

# Opening Prayer



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES  
The United Methodist Church

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS **WAY FORWARD PROPOSALS**

# Tonight...

1. Welcome & Opening Prayer (Pastor Laura)
2. How Did We Get Here? (Sabrina)
3. Traditional Plan (Christian)
4. Connectional Conference (Joe)
5. One Church Model (Jean)  
Closing Prayer (Pastor Laura)



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# How Did We Get Here?



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Good evening. My name is Sabrina MacIntyre and I'm here to explain 'How Did We Get Here?'

## How Did We Get Here?

- Special Called General Conference in St. Louis, Missouri (Feb 23-26, 2019)
- Delegates will vote on the Way Forward Commission's report:

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know>



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There is a special conference coming up in February where delegates will vote on a report from the Way Forward Commission.

I've provided a link if you'd like to read it yourself. It includes proposed amendments for the plans up for vote.

The church has wrestled with this issue of human sexuality for most of its history.

As a result, the GC asked the bishops to lead.

## How Did We Get Here?

- Recognition of changing attitudes regarding gender and sexuality (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/developments-and-changes-since-1968>)
- *Book of Discipline* amendments - outlines church law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures.
- *Book of Resolutions* amendments - contains the text of all church resolutions or pronouncements on approved issues.



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Basically, the church has recognized changing attitudes about gender and sexuality, especially in Europe and here in the United States – and please notice, I've given you an online link if you'd like to read more about this.

When the church changes its official position on an issue, you will see amendments to The Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions (hold up 2 copies for audience to see). These books are published every 4 years.

The Book of Discipline outlines church law and doctrine, for example, while the Book of Resolution includes resolutions or pronouncements.

Copies of these are available in the church library.

## How Did We Get Here?

- “Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, ...though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” The Book of Discipline 1972 (pg. 86)



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Let me give you a few examples of amendments made over the years regarding human sexuality.

As early as 1972, just 4 years after The Methodist Church was formed in 1968, the language read that ‘homosexuals are persons of sacred worth.’ However, note the statement about ‘not condoning the practice of homosexuality because it is incompatible with Christian teaching.’

## How Did We Get Here?

- “We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant, which is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman.” The Book of Discipline 1980



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A few years later in 1980, you see language about marriage being between a man and a woman.

## How Did We Get Here?

- adopted, as a standard for ordained clergy, commitment to “... fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” and
- “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” are prohibited from serving as clergy.

— The Book of Discipline 1984



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In 1984, you see language appearing about ordained clergy, regarding fidelity in marriage and that self avowed practicing homosexuals are not to serve as clergy.

## How Did We Get Here?

- “Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.” The Book of Discipline 1988



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In 1988, you see language affirming that God’s grace is available to all, as the church is committed to be in the ministry for and with all.

## How Did We Get Here?

- <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-is-the-denominations-position-on-homosexuality>
- 2016 General Conference asked for bishops to lead in light of overwhelming number of proposals and continued debates



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Here's another link if you'd like to read more about the church's position on homosexuality.

## How Did We Get Here?

- Council of Bishops created Way Forward Commission of bishops, pastors, and laity
- Way Forward Commission included:
  - 32 people from 9 nations
  - All jurisdictions
  - Wide spectrum of positions and theology



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And lead they did, as they formed the Way Forward Commission, comprised of 1/3 clergy, 1/3 lay people and 1/3 bishops from 9 nations with varying positions.

They've just issued their report. (Hold up your copy). It's about 93 pages.

## How Did We Get Here?

- Only delegates vote. The bishops have voice but no vote.
- Regardless of the outcome ... historically, a split in the church results in a wider reach to the Wesleyan tradition... so this ***is not*** the end of the church!



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Jean, Joe and Christian will provide details on the 3 plans forthwith!

But first here is a short video featuring Gil Rendle: A Parable for Today - <https://youtu.be/D8ZGS6Dpl9g>

Gil Rendle, a parable for today

## Parable for Today

*“Working together has more to do with listening carefully to each other than claiming our position and speaking clearly.”*

— GIL RENDLE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8ZGS6Dpl9g&feature=youtu.be>



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# Traditional

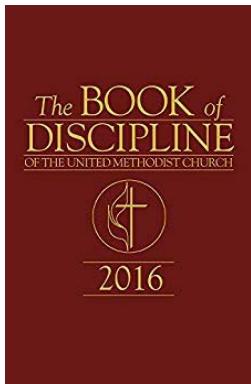


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Greetings, I'm Christian Hamson

## Qualifications for Ordination



The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals...



