

Analysis of Traditional Plan Bishop Scott J. Jones

Summary

The Traditional Plan maintains the current language regarding the practice of homosexuality and marriage. It strengthens the definitions to make complaint procedures and trials more easily decided. It provides for a gracious exit of annual conferences or groups of churches to join new, self-governing denominations.

Strengths

- Maintains current language defining marriage is only between one man and one woman and does not move the church toward a progressive understanding of sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Allows annual conferences or any group of 50 congregations to form a self-governing church if they are in “irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience with the doctrine or moral teachings and requirements of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church on the issues of human sexuality, or with the way such requirements are being enforced, or with the resolution of those matters adopted by the 2019 General Conference.”
- Clarifies that “self-avowed, practicing homosexual” includes persons living in same-sex marriage or partnership, or who publicly so states.
- Maintains current structures of jurisdictions and central conferences
- Maintains current boards, agencies and seminaries
- Enhances accountability procedures to more easily handle principled disobedience by clergy and bishops.
- Prohibits bishops from consecrating as bishops or ordaining as clergy self-avowed practicing homosexuals.
- Requires members of Boards of Ordained Ministry to certify that they will uphold provisions of the *Book of Discipline* regarding homosexuality.
- Clarifies procedures for reaching just resolutions in the complaint process.
- Sets minimum penalties for performing same-gender marriages.
- Clarifies that churches leaving the denomination must contribute an amount of money equal to its share of the Conference’s unfunded pension liability.

Weaknesses

- Maintains current language defining marriage is only between one man and one woman and does not move the church toward a progressive understanding of sexual orientations and gender identities.
- It may result in an increased number of trials and complaint procedures because those engaging in principled disobedience show no interest in leaving the UMC.
- Allows annual conferences or any group of 50 congregations to form a self-governing church if they are in “irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience with the doctrine or moral teachings and requirements of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church on the issues of human sexuality, or with the way such requirements are being

enforced, or with the resolution of those matters adopted by the 2019 General Conference.”

- It may not be successful in holding disobedient bishops and conferences accountable and thus change their behavior.
- Proposed accountability procedures may be unconstitutional.