**LGBTQ INCLUSION AND THE UMC, POST-GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019**

2019.03.04

**JOHN WESLEY, SERMON ON A CATHOLIC SPIRIT**

“*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.*”

**UNITED METHODIST HISTORY & GENERAL CONFERENCES (GC)**

GC1968, EUB and Methodist Church merge to form The United Methodist Church

GC1972, incompatibility motion passed, issue debated every four years since

Multiple clergy trials & conflicts over the years, including Rev. Amy DeLong & Bishop Karen Olivetto

GC2016, denominational schism averted and the Way Forward Commission

GC2019, voted 438-384 (53.3-46.7%) for the amended Traditional Plan

GC2020, May 5-15, Minneapolis, MN

**RESULTS OF GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019**

1. Wespath petitions passed. Churches that choose to leave the denomination must pay their fair share of pension liability. Exiting clergy retain their pension but it is converted to limit further liability to the conference.
2. Current language around sexuality and restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals is retained. (See “UMC’s Official Position” below.)
3. The Traditionalist Plan passed except for the main petition. This means there will be no required certification by annual conferences and bishops that they will follow the *Book of Discipline* and no method for annual conferences to leave the denomination.
4. Eight parts of the Traditional Plan passed that have previously been ruled constitutional by the UMC Judicial Council. The Judicial Council will consider their constitutionality again in April but are not likely to reverse their decisions. This means:
   1. The definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” now includes those who are in a same-sex marriage.
   2. Bishops cannot commission or ordain lesbian or gay clergy or consecrate them as bishops.
   3. Boards of ordained ministry must do a full examination of clergy candidates including ascertaining whether they are a self-avowed practicing homosexual.
   4. Pastors who perform same-sex weddings and are convicted by trial will have minimum penalties of suspension (for the first offense) and be required to surrender of credentials (for a second offense)
   5. Bishops can only dismiss complaints for reasons of law or fact.
   6. Just resolutions must acknowledge all harm done and be agreed to by the person bringing the complaint.
   7. The church can appeal a decision for egregious errors of law.
5. One petition of the Traditional Plan passed by it may or may not be constitutional and awaits the decision of the Judicial Council. That petition would require all members of the board of ordained ministry to certify they will follow the *Book of Discipline*.
6. An amended “exit plan” for churches passed but it may or may not be constitutional. It would allow for local churches to exit with their property and assets if 2/3 of the members vote to do so and they pay for pension liabilities and one year of apportionments.
7. Legislation is not official church law until January 1, 2020. We will elect delegates to the 2020 General Conference at annual conferences this spring and summer. The 2020 General Conference will be held May 5-15 in Minneapolis, MN.

*Summary provided by Rev. Alex Shanks, Commission on the Way Forward administrative officer.*

**ONALASKA UMC CHURCH COUNCIL RESOLUTION**

Reaffirm our vision statement to “LOVE unconditionally.” All truly are welcome. Passed unanimously February 26, 2019. Public interpretation, <http://www.onalaskaumc.org/who-is-welcome/>

**THE United Methodist Church’s official position from the 2016 *Book of Discipline***

1. “We affirm that all persons are of sacred worth and are welcome in the church.” (paragraphs 4 & 214).
2. “…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 or gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.” (par. 161G)
3. We do not ordain “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” (par. 304.3).
4. Our clergy may not perform same-sex union ceremonies (par. 341.6).
5. Our denomination does not fund ministries that either support LGBTQ issues or oppose LGBTQ issues (par. 613 & 806.9).

http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/homosexuality-full-book-of-discipline-statements

**WISCONSIN CONFERENCE: BISHOP JUNG’S STATEMENTS**

“It would be too easy to say we failed at General Conference. That is one way to look at it, and many people will. But perhaps God revealed to us that we are not yet ready to make these big decisions that will forever change our church.” General statement, <http://tinyurl.com/GC2019bishop>

“My friends in Christ, where there is suffering, offer grace. Where there is anger, be kind. Where there is insult, offer compassion, and where there is frustration, be patient. We are not in a good place. Now, more than ever we need to say together, Come, Holy Spirit, and allow the fruit of God’s Spirit – love, kindness, gentleness, patience, and peace, prevail.” Pastoral letter, <http://tinyurl.com/GC2019bishop2>

**WISCONSIN CONFERENCE: BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY STATEMENT**

“We do not consider sexual orientation and gender identity to be sufficient reasons, on their own, to deny God’s call to ministry.” From GC2019, <http://tinyurl.com/GC2019board>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Wesleyan Covenant Association (traditionalist), <https://wesleyancovenant.org/>

Uniting Methodists (moderate), <https://unitingmethodists.com/>

Reconciling Ministries Network (progressive), <https://rmnetwork.org/>