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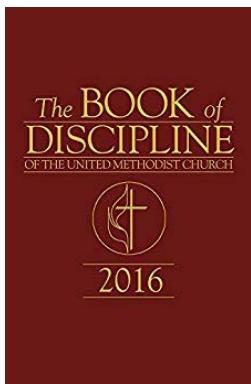
First, how things stand now:

### ¶ 304.3 Qualifications for Ordination

While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.



# Homosexual Union Ceremonies



No same sex wedding ceremonies

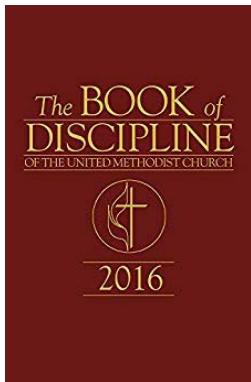


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¶ 341.6: Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

## Chargeable Offenses



Trials for immorality –

- Not being celibate in singleness or unfaithful in a heterosexual marriage
- Practices declared “incompatible”
- Disobedience
- Dissemination of contrary doctrines



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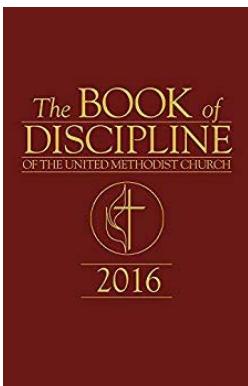
¶ 2702. 1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in (¶ 2702.4)10 with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-

avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies; (d) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (e) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church;

The Traditionalist Plan would clarify that “a self-avowed, practicing homosexual” includes anyone living in the context of same-sex marriage or civil union, and any public statement (including social media) claiming to be a practicing homosexual. Every Bishop and member of the Board of Ordained Ministry must specifically affirm that they will uphold, enforce, and maintain the Book of Discipline related to ordination and marriage of practicing homosexuals. District committees on Ordained Ministry and the conference Boards of Ordained Ministry must perform a full examination and thorough inquiry to ensure that the candidates meet all qualifications, including both ¶304.3 and ¶304.1j) “Be accountable to The United Methodist Church, accept its Doctrinal Standards and Discipline and authority, accept the supervision of those appointed

to this ministry, and be prepared to live in the covenant of its ordained ministers." Bishops would prohibited from consecrating as a bishop, commissioning on the deacon or elder track, or ordaining as a deacon or elder someone if the Board either has determined that person to be a "self-avowed homosexual" or if the Board did not certify that they carried out the mandated examination of public records and publicly available statements.

## The Traditional Plan



**Nothing Changes in the Discipline.**

**It Just Gets Enforced.**

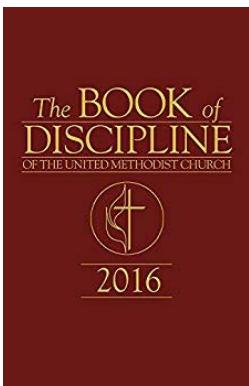


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Right now there is no mandatory penalty for officiating at a same-sex wedding ceremony. Under this plan the mandatory penalty for doing so is not less than 1 year suspension without pay for first offense and not less than termination of membership and revocation of credentials for a second offense.

## The Traditional Plan



**If a Lay Member, Clergy Member, Congregation, or Annual Conference will not uphold these standards they can leave, taking their property with them.**



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Anyone at any level who will not uphold this doctrine is specifically invited to leave. Congregations or Annual Conferences who do so may keep their property.

## Let's Talk 1 – 10 minutes

- Write your top convictions or interests that shape your beliefs about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning) inclusion.
- What Bible stories or passages shape how you view homosexuality?
- Where do you see God leading the church regarding inclusion of LGBTQ persons?



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## Let's Talk 2 – 10 minutes

- What in the Traditional Plan raises questions?
- What causes you the most concern about the Traditional Plan?
- If the Special Called General Conference adopted this plan I would...



