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COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD



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COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD

Thank you for taking the time to explore the information contained in this PowerPoint. This work is part of a larger effort of Denver United Methodist Church to address the ways in which our denomination seeks to be in ministry regarding issues of human sexuality. The purpose of this PowerPoint is to provide information about how decisions regarding any changes to current church doctrinal standards will be handled leading up to the 2019 called General Conference. The information contained in this PowerPoint has been sourced primarily from United Methodist related boards, agencies, and news outlets. Thank you to Mr. Karry Brockman and Ms. Sandra Hussey for their work in gathering these resources. Also thank you to the DUMC Advisory Group that is assisting me in providing guidance to our congregation in response to any decisions made by the General Conference. Please prayerfully and faithfully discuss this issue within your group and be in prayer for our church as we seek God's will for our congregation.

Blessings,
Pastor Steve



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Introductory Comments

This presentation is not a position statement i.e., it only provides up to date details specific to human sexuality discussions/activities occurring over the past several months.

Pastor Steve formed an advisory group focused at providing guidance/direction once the General Conference decision is made known in February, 2019

Hardcopies of handouts are available – Q&A, PPT, resource list, etc

I'm available to make presentations one-on-one or to small groups



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Organization Structure

The UMC denomination is organized in a “connectional” system, which “enables us to carry out our mission in unity and strength” (Book of Discipline, ¶ 701).

Every local church is linked to an interconnected network of organizations that join together in mission and ministry, allowing us to accomplish far more than any one local church or person could alone.

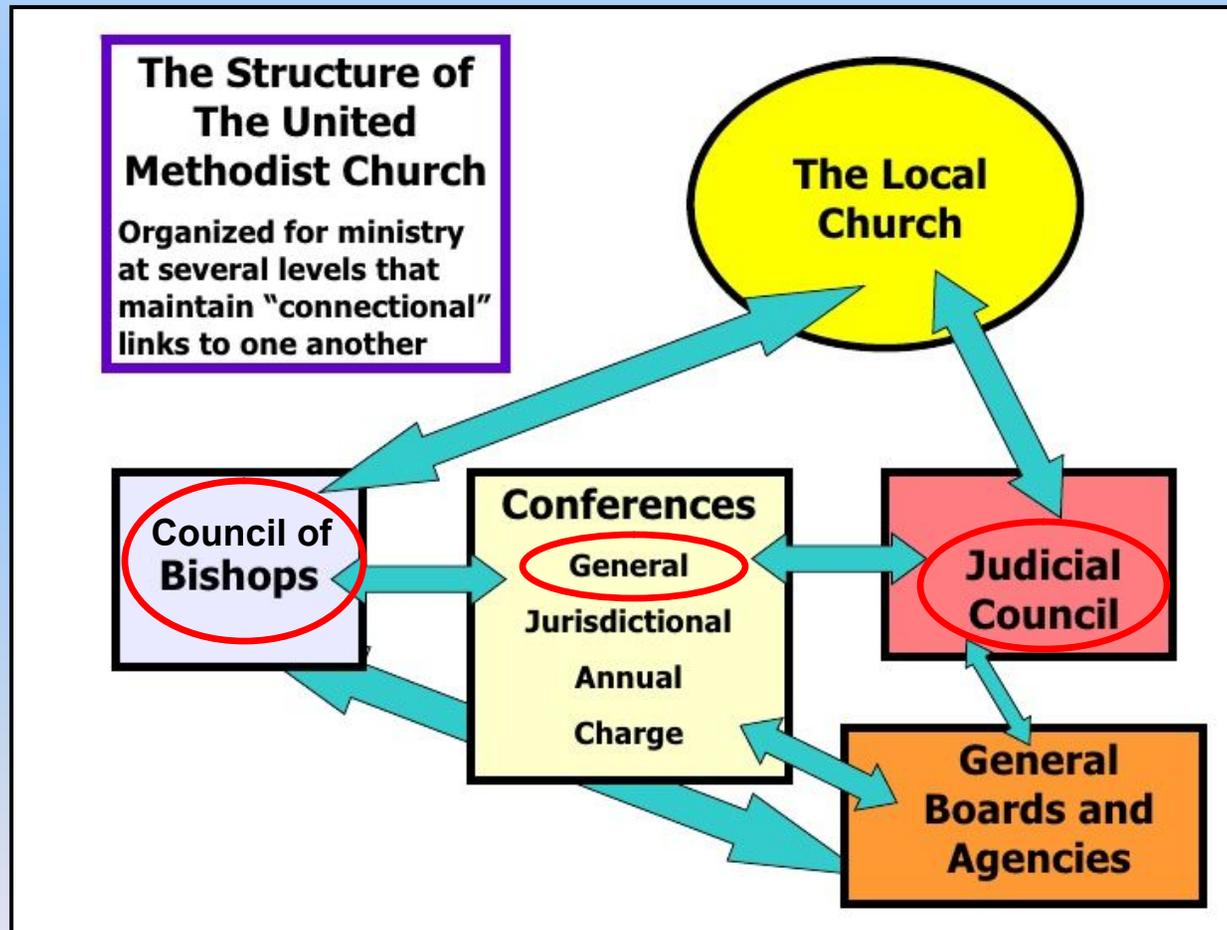
Within the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church, conferences provide the primary groupings of people and churches for discernment and decision-making.

