only plan supported by both the Commission on a Way Forward and the Council of Bishops. Support for Central Conference bishops will continue in the same way as in the past. Central Conferences will continue to operate and serve as usual. Each would adapt their book of discipline based on their context and conscience. Expensive trials against LGBTQ+ clergy and clergy who perform same-sex weddings would be reduced. The One Church Plan holds The United Methodist Church together to continue mission work around the world.

The Connectional Conference Plan is a formula for a house divided that could result in an explosion of civil court cases on property and pensions. If the church is divided into three branches, resources would be divided too, harming mission work around the world. General agency services would be based on the ability to pay. It could jeopardize programs of the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society, for example, such as missionary placements, global health, economic development, and advocacy programs. The General Commission on Religion and Race and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women would disappear. Time and resources would be drained as multiple Judicial Councils and regional Councils of Bishops are launched. Because this plan has multiple constitutional amendments, it could take many years to implement.

The Traditionalist Plan demands more rules, trials, and punishments, which will increase fear at all levels of the church. The name says it: This a formula for schism and chaos. Giving will diminish, members will flee, conferences will defect, and bishops, along with everyone with responsibility, will be desperate to prop up their respective institutions. Conferences, congregations, and clergy would be mandated to sign a statement of obedience to the *Book of Discipline*. Any person or body that refuses to sign the promise to obey would be required to leave. The General Commission on Religion and Race and the Commission on the Status and Role of Women would disappear. Any divergence from the *Book of Discipline* would be a chargeable offence, not limited to matters of human sexuality. This model is based on authoritarianism and legalism; it is not a witness for a church grounded in John Wesley's theology of grace.