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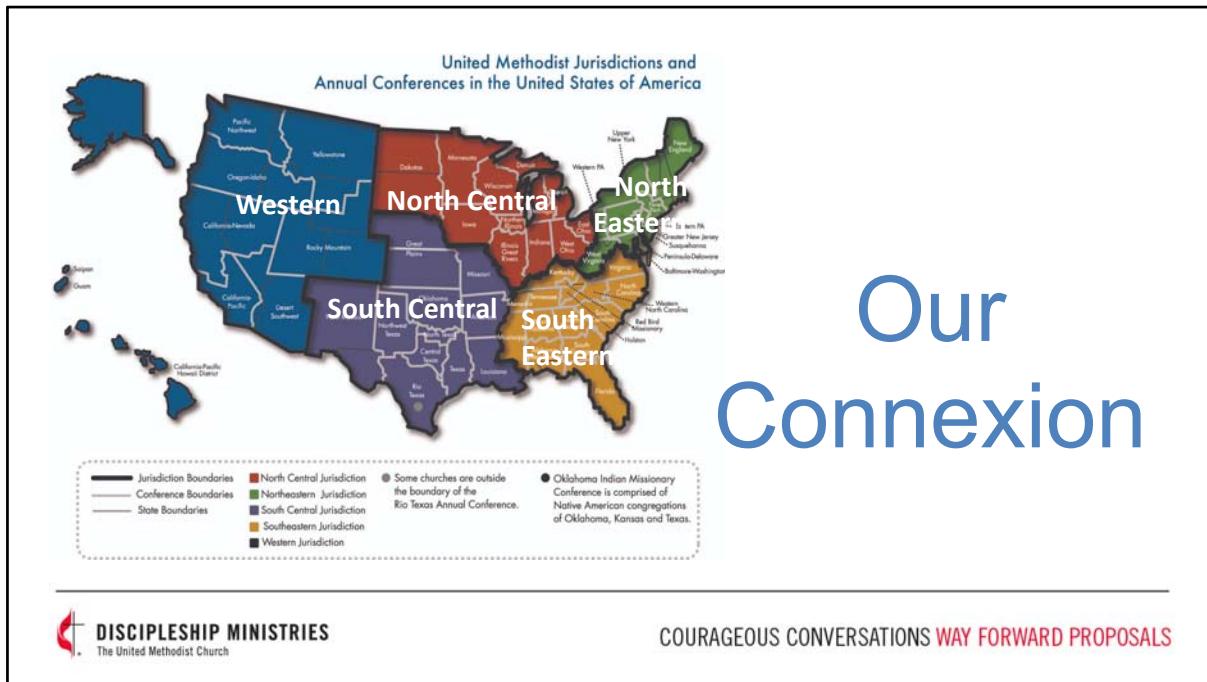
# Connectional Conferences



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Greetings I am Joe Lee



Let's review the Structure and Organization of the United Methodist Church.

United Methodists often speak of the denomination as "the connection." This concept has been central to Methodism from its beginning.

The United Methodist structure and organization began as a means of accomplishing the mission of spreading scriptural holiness. Methodism's founder, John Wesley, recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability and developed what he called the "connexion," a network of classes, societies, and annual conferences.

Within the connectional structure of The United Methodist Church, conferences provide the primary groupings of people and churches for discernment and decision-making. Wesley described Christian conferencing as a spiritual discipline through which God's grace may be revealed. At every level of the connection, church leaders and members come together in conversation, or conferencing, to discuss important issues and discover God's will for the church. The word, conference, thus refers to both the assembly and organization of people as well as the process of discerning God's call together.

#### General Conference

As the primary legislative body, General Conference is the only entity with the authority to speak on behalf of the entire United Methodist Church. The General Conference meets every four years to consider the business and mission of the church. An equal number of lay and clergy delegates are elected from United Methodist conferences around the world to decide matters of policy and procedure for the denomination. [Learn more.](#)

#### Jurisdictional Conferences

There are five geographic jurisdictions (Western, Southeastern, South Central, Northeastern and North Central), or regions, in the United States, which are comprised of eight to 15 annual conferences each. [Learn more.](#)

#### Central Conferences

In Africa, Europe and the Philippines, there are seven geographical regions, called central conferences, each of which is comprised of annual conferences and divided into several episcopal areas. [Learn more.](#)