The word, conference, refers to both the assembly and organization of people as well as the process of discerning God’s call together.



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Connectional Organization Structure



Bishop

Bishops of The United Methodist Church provide spiritual leadership to almost 12 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. In the United Methodist tradition, bishops are not “ordained” as bishops, but are clergy elected and consecrated to the office of bishop.

Bishops are elected by one of the five jurisdictional conferences held every four years in the United States and by the central conferences outside of the U.S. Bishops are assigned by their jurisdiction to serve a geographical area for a four-year term.

All bishops are members of the Council of Bishops, which collectively is charged with the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church. Bishops are specifically assigned to preside over the work of a regional area.



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Council of Bishops

The Council of Bishops is made up of all active and retired bishops of The United Methodist Church. The Council meets twice a year. According to the Book of Discipline, "The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships." [427.2]

The Council's office is in the United Methodist Building, across the street from the Capitol and the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington D.C.

The president of the Council serves two years. The Executive Committee also includes these additional officers: president-designate, secretary, executive secretary and ecumenical officer. The immediate past president also serves on the committee.



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General Conference

The General Conference is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates that meets every four years. General Conferences are held in years divisible by 4, such as 2008, 2012, 2016, etc.

The delegates are elected by annual conferences (at annual conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy.
(864 Delegates, Western NC Conference, 20)

Bishops attend the General Conference but cannot vote. Different bishops serve as presiding officers during the conference. Other bishops cannot speak unless permission is specifically granted by the delegates.

During General Conference, delegates discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, annual conferences, and other groups within the denomination. These actions result in a revision of the Book of Discipline, the denomination's book of law, and Book of Resolutions, policies of the denomination on current social issues.



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Judicial Council

The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body or "court" of The United Methodist Church. Its nine members are elected by the General Conference. The Judicial Council determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences. It acts on these either on appeal of lower rulings or through requests for declaratory decisions. It also rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the denomination conform to The Book of Discipline. This is done in accordance with procedures established in The Book of Discipline.

Both clergy and laity serve on the Judicial Council-four of one, five of the other, alternating every eight years. Members are elected for eight-year terms by General Conference and may not serve on any other United Methodist Board or Agency beyond the Annual Conference. Members are limited to two consecutive terms. The council elects its own president and other officers for a four-year term. A Clerk of the Council serves part-time and is the only paid person attached to the Council.



