



General Conference 2019

Q. *What is the General Conference?*

A. General Conference is the highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church consisting of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference typically convenes every four years to determine the denomination's future direction. It is the only body that can speak officially for the worldwide United Methodist Church.

Q. *Why has a Special Session of the General Conference been called?*

A. In response to the request of the 2016 General Conference concerning continued tension within the United Methodist Church regarding issues of human sexuality, including how marriage is defined by our denomination, whether self-avowed practicing homosexual persons may be ordained and whether churches are permitted to conduct same-gender wedding ceremonies. This Commission is made up of 32 persons from around the globe who represented various positions on the issues of human sexuality and were tasked to research, prayerfully consider and recommend a way or ways forward for the church to consider.

The Commission presented three recommended plans for A Way Forward to the Council of Bishops in 2018. The Council of Bishops (COB) called a Special Session of General Conference for 2019 with the sole purpose of discussing, debating and taking action on the recommendations.

Q. *What are the three proposed plans from the Commission on the Way Forward?*

A. The 32-member Commission of clergy and laity was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to conduct a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of The Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and to explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church. The Commission was directed to prepare recommendations to present to the Council of Bishops that would be forwarded to the 2019 called session of General Conference.

There are three proposed plans: The Traditional Plan, The One Church and The Connectional Conference Plan. The Traditional Plan allows for the current

language regarding the practice of homosexuality and marriage as outlined in The Book of Discipline to remain the same. The One Church Plan will remove the current language regarding homosexuality and marriage from The Book of Discipline. The Connectional Conference Plan creates three values-based connectional conferences each with distinctive definitions of homosexuality and marriage, accountability, contextualization and justice. You can learn more details about each plan [here](#).

Q. *Is there a plan for which Texas Annual Conference is advocating?*

A. No. There are benefits and challenges of each proposed plans, and we have not endorsed any plan. You can see Bishop Jones' analysis of the pros and cons of each plan at <https://www.txcumc.org/thewayforward>.

Q. *What will be discussed and debated at General Conference 2019?*

A. In addition to voting on the three proposed plans, the three primary questions are:

- 1) How will the United Methodist Church define a Christian marriage? Is it a union between a man and a woman or a union of two adults?
- 2) Will same-gender weddings be allowed in the local churches of The United Methodist Church and/or be officiated by UMC clergy?
- 3) Will the ordination of "self-avowed, practicing" homosexual or LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) persons be allowed?

Q. *Who are the delegates representing the Texas Annual Conference at General Conference 2019?*

A. Our Conference (region) has 18 men and women who were elected to serve as clergy and lay delegates at our last local session of the Texas Annual Conference (an event), which happens every May in Houston. Our delegates are listed at <https://www.txcumc.org/2019Delegates>.

Q. *If General Conference decides on a plan, when will it take affect?*

A. Typically, actions taken by General Conference do not go into effect until January 1 of the next calendar year. However, General Conference could vote to change the start date.

Q. *Is General Conference 2019 required to vote on one of these plans – or an amended version?*

A. The Conference is not required to approve or adopt any of the three plans – or any plan. However, it must take action on each petition duly presented to the body. No matter what is decided at the General Conference, God is in control.

Q. What happens if no action on A Way Forward is approved?

A. The church will move forward under the current provisions as stated in The Book of Discipline.

Q. What does the current Book of Discipline say about the practice of homosexuality, same-gender weddings and the ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals?

A.

1. We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.
2. Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.
3. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-is-the-denominations-position-on-homosexuality>