#### Annual Conferences

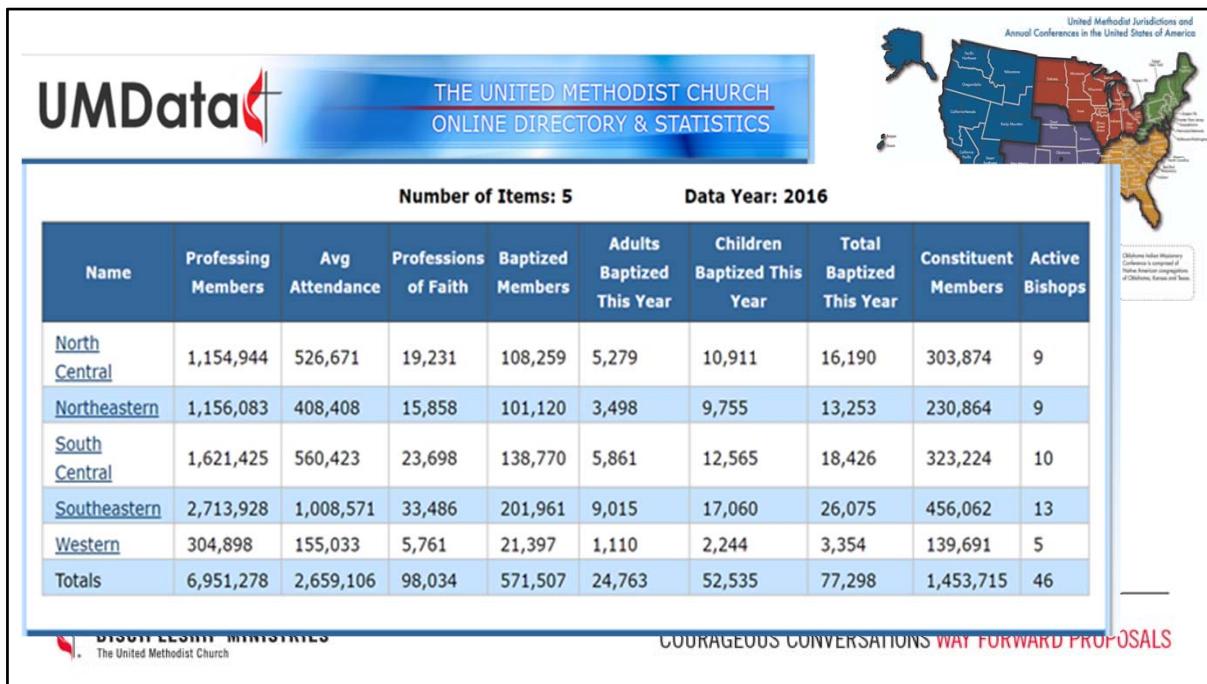
The annual conference is a geographical entity, an organizational body (made up of elected lay and clergy members), and a yearly meeting. It is the fundamental body of the church (*Book of Discipline*, ¶ 11). [Learn more.](#)

#### Districts

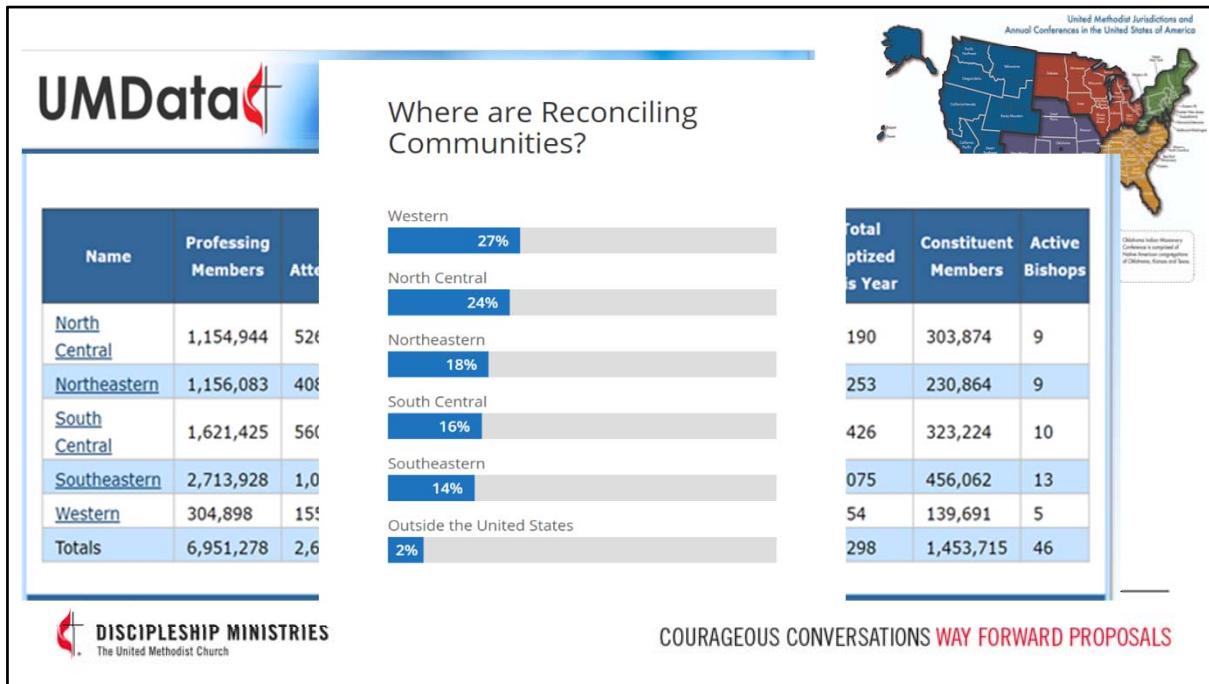
Each local church is part of a district, which is an administrative grouping of churches in a geographic area. [Learn more.](#)