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Jurisdictions

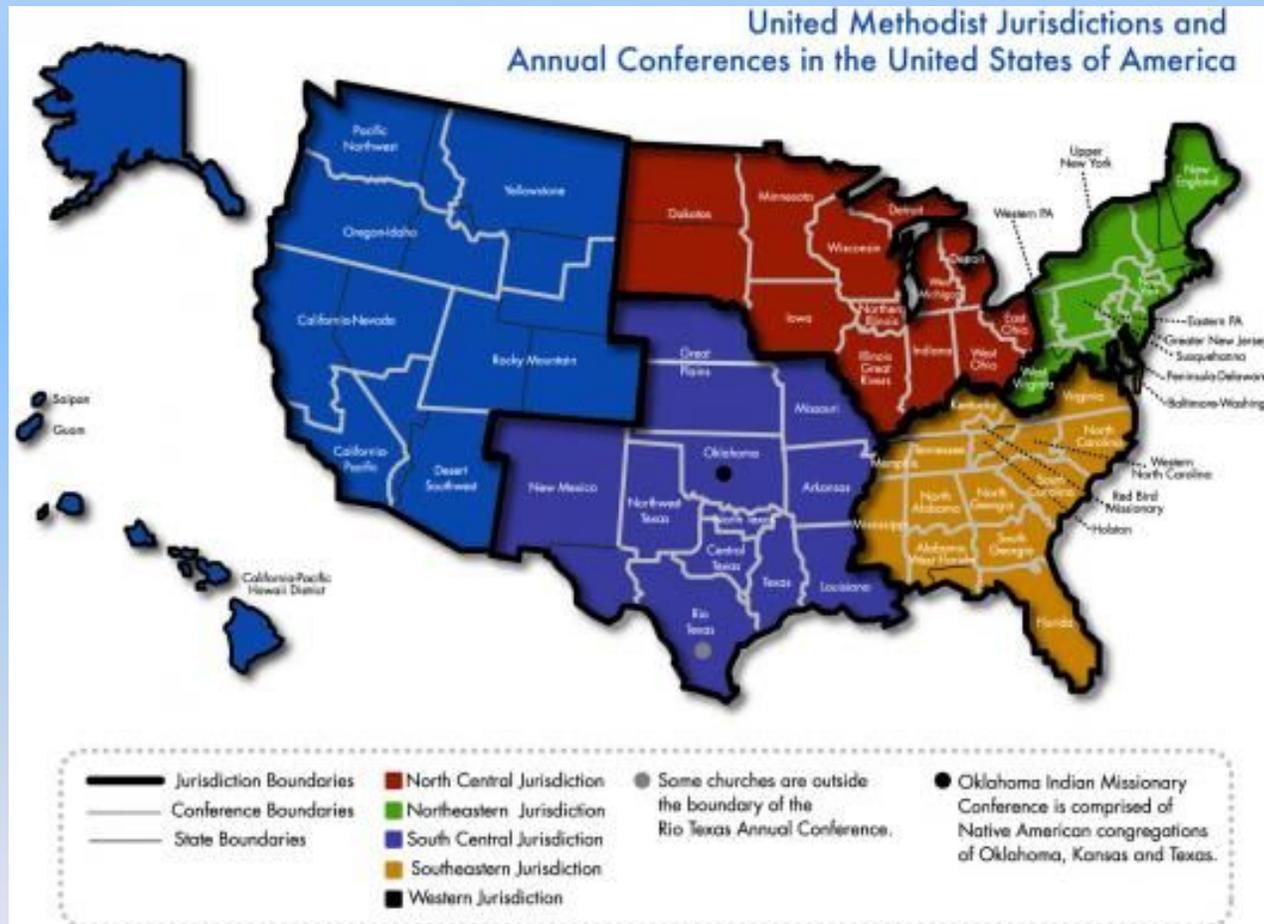
In the United States of America, The United Methodist Church is divided into five areas known as jurisdictions: Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western. These provide some program and leadership training events to support the annual conferences. Every four years the jurisdictional conferences meet to elect new bishops and select members of general boards and agencies.

Annual conferences located outside the United States are organized into “central” conferences, much like jurisdictions. There are seven central conferences: Africa, Central and Southern Europe, Congo, Germany, Northern Europe, Philippines, and West Africa.



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Jurisdictions



Southeastern Jurisdiction



Annual Conferences

“Annual conference” refers to one of three things. The annual conference is a regional body, an organizational unit, and a yearly meeting. Many of these yearly meetings happen in the U.S. in May and June.

Regional body

The annual conference is described by the church's Constitution and (other parts of the) Book of Discipline as the “basic unit” of the church.

In the United States, an annual conference may cover an entire state, only part of the state, or even parts of two or more states.

The United States has 56 annual conferences, supervised by bishops in 46 Episcopal areas. There are 75 annual conferences in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, which are supervised by 20 bishops.



