



Support the Traditional Plan, as Revised

UMAction and other renewal groups strongly support the “Traditional Plan” from a group of faithful United Methodist bishops. It has been submitted to the specially called February 23–26, 2019, General Conference as one of the three alternative proposals within the official report of the Commission on a Way Forward. We also support a couple of important amendments to this plan.

This denominational assembly will be limited to proposals for resolving the United Methodist Church’s conflicts over sexuality. Of all the major proposals currently under widespread discussion, the Traditional Plan is the ONLY one that:

- Maintains the UMC’s current biblical standards on marriage and sex
- Honors the consciences of traditionalist United Methodists
- Offers gracious treatment to congregations that cannot, as a matter of conscience, accept the decisions made in 2019
- Maintains the maximum degree of unity with as wide a range of United Methodists as is possible at this point.

The Traditional Plan would boldly confront the reality that some entire annual conferences now openly defy our sexuality standards.

The Traditional Plan would amend our governing *Book of Discipline* in five main ways.

First of all, it would improve the screening of candidates to become new clergy. It would basically close loopholes some dissident annual conferences (the main geographic division in our denomination) have been using to defy the UMC’s longstanding ban on approving “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy candidates. It would also require basic questions to be asked of all

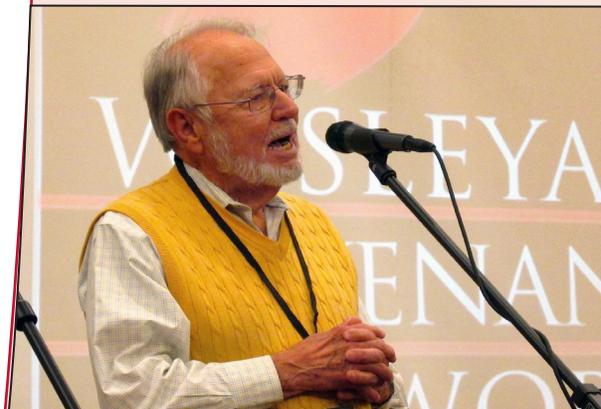
candidates, and require bishops to intervene to prevent homosexually active clergy from being ordained.

Secondly, it would make key reforms to ensure accountability for clergy who violate our standards. If the Traditional Plan passes, liberal bishops would no longer be able to abuse their authority, as several have done in recent years, by simply dismissing complaints or announcing laughable

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The Rev. Maxie Dunnam speaks in 2014 in Atlanta. Dunnam, on behalf of the Renewal and Reform Coalition, submitted some modifications to the Traditional Plan. He and other advocates for current church policies on homosexuality are promoting the modified Traditional Plan. (Photo: Steve Beard/Good News Magazine)

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Prayer at the 2018 North Georgia Annual Conference meeting held June 12-14 (Photo: ngumc.org)

U.S. Annual Conferences Weigh in on 2019 General Conference

At their 2018 meetings last May and June, numerous U.S. annual conferences expressed their opinions on issues relevant to the upcoming specially called 2019 General Conference.

The numerically largest U.S. annual conference—North Georgia, which has more members than all seven conferences of the geographically huge Western Jurisdiction *combined*—conducted a survey of its members’ feelings about the UMC *Discipline’s* stance that homosexual practice is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” Despite concerns that the survey over-represented liberal responses, it still found that a majority supported the current stance, 25 percent would *leave* the UMC if it were removed, and only 5 percent would leave if it were not removed. Thus, we lose a lot more by adopting the so-called One Church Plan than by adopting the Traditional Plan.

The South Georgia Conference overwhelmingly adopted a resolution affirming our denomination’s standards limiting marriages and sexual relations to covenants between one man and one woman, decrying how some clergy have recently violated these standards, urging the 2019 General Conference to maintain our standards and bring greater accountability for clergy who violate them, and calling this “the ‘way forward’ that would be the most faithful to Scripture and our Wesleyan tradition, the most effective for our mission, and the most helpful for maintaining unity among the greatest number of current United Methodists as possible.” The resolution was submitted by UMC *Action* Steering Committee member **Sara Anderson**.

The Peninsula-Delaware Conference rejected an effort to go on record as supporting the liberalization of our sexuality standards and instead adopted a resolution “strongly encouraging the General Conference...to maintain the current language in the UMC *Discipline* concerning matters of human sexuality.” This prompted a liberal seminary student in that conference to protest by publicly announcing her withdrawal from the clergy candidate process.

In contrast to the disobedience promoted by liberal officials and conferences, Mississippi passed a resolution committing to obeying the *Discipline’s* standards on sexuality.