#### Charge Conferences and Local Churches

As the visible presence of the body of Christ, the local church is the place where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world. [Learn more.](#)

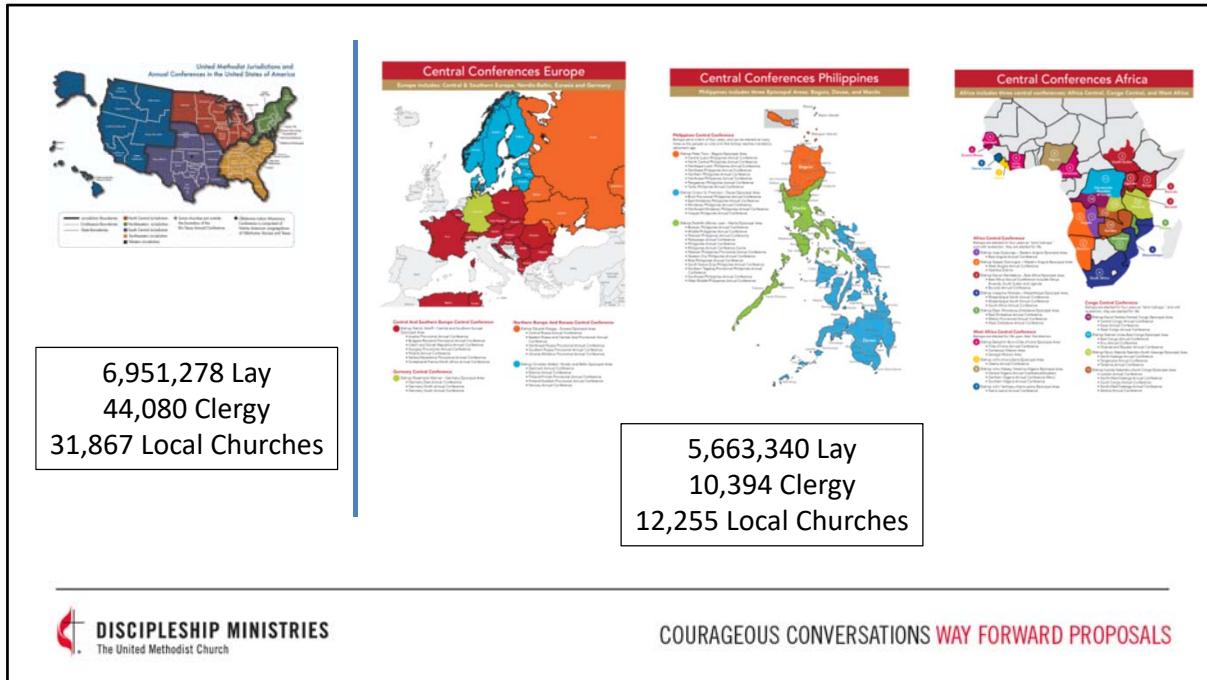


The geographical jurisdictions have [a great disparity in membership](#), with the two southern jurisdictions having far more than their northern and especially their western counterparts. The Southeastern Jurisdiction has the largest membership.