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Annual Conferences

Organizational body

In the U.S., the annual conference has a central office and professional staff that coordinate and conduct ministry and the business of the conference. It likely has a director of connectional ministries, treasurer, directors of program areas (such as camping), communications director, and other staff as deemed appropriate for the annual conference and as required by the Book of Discipline. Clergy and laypersons may also serve on conference boards, commissions and committees.

Annual Conference sessions

Each year an equal number of clergy members and lay members attend their conference's annual conference session for worship, fellowship, and to conduct the business of the conference, which may last 3-5 days. These sessions include reports of past and ongoing work; adoption of future goals, programs and budgets; ordination of clergy members as deacons and elders; and election of delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conferences (every 4 years). The bishop presides over these meetings.



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Annual Conferences



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Districts

Groups of churches in a geographic area are organized to form a district, somewhat similar to the way cities and towns are organized into counties. Often, churches in a district will work together to provide training and mission opportunities.

Each district is led by a district superintendent (“DS”), an elder appointed by the bishop, usually for a six-year term. The DS oversees the ministry of the district’s clergy and churches, provides spiritual and pastoral leadership, works with the bishop and others in the appointment of ordained ministers to serve the district’s churches, presides at meetings of the charge conference, and oversees programs within the district.



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Catawba Valley District

District Superintendent - Rev. Angela Pleasants
Office - Gastonia, NC

Number of Churches - 165 churches
Appointed clergy - 147 appointed clergy

Average Membership - 245
Membership - 39, 898



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Local Churches

It is primarily at the level of the charge consisting of one or more local churches that the church encounters the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society...Therefore, the local church is to minister to persons in the community where the church is located...to cooperate in ministry with other local churches...and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church... (2012 Book of Discipline)

The Book of Discipline outlines rules and organization that local churches must follow providing ample room for a local church to adapt its distinctive ministries and mission to the needs, circumstances, and culture of its congregation and the local community.



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What is the Commission of a Way Forward?

- A 32-member commission authorized by the 2016 General Conference of Bishops - eight bishops, 11 laity, 11 elders, and two deacons
- Complete examination of possible revision to paragraphs in the BOD
- Develop and submit a final recommendation to the Bishops in May 2018
- Bishops (General Conference) will review, make changes, and present a report with legislative proposal to the February 2019 special General Conference in July 2018
- Three models under consideration
- Each model to include way to exit for those who feel called to exit from the denomination
- Each model will include a theological statement that both informs the model and creates a compelling narrative for them.



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What is the Commission of a Way Forward?

Mission: Exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual jurisdictional, and central conference actions.

Vision: Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world 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.

Scope: Be open to new ways to embodying unity that moves us beyond where we are in the present impasse and cycle of action and reaction around ministry and human sexuality . . . Give consideration to greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present conventionality.



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What actions Led To Formation Of The Commission?

- In early 2017 the Judicial Council ruled 6 to 3 (Decision 1341) that the election of Karen Oliveto (Glide Memorial UMC in San Francisco) as Bishop violated Church law specific to the ban on ordaining noncelibate homosexuals.

“Under the long-standing principle of legality, no individual member or entity may violate, ignore or negate church law.” “It is not lawful for the college of bishops of any jurisdictional or central conference to consecrate a self-avowed practicing homosexual bishop.”

- First time the Judicial Council weighed in on same-gender marriage licenses since the U.S. Supreme Court established same-sex civil marriage as a constitutional right in 2015.
- Decision does not change the BOD nor will it change the mission, vision, and scope of the Commission’s work.



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Models Update/Revised

In May, 2018, The Council of Bishops released a summary of three revised sketches (following screens).

These sketches provide avenues for unity, contextualization and mission and could change based on the commission's work at its next meeting.

These sketches could change based on the commission's and Council of Bishops work leading up to July 8th.



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The Traditional Model – Original Model 1

The traditional model: Affirms the current language about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline and seeks to strengthen enforcement for violation of church law..

The Book of Discipline, says the practice of Homosexuality “is incompatible with Christian Teaching; and lists officiating at the same-gender union being a “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy member as chargeable offenses under current law.