Other motions to express support for liberalizing our sexuality standards were defeated, tabled, or derailed in the Holston, Michigan, North Alabama, Texas, and even the liberal-dominated Upper New York Conferences.

The Arkansas, North Texas, and Virginia Conferences rejected or tabled both motions urging a more liberal stance and motions supporting a traditionalist stance.

Only the Baltimore-Washington and Northern Illinois Conferences passed resolutions explicitly endorsing the so-called “One Church Plan” (see story on p. 4). The vote was surprisingly narrow in the former.

The Memphis Conference voted down a resolution “to reaffirm the traditional Christian view of marriage,” but reportedly one significant factor was that some interpreted the language of the resolution as categorically forbidding remarriage after divorce.

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In the Texas Conference, an evangelical-backed resolution would have called on the 2019 General Conference to allow “gracious exits” for congregations who felt they could no longer live with the UMC’s official stance on homosexuality, as decided in 2019. These congregations would be allowed to leave with their property (which is legally “held in trust” for the denomination). Disappointingly, this was defeated by the narrowest of margins, with some apparent misunderstandings. Afterwards, similar “gracious exits” resolutions were ruled out of order by the bishops of the Indiana, Virginia, and Western North Carolina Conferences.

Other notable actions at annual conference sessions:

- Baltimore-Washington Conference Bishop **LaTrelle Easterling** stopped two openly partnered gay clergy candidates from being approved. This effectively prevented the conference’s liberal-dominated board of ordained ministry from implementing its recently expressed commitment to disregard the UMC’s official ban on “self-avowed practicing homosexual clergy.” It came as a bit of a pleasant surprise, as Bishop Easterling is an outspoken liberal.

- The Indiana Conference passed a resolution asking the University Senate to invite the seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University, affiliated with the Wesleyan Church, to apply to be approved for UMC ordination candidates, overcoming strong liberal objections stemming from that evangelical denomination’s conservative approach to homosexuality.
- The West Virginia Conference overwhelmingly passed a resolution opposing a draft proposal from the far-left General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) to dramatically liberalize what the official UMC Social Principles teach about abortion. This matter will be decided at the 2020 General Conference. ✚

ACTION: Thank Bishop Easterling for having the integrity to uphold the biblical ordination standards of our UMC’s governing Discipline, even when this meant putting her personal views aside: Bishop LaTrelle Easterling / Baltimore-Washington Conference / 11711 East Market Place / Fulton, MD 20759 / bishopeasterlingoffice@bwcumc.org.

Will Large Liberal Congregation Leave UMC?

The famous Glide United Methodist Church in San Francisco, California, may be on the brink of leaving United Methodism. It has already systematically distanced itself from the UMC’s governance and doctrine.

Glide’s “Mission and Values” page includes no mention of God or Scripture. It has gone out of its way to remove the Gospel from the caring social-service work they provide for poor and marginalized people in their city.

The California-Nevada Conference Bishop **Minerva Carcaño**, who is ironically quite liberal herself, has started an assessment of

Glide’s internal workings, citing “serious concerns.”

Bishop Carcaño wrote an open letter outlining issues she found troubling. She described Glide’s “Sunday Celebrations” as “uplifting concerts” that “lack the fundamentals of Christian worship.” She noted that “the great

majority of the participants ... claim other faiths such as Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim and Wiccan,” along with a faction of atheists. She further observed that the congregants don’t want the

church to be United Methodist or Christian in its practices. There was “much resistance” to reintroducing Holy Communion, even outside of their Sunday gatherings, after the sacrament had been abandoned for some time.

Bishop Carcaño is also concerned about the continued influence of retired Rev. **Cecil Williams**, who reportedly makes all major decisions at Glide despite being retired since 2000. Notably, he personally selects individuals on the secular board of the \$20 million Glide Foundation, which makes major decisions in the work of both the foundation and the church.

In recent years, all of this happened under **Karen Oliveto**, who was nominally the senior pastor of Glide from 2008 until 2016, when the Western Jurisdiction provocatively voted to elect her as a bishop, despite her being an openly partnered lesbian activist, in open violation of the *Discipline*.

There was major decline in attendance during Oliveto’s tenure. While claiming a rise in (apparently inflated) membership from nearly 12,000 to over 13,000, actual attendance dropped from 3,000 to 1,899.

Glide’s leaders have responded to Bishop Carcaño with public statements of their own, stating they “remain open to dialogue with the UMC,” but are determined to continue in their ways with or without the UMC. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: 2 Timothy 4:1–5.



Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco, Calif. (Photo: Chris Carlsson)

What You Should Know about the Liberal Bishops' 'One Church Plan'

After much anticipation, the full report of our denomination's Commission on a Way Forward has been published. The core of this 93-page document is three detailed alternative plans for how our denomination should address the crisis created by some bishops and regions defying our denomination's prohibitions of homosexually active clergy and gay weddings: the Traditional Plan (see story on p. 1), the Connectional Conference Plan, and the One Church Plan. All three plans, along with additional proposals submitted by others, will be considered at a specially called session of our denomination's governing General Conference in February 2019.

Reportedly, about 60 percent of active United Methodist bishops favor the so-called "One Church Plan," while others favor one of the other two plans. This has prompted some to misleadingly describe the "One Church Plan" as the one "supported by our bishops."

This plan is being marketed as a "local option" that would let United Methodists in each region follow their separate consciences on questions of sexual morality.

But the plain facts are that the One Church Plan is far more extreme than that. It would require every UMC annual conference (at least in the USA) to accept same-sex weddings, which goes further than the liberal policies that split the Episcopal Church in 2003. It would require traditionalist United Methodists to fund and submit to the authority of homosexually active bishops. It would remove the main legal basis for defrocking homosexually active clergy in any region of the UMC. It would also make allowing the ordination of new clergy who are homosexually active the default position of the UMC in every part of the world. In traditionalist American annual conferences and overseas central conferences, there would be a nominal right to re-impose the restriction on ordaining new "self-avowed practicing homosexual" clergy, but the burden would be entirely on traditionalists to try to re-establish such restrictions.

Of all the major proposals, this plan is by far the most elitist. Any distinct ordination standards for an annual conference could ultimately only be set by its ordained clergy. Laypeople and licensed local pastors would be excluded from such decisions. Furthermore, liberal bishops overseeing conservative conferenc-

es would be given great power to effectively determine whether or not these conferences could keep more traditionalist ordination policies. Our congregations could forbid same-sex weddings on church property, but they could not prevent their pastors from performing such ceremonies off-site, nor could they insist on not having a homosexually active pastor appointed to their charge.

Despite the misleading "One Church Plan" name, this plan is the one most guaranteed to split our denomination, with mas-



Leading officers of the UMC Council of Bishops at a May 4 press conference announce the support of the Council's majority faction for the "One Church Plan." From L-R: Outgoing COB President Bruce Ough (of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area), new COB President Ken Carter (of Florida), and COB President Designate Cynthia Fierro Harvey (of Louisiana) (Photo: John Lomperis/IRD)

sive membership losses around the world, drastically depleting finances available for ministry within and beyond the USA. This is what we have seen in other denominations that have gone this route. Furthermore, it would eventually require every local congregation to debate and take divisive, potentially community-shattering votes on allowing same-sex unions.

There would be a temporary allowance for non-American conferences to continue to have more traditionalist marriage policies in their own context, but this allowance would be on shaky ground, and could easily be canceled later.

The One Church Plan also offers no amicable treatment for congregations who feel they cannot remain in such a denomination.

Amidst all the misleading spin and rhetoric being used to sell this plan, please keep sight of these facts, and help your area's General Conference delegates to know the truth. ✝

FOR REFLECTION: Matthew 7:15-20.

Yet Another Pastor Defrocked over UMC Marriage Standards

For the last several years, UMAction has been reporting on the disobedience movement that protests our denomination's rules against same-sex union ceremonies. While challenging this unfaithfulness, we have also noted how the clergy openly betraying our standards are a rather TINY fraction of the whole.

Another test came earlier this year when officials in the Holston Conference discovered that **Anna Golladay**, who was co-pastor of both St. Mark's UMC and St. Elmo's UMC in Chattanooga, Tennessee, performed a pastorally harmful same-sex "wedding" service.

Someone sent Golladay's district superintendent (DS) a photograph from this ceremony. Her superior moved quickly to confirm the information, and Golladay was stripped of her pastoral license within a month.

Because she was a licensed local pastor rather than an ordained elder, Golladay did not have the same level of protection in our church-law system. This allowed accountability to come with refreshing swiftness, avoiding a draining, drawn-out process.

That someone finding the photograph apparently made all the difference indicates that social media can be a helpful tool for accountability.