## Where are today's Reconciling Communities?

- Western 27%
- North Central 24%
- Northeastern 18%
- South Central 16%
- Southeastern 14%
  
- Outside the US 2%



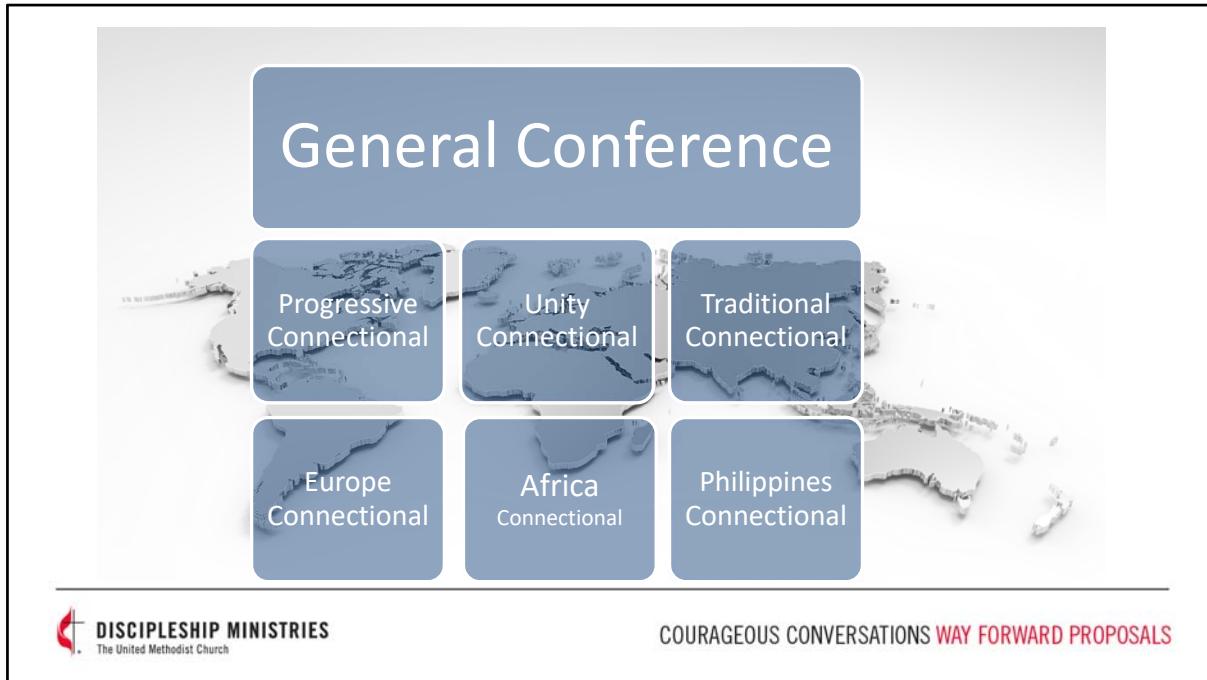
Here is a size comparison between US Jurisdictions and Central Conferences –

- United Methodists in the United States: Approx. 7 million
- United Methodists in Central Conferences: approx. 6 million



The Way Forward Commission proposes the Connectional Conferences Plan which changes our connectional structure from a geography-based to one that is theology-based.

- The Plan creates three branches of the church based on theology (Progressive, Unity, and Traditional). These branches will be called Connectional Conferences.
- These Connectional Conferences replace the geography-based Jurisdictions.
- Jurisdictions and annual conferences vote first on which conference to join
- Conferences will share responsibility and receive support from a number of general church boards and agencies along with shared doctrinal standards.
- Conferences will have significant autonomy on sexual ethics, teachings on marriage, and ordination standards
- General Conference would transfer much of the authority and accountability functions to the connectional conferences.
- The Council of Bishops is recast as a learning and support community for bishops
- Connectional conferences would hold its bishops accountable to its standards.
- Bishops and clergy would only serve within their connectional conference.
- Work within each connectional conference would be funded and governed by that connectional conference's theology and requirements.
- Cross-connection ministries and partnerships could continue.
- All U.S. conferences continue support of central conferences.
- Would require annual conferences to adopt a number of Constitutional amendments
- Every Annual Conference will have to pass amendments by 2/3 of conference votes from ballots of all annual conferences



Central conferences could:

- Become their own connectional conference with power and authority equal to U.S. conferences
- Join with other central conferences to become one connectional conference
- Join one of the three theological conferences to become a global connectional conference

# One Church



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Greetings, I'm Jean Harris



- Removes restrictive language
- Protects churches and pastors

Our bishops recommend the One Church Plan

**Active Bishops**

Bishops of The United Methodist Church provide spiritual leadership to more than 11 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Historically, bishops preside over Annual and Central Conferences (regional areas of the church). They play an important leadership role in helping to set the direction of the church and its mission throughout the world.