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The One-Church Model – Original Model 2

The one-church model: The one-church model would allow different United Methodists in different places to make different decisions regarding ministry with or by LGBTQ persons rather than maintaining a single standard that operates everywhere throughout the worldwide church. This plan would remove restrictive language from the Book of Discipline and give conferences, churches and pastors the flexibility to “uniquely reach their missional context in relation to human sexuality without changing the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church.”

This plan would also protect the rights of United Methodists whose theological convictions will not allow them to perform same-sex weddings or ordain LGBTQ people.



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The Multi-branch Model – Original Model 3

The Connectional Conference model: This plan would create three connectional conferences based on theology or perspective, each having clearly defined values (accountability, contextualization and justice). The three connectional conferences would function throughout the worldwide church and the five existing U.S. jurisdictions would be abolished.

Adaptations to the Book of Discipline would be allowed by each connectional conference. Annual conferences would determine their affiliation with a connectional conference. Local churches who choose a branch other than the one chosen by their annual conference could vote to join another conference.

This plan would require multiple amendments to the denomination's constitution.



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What Does the BOD Say About LGBTQ?

- While affirming that all persons are people of sacred worth and that god's Grace is available to all the **UMC does not condone the practice of homosexuality** and considers it not compatible with Christian teaching (§161.f)
- We are reminded that the **leaders in our congregations be persons of Christian character, discipline, commitment, as well as loyal to the ethical standards of the UMC** (§304.3)

§140 Inclusiveness of the Church

§166 Our Social Creed

§162 Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation

§214 Church Membership

§613 responsibilities

§160 The natural World

§The Social Community

§304.3 Qualifications for Ordination

§806.9 Fiscal Responsibilities



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Definition of Condone

To regard or treat (something bad or blameworthy) as acceptable, forgivable, or harmless.

To disregard or overlook (something illegal, objectionable, or the like).

To accept or allow behavior that is wrong.

Accept behavior that is considered morally wrong or offensive .

If you condone something, you allow it, approve of it, or at least can live with it.



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What Does The Bible Say About LGBTQ

•Bible passages most often referenced include:

Genesis 1-2; 19:1-29 *

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13 *

Matthew 19:4-6

John 15:1-17; 17:20-23

Romans 1:18-32

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 *

1 Timothy 1:8-11 *

Acts 15:28-29 *

Galatians 3:25-29; 5:25-6:2

Colossians 3:12-17

* Receive the most attention



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What Does The Bible Say About LGBTQ

Methodologies used to study the Bible include:

- Contextual interpretation – determine the meaning of a small unit of the biblical text in light of its location in a part of the book and then in the book itself
- Passage evaluation – determines whether the meaning of a passage is local and temporal or universal and timeless. Includes determining if a passage is cultural or transcultural.

Use of these methods leads to an awareness of both the literary context of a passage, as well as the historical situation out of which it emerges and the primary audience to whom it is addressed.



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Where Can I Find Information To Read And Stay Current With UMC LGBTQ Activities

“The People of the United Methodist Church” – www.umc.org

“Good News” – www.goodnewsmag.org

“Life Watch” – www.lifewatch.org

“United Methodists” – www.unitingmethodists.com

“Wesley Covenant Association” – www.wesleyancovenant.org

“Western North Carolina Conference” – www.wnccumc.org

“Methodist Federation for Social Action” – www.mfsaweb.org



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What Resources (books, articles, links, etc) Are Available For In-depth Reading And Understanding?

“Anatomy of Peace”, by Arbinger Institue

“The Moral Vision of the New Testament”, by Richard B Hays, Chapter 16

“What Does The Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality?” by Kevin DeYoung

“Is It Time – Helping Laity and Clergy Discuss Homosexuality One Question At A Time” by Adolf Hansen

“Unafraid and Unashamed – Facing the Future of United Methodism” by Wil Cantrell



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What Resources (books, articles, links, etc) Are Available For In-depth Reading And Understanding?

“Council of Bishops – President Address” by Bishop Bruce R. Ough, President of the Council of Bishops, November 5, 2017

“A Way Forward? The End of the United Methodist Church? New Birth: New Possibilities?” By Andy Langford, October 2017

“Let’s Make a Deal, #UMC Style” by David F Watson

“Finding A Way Forward – Resources for Witness, Contextual Leadership and Unity”, by Commission on a Way Forward Council of Bishops



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