

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) REGARDING THE 2019 CALLED, SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

What is the General Conference?

The General Conference is the primary legislative body of The United Methodist Church – and the only body that speaks officially for the Church. The General Conference meets once every four years, with the next one scheduled for 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

What is a Special Session of the General Conference?

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016 in ¶14, Article II states, “a special session of the General Conference, possessing the authority and exercising all the powers of the General Conference may be called by the Council of Bishops ... to meet at such a time and in such place as may be stated in the call.” The Council of Bishops has called for a special session of the General Conference to take place February 23-26, 2019 in The Dome in St. Louis, Missouri.

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

The amended call issued by COB President Kenneth H. Carter states, “The purpose of this Special Session of the General Conference shall be limited to receiving and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward and recommendations of the Council of the Bishops.”

The 32-member Commission of clergy and laity was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* concerning human sexuality and to explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.

What will be considered by the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference?

The Commission on a Way Forward commission will present to delegates of the Special Session of the General Conference the following three plans:

- *The One Church Plan*

This plan would allow decisions about whether to ordain LGBTQ clergy or to allow same-gender unions to be made closer to the conference and congregational level. It would remove the restrictive language against the practice of homosexuality in *The Book of Discipline* and give assurances to pastors and conferences who in good conscience cannot perform same-sex weddings or ordain “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy that they don’t have to do so.

The Council of Bishops recommends the One Church Plan as the way forward for The United Methodist Church.

- *The Traditionalist Plan*
This plan would affirm the current language in *The Book of Discipline*; and seek to create swift and strong penalties for violations and create exit plans for churches that disagree.
- *The Connectional Conference Plan*
This plan would allow conferences to choose among three connectional conferences for affiliation. The connectional conferences would align based on theology or perspective on LGBTQ ministry – be it traditionalist, progressive or allowing for a variety of approaches. This plan would require multiple amendments to the denomination’s constitution.

Read the proposed legislation at <http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session> .

How are delegates to the Special Session of the General Conference chosen?

¶14, Article II of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* states, “Such special session of the General Conference shall be composed of the delegates to the preceding General Conference or their lawful successors, except when a particular annual conference or missionary conference shall prefer to have a new election it may do so.” Half of the 864 General Conference delegates are lay, and half are clergy. They are elected by members to their Annual Conference business session to represent their annual conference, using a formula based on the number of lay and clergy members in their annual conference. The formula ensures that each annual conference has at least one clergy and one lay delegate to the General Conference.

How can I participate in conversation and sharing about a Way Forward and the Special Session of the General Conference?

East Ohio Conference clergy and laity were invited to pray for, and participate in, the 10 Conversations on a Way Forward held between September 2017 and March 2018. In the fall, the East Ohio delegation to the Special Session of the General Conference will host the following listening sessions:

Sat., Sept. 8	10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Wildare UMC
Sat., Sept. 29	10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Cambridge Christ UMC
Tues., Oct. 9	6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	New Philadelphia First UMC
Sat., Oct. 20	10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Ashland First UMC
Tues., Nov. 6	6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	Aldersgate UMC

Pre-registration is not required, but is helpful for us to plan hospitality. Attendees can register at www.eocumc.com/gc.

Contact the East Ohio delegation via e-mail at eoc2019gcdelegation@eocumc.com.