The following lists the names of bishops serving in the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church and their 2016-2020 assignments. Click on the bishop's names to find out more about each person.

<b>Minerva G. Carcaño</b>	Japanese American Caucus Asian American Justice Camp Program
WJ College of Bishops	College President
WJ Leadership Development	WJ Executive
WJ Quadrilateral Conference Member	WJ Congregational Development Team
WJ Transforming Ministry 4	WJ Transforming Ministry 4
WJ UNW Executive	WJ UNW Executive
WJ Hispanic Ministry Council	WJ Hispanic Ministry Council
WJ Mission Cabinet	WJ Mission Cabinet
WJ Immigration Task Force	WJ Immigration Task Force
<b>Grant J. Hagiyá</b>	Elaine Stanovsky
WJ College of Bishops	WJ College of Bishops
Korean Ministry Chair	WJ Native American Ministries
Leadership Development	WJ Asian Pacific Islander Oversight
Coordinator of WJ Course of Study	Recent Posts
WJ Leadership Development	WJ Mission Cabinet endorses the One Church Plan
WJ Bishop Jack and Marianne Tuell Center	Declaración Pastoral en Apoyo a las Familias Diferidas y Separadas
WJ Hispanic Ministry Council	Statement in Support of Ministry with Detained & Separated Families
WJ Latino Ministry	
WJ Liaison with Communicators	
WJ Ministerial Services Committee	
WJ United Methodist Women	

# Overview



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## Overview:

This plan preferred by a majority of the Council of Bishops would:

- remove restrictive language from the Book of Discipline that prohibits same gender weddings in UMX properties and ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals; and
- add language to protect churches and pastors who choose not to allow same gender marriages.

It is the recommended option by all the Bishops in the Western Jurisdiction of which we are a part.

# Responsibilities Annual Conferences

- Conference Board discerns whether to ordain LGBTQ persons
- Churches may exit with grace
- No vote needed

## Western Jurisdiction

- Alaska Annual Conference
- California-Nevada Annual Conference
- California-Pacific Annual Conference
- Desert Southwest Annual Conference
- Mountain Sky Annual Conference
- Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference
- Pacific Northwest Annual Conference



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## Responsibilities: Annual Conferences

- The Board of Ordained Ministry of each Conference can discern whether to ordain LGBTQ persons.
- General Conference will craft a way for churches to exit with grace.
- No vote is needed

- Exercise individual conscience
- Theological convictions
- Ends potential for church trials
- LGBTQ candidates can be ordained and appointed to local churches that approve

# Responsibilities Clergy



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## Responsibilities - Clergy:

- Can exercise individual conscience
- Bishop and cabinet would take theological convictions into account for appointments
- Ends potential for church trials
- LGBTQ candidates can be ordained and appointed to local churches that approve and can request transfer of candidacy if conference Board of Ordained Ministry or clergy session chooses not to ordain LGBTQ persons.

# Responsibilities Local Church



- No change in practice
- May write wedding policies to expressly forbid or permit same sex weddings
- Covenant with bishop on acceptance of LGBTQ pastor



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## Responsibilities - Local Churches:

- Most likely would make no changes in practice at the local level.
- May re-write wedding policies to explicitly allow or forbid same gender weddings.
- Will covenant with bishop on whether congregation will accept LGBTQ pastor

- Removes restrictive language
- Annual Conference Board determines – standards for ordination
- Clergy not prohibited nor required to perform same-sex ceremonies
- Local churches decide on church use for same-sex ceremonies
- This Plan applies in the US, only

Our bishops recommend the One Church Plan



## Summary



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### Summary:

It is designed for the United Methodist Church to remain in connection, upholding unity of mission without uniformity of practice so that churches can maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible.

It would eliminate the restrictive language concerning human sexuality from the Book of Discipline.

Each Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and clergy session may determine standards for ordination or certification included standards relating to human sexuality.

Clergy is not prohibited nor required to perform same gender

marriages, unions or blessings.

Local churches can decide whether to allow their property to be used for a same gender ceremony.

These changes apply only to conferences in the U.S..

## Let's Talk 3 – 20 minutes

- What in the Connectional Conference & One Church Plans raise questions?
- What causes you the most concern about these Plans?
- If the Special Called General Conference adopted either plan I would...



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# Hymn



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# Closing Worship Experience



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