

A CONVERSATION WITHIN THE COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD: THE TRADITIONALIST PLAN

Important Note:

The request to include a full Traditionalist Model was received by the Commission on a Way Forward just prior to its last meeting, which began on May 14, 2018. Members of the Commission on a Way Forward registered concern that the time available did not allow for the full conciliar process utilized for the other two plans offered by the Commission on a Way Forward. The One Church Plan and the Connectional Conference Plan both received intensive and comprehensive participation from the Commission and the Council of Bishops over an extended period of time. While there was some support within both the Commission and the Council of Bishops for a Traditionalist Model, the support was modest enough in both groups to discontinue the Commission's earlier work on this model. In order to serve the May, 2018 request from the Council of Bishops, the Commission on a Way Forward resubmits the sketch sent to the Council of Bishops in November, 2017 as our work on the Traditionalist Model along with the history of this work and its implications for various bodies in The United Methodist Church.

History of Traditionalist Plan:

- The Commission on a Way Forward developed a sketch of a Traditional Model that was submitted with the sketches of the One Church Model and the Multi-Branch plan in November, 2017
- It was reported to the Commission on a Way Forward that the Council of Bishops did not vote on or express any preference on the models but when asked which model(s) the Commission should develop, both the One-Church sketch and the Multi-Branch sketch were the focus.
- The One Church sketch and the Multi-Branch sketch were each developed into full plans by the Commission on a Way Forward for consideration by the Council of Bishops for their February, 2018 meeting. The Multi-Branch sketch later was titled the Connectional Conference Plan.
- At the April 29 - May 4, 2018 meeting of the Council of Bishops, the Commission on a Way Forward was asked to provide a Traditional Plan. The Commission on a Way Forward was asked to develop this plan by the end of its May 14-16 meeting.

Summary of the Traditionalist Plan (as presented to the November Council of Bishops Meeting):

Primary Action: Accountability to the current *Book of Discipline* language

Disciplinary Language and Implications:

- Broaden the definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual to include persons living in a same-sex marriage or civil union or persons who publicly state that they are practicing homosexuals.
- Mandate that any just resolution shall include a commitment not to repeat the offense.
- Require every annual conference to certify that they will uphold, enforce, and maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination.
- Annual conferences that did not so certify would be encouraged to form something similar to an "autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church." As of 2021, annual conferences who could not so certify could no longer use the United Methodist name and logo, and they could no longer receive any funds from The United Methodist Church.
- Require bishops (active and retired) to certify that they will uphold, enforce, and maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination. Active bishops who did not so certify would not be eligible to receive compensation for expenses as of 2021, and would be encouraged to join the "autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church" formed by the above annual conferences.

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- Local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to not enforce the Discipline's standards could vote to remain with the UMC.
- Local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to enforce the Discipline's standards could vote to withdraw from the UMC and unite with the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.”
- Clergy who could not maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination would be encouraged to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.”

The effects of the Traditionalist Plan on each segment of The United Methodist Church

Local Church:

- Local churches would not be required to vote.
- Local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to not enforce the *Discipline's* standards could vote to remain with the UMC.
- Local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to enforce the *Discipline's* standards could vote to withdraw from the UMC and unite with the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.”

Clergy:

- Clergy who could not maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination would be encouraged to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.”
- Mandate that any just resolution shall include a commitment not to repeat the offense.
- Clergy would surrender their credentials if found guilty of breaking provisions of the Book of Discipline related to same-gender marriage.
- The expectation is that clergy who cannot conform to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related their identity as self-avowed, practicing homosexuals or the performance of same-sex weddings would be expected to leave. The process of leaving would have to be developed in accordance to the Constitution.

Annual Conferences:

- Require every annual conference to certify that they will uphold, enforce, and maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination.
- Annual conferences that did not so certify would be encouraged to form something similar to an “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.” As of 2021, annual conferences who could not so certify could no longer use the United Methodist name and logo, and they could no longer receive any funds from The United Methodist Church.

Bishops:

- Require bishops (active and retired) to certify that they will uphold, enforce, and maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination. Active bishops who did not so certify would not be eligible to receive compensation for expenses as of 2021, and would be encouraged to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church” formed by the above annual conferences.

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General Agencies:

- All General Boards and Agencies will continue.
- General Boards and Agencies have the ability to negotiate their services with churches that have left the UMC.

UMC Related Institutions:

- UMC related institutions would retain their current relationships and affiliations unless under their by-law they change these relationships.

Mission Field:

- The intention of this model is to use the energy of the church to reach the mission field rather than in processes related to church conflict.

Judicial Council:

- The plan makes no changes to the Judicial Council.

Global Church:

- It aligns the position of the church related to LGBTQ inclusion with the majority of the global church outside the United States.