

PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD



We are One in Christ

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“Maintaining and strengthening the unity of The United Methodist Church is all of our work to do and all of our conversations to have.”

– Bishop Tracy S. Malone, East Ohio Conference resident bishop

East Ohio Conference Conversation and Prayer Guide for Local Churches

This resource is designed to provide the local church a framework for engaging in conversations about the final report of the Commission on a Way Forward to the 2019 Special Called Session of the General Conference. It is recommended that each participant read:

- The Mission, Vision, Scope document
(<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us>)
- The Final Report of the Commission
(http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/council-of-bishops/news_and_statements/documents/Way_Foward_Report_-_Final_-_ENGLISH.pdf)

Opening Prayer

Hymn of Faith

“Spirit of the Living God”

#393 UMH

Scripture/Devotion

Ephesians 4:1-6

NIV

Brief Overview of the work of the Commission:

The Commission was tasked with designing a way for being church that maximizes the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible and with as many people as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible.

Review the Summaries of the Three Plans:

One Church Plan (recommended by the Council of Bishops)

The One Church Plan provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context without disbanding the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church. It is based on the belief that we can be a church with a large enough tent for people to disagree about human sexuality and yet remain together as The United Methodist Church. It allows us to affirm our unity and mission are more important than our disagreements.

In the One Church Plan, no annual conferences, bishops, congregations, or pastors are compelled to act contrary to their convictions. The plan maintains the leadership structure of The United Methodist Church, including the Council of Bishops, the General Conference, and the annual conferences as one body and one Church. It offers greater freedom to many who desire change but do not want to violate *The Book of Discipline*. Voting is kept to a minimum except where it is helpful. There is no mandate that requires local churches, conferences, or pastors to participate in a vote that divides, segments, or separates.

Connectional Conference Plan

This plan creates an entirely different structure for The United Methodist Church. This plan maintains a General Conference structure that holds the unified core . . . all those things the Church can agree on, (i.e. the Articles of Religion, Apostle's Creed, Nicene Creed, Wesley's sermons, etc.) and maintains the Council of Bishops. Underneath this General Conference there would be three Connectional Conferences (branches) according to theological perspectives: Progressive, Centrist and Traditional. Currently the church is structured geographically.

Each connectional conference would share a book of discipline for the General Conference but each connectional conference would begin to develop its own book of discipline. This plan is the most complex. It is the only plan that requires constitutional amendments in order to be fulfilled, and it will require a long implementation process.

Traditional Plan

This plan affirms the current language about human sexuality in *The Book of Discipline* and seeks to strengthen enforcement for violations of church law.

Questions for Reflection:

- What unites us as United Methodists, and what type of Church do you long for?
- Because we are a global Church how might people of varied convictions live together in their differences without presuming that they will resolve their differences?
- How do you feel the Spirit of God is calling The United Methodist Church to live out its mission at this time in our history?
- What can be our witness to the world in relation to our differences?

Hymn of Faith

“Help Us Accept Each Other”

#632 UMH

Closing Prayer

The Charge: Praying Our Way Forward

Pause and pray for our church's mission and way forward daily for four minutes from 2:23 through 2:26 am or pm OR at another time. This is because the Special Session of General Conference will be held February 23 through February 26, 2019.

Download the 4-Minute Prayer Guide at: <https://umcprays.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/4-minute-Prayer-Guide.pdf>