Former United Methodist Pastor Anna Golladay at the Convergence progressive Christian gathering held before the 2018 Wild Goose Festival in Hot Springs, NC (Photo: Reconciling Ministries Network)

Golladay promoted a radically liberal faith, teaching that Jesus loves "all beliefs" and running a side business that included selling foul-mouthed T-shirts. In 2015, St. Mark's UMC formally affiliated with the LGBTQ liberationist Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN), and in 2016, Golladay was first appointed there. By the end of 2016, worship attendance plummeted by 24 percent, while giving plunged by 29 percent from the previous year. St. Mark's soon needed to become yoked to St. Elmo's UMC. The latter congregation lost a whopping 42 percent of its worship attendance in the year it joined RMN and then another 38 percent of its remaining worshippers over the next two years.

Pastors and congregations who choose to be part of United Methodism know our biblical rules, which provide invaluable spiritual protection against the great harm that results from serious sin if people never repent. Golladay had no reason to be surprised at being held accountable. ✚

ACTION: Thank Bishop Virginia Taylor for promoting a culture in her conference in which the biblical standards of our Discipline are upheld: Holston Conference / P.O. Box 850 / Alcoa, TN, 37701 / bishop@holston.org

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"just resolutions" to prevent any real accountability for clergy who violate our sexuality standards (or other standards). Then if a trial finds a minister guilty of violating our ban on performing same-sex union ceremonies, s/he must face a minimum penalty of a one-year suspension for the first offense and automatic defrocking for a second offense. This would provide a far more effective deterrent against such pastorally harmful ceremonies than the token penalties (such as "24-hour suspensions") recently imposed in liberal regions. And if a church trial very blatantly refused to uphold our biblical standards, the Traditional Plan would allow such abuses to be appealed.

Thirdly, the Traditional Plan would hold bishops accountable for enforcing these standards. It would remove the key loopholes and technical ambiguities that some liberal bishops have recently used to uphold the letter of church law while callously under-

mining its spirit. Under the Traditional Plan, any bishops who still allow clergy in their areas to violate our sexuality standards would themselves become vulnerable to being charged with "disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church." The Traditional Plan would make it easier for the global Council of Bishops to force any bishop into early retirement as a means of accountability. Furthermore, if the 2019 General Conference decides that bishops cannot be trusted to hold each other accountable, then it could adopt a petition submitted by the Rev. Dr. **Maxie Dunnam** to create a new global committee of non-bishops to oversee complaints against bishops.

Fourthly, the Traditional Plan would boldly confront the reality that some entire annual conferences now openly defy

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our sexuality standards. It would require every UMC annual conference to vote on whether or not it will comply with the *Discipline's* bans on homosexually active clergy, same-sex weddings, and the use of annual conference funds "to promote the acceptance of homosexuality." Those refusing to commit to these standards would be cut off from our denomination's finances and prohibited from using the UMC's official name and logo. Such conferences would be encouraged to take advantage of provisions in the Traditional Plan allowing them to become "self-governing Methodist churches" (i.e., their own separate denominations), in which case they must allow any of their congregations who so desire to leave the conference and remain United Methodist. Another petition from Dunnam would generously offer disobedient annual conferences a one-time settlement payment of \$200,000 if they leave the UMC.

Fifthly, this plan would allow "gracious exits" for congregations. It would allow any group of at least 50 congregations to leave the UMC and form a self-governing Methodist church, and allow any congregation to leave the UMC later to join such a new denomination created by others under these new provisions. In such cases, departing congregations would be allowed to keep their properties, thus sparing the UMC from the heartache we have seen in recent years of congregations trying to leave various denominations over sexuality controversies and then having denominational officials sue them for their property. Importantly, it would NOT let congregations leave the UMC for *any* reason, but ONLY if they (1) can find a group of at least 50 self-governing Methodist congregations to join, and (2) declare that they are "in irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience with the doctrine or moral teachings and requirements of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* on the issues of human sexuality, or with the way such requirements are being enforced, or with the resolution of those matters adopted by the 2019 General Conference." This would ensure our denomination is composed of congregations who WANT to be together, rather than using property and trust clauses as weapons to keep people in the connection against their will. ✚

FOR REFLECTION: 1 Corinthians 6.

ACTION: Find the names of the General Conference delegates from your annual conference and respectfully urge them to oppose the so-called "One Church Plan" (see story on p. 4) and support the Traditional Plan.

UMAction Briefing

A newsletter for United Methodists working for Scripture-based renewal and reform in our denomination

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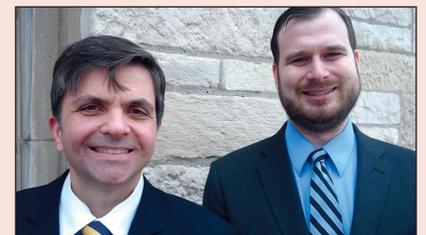
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