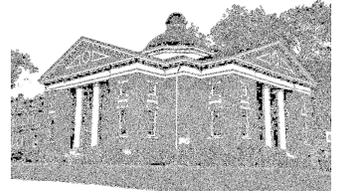


Welcome to Madison First United Methodist Church



296 South Main Street, Madison, Georgia 30650
Website: www.MadisonFUMC.com
Church Office 706-342-3325
Rev. H. Grady Mosley, II, Senior Pastor



October 7, 2018

Town Hall Plan for The Way Forward

On September 16, 2018, our district superintendent Dr. Rev. Brian Clark conducted a training event for leaders to present the Way Forward vote which will take place at General Conference on February 23-26, 2019. Eric Prince (Lay Leader), Tom Joiner (Annual Conference delegate) and Ray Spence (SPRC Chair) attended the session.

A town hall meeting is scheduled for **October 21 (Sunday) at 2 pm** in the Wesley Building. This will be led by our Lay Leader, Lay Delegate, and SPRC Chair following the guidelines of our District superintendent. We will address the questions and comments that have been submitted. This meeting is not about discussing human sexuality but the three plans of the Way Forward. A list of our delegates and their emails will be provided at this meeting and that list will also be placed in the Intercessory Prayer room.

As further information develops, we will be posting to the church website and other means we determine the best communicate this information. Information will include additional listening sessions throughout the conference. All information and feedback from our town hall meetings will be gathered and sent to the delegates. Should anyone personally desire contact information for our delegation, this may be obtained by contacting the church office.

Sunday February 23, 2019 is when General Conference begins. The sermon this day will be "The Anatomy of Peace". In the meantime, the Council of Bishops have asked everyone to pray each day at 2:23-26 PM as a means of keeping this need before the LORD.

A Word from your Pastor

The following is a compilation of excerpts from official statements from the United Methodist Church (website posting provided). As your pastor, I remind you of my three requests of you as you reflect on your vows of loyal membership to the United Methodist Church and Madison First United Methodist Church:

1. Pray for Leadership of the United Methodist Church
2. Continue to support the United Methodist Church with your presence, service, witness, and financial giving (tithes and offerings). In simple terms, "don't leave".
3. Trust and allow me to lead all of us through the months leading up to the decision to be made at General Conference in February 2019 and then again after the decision.

Grace and Peace,
Grady
2 Peter 3:18

A Covenant for All of our Conversations

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:29-32

A Way Forward: Summary of The Three Plans

Below is a brief summary of three plans before the Special 2019 General Conference.

All are encouraged to read the full report from the Commission on a Way Forward found at www.ngumc.org/GC2019 or www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session.

This summary is adapted from the Minnesota Annual Conference with permission.

One-Church Plan

(Recommended by the Council of Bishops)

This plan would maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many parts of the world as possible, adapting some non-essential practices to different mission fields. It is based on the belief that we can remain together as The United Methodist Church even if we disagree about matters of human sexuality. No annual conferences, bishops, congregations, or pastors will be compelled to act contrary to their convictions. It allows us to affirm that our mission is more important than our disagreements.

Some of the key components of this plan:

- Acknowledges that the church is not of one mind on matters of human sexuality.
- Would remove the statement that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- Relies on pastoral discretion. Clergy would decide which weddings to officiate or not officiate.
- Affirms the sanctity of marriage between two adults.
- Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry would discern who is fit and fruitful for clergy service in their annual conference.
- This plan protects clergy rights to individual conscience. The Book of Discipline would protect clergy who do not want to officiate same-sex weddings. Likewise, all would be allowed to follow their conscience on the matter of ordination.
- This plan would remove current prohibitions without creating obligations or affirmation.
- This plan should put an end to clergy trials that are damaging to individuals and to our public witness.
- It respects local church wishes. No local church would be forced to vote. However, church property would not be used in same-gender weddings unless the local church specifically allows it.
- Bishops would take each local church into account concerning who is or is not a good fit for that appointment.

"Gains and Pains"

Gains of This Plan:

- Allows for contextualization in different parts of the U.S. (this already exists in Africa, Asia, and Europe).
- More coherent theology for unity because it no longer assumes that human sexuality is a defining theological issue for The United Methodist Church.
- No more clergy trials.
- No church will be forced to vote on this matter.
- Provides a public witness to those outside the church that our love for one another in Christ and our desire to fulfil Christ's mission is stronger than our disagreements.

Pains of this Plan:

- Does not completely satisfy some progressive United Methodists because it does not totally eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ members.
- Does not completely satisfy some traditionalist United Methodists because allowing same-gender marriage or ordination of LGBTQ members violates their interpretation of scripture.

Connectional Conferences Model

The Connectional Conferences Model is grounded in a core that includes shared doctrine and services, and one Council of Bishops, while creating different branches that would have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization, and justice. This plan gives each connectional conference the ability to change portions on the Book of Discipline (excluding sections I-V).

Connectional Conferences Model (cont.)

In the U.S., the five regional Jurisdictional Conferences would be replaced by three overlapping conferences: one traditional conference, one progressive conference, and one centrist or “uniting” conference. Each annual conference would choose to be a member of one of the three connectional conferences based on their affinity to the conference’s theological stance on human sexuality. Any local church that disagrees with the annual conference decision could vote to join a different branch conference.

Gains of this Plan:

- Makes a place for three viewpoints within The United Methodist Church, yet creates enough separation that there is clarity for each position.
- Conferences and local churches could make a clear choice on their view of human sexuality while retaining some of the missional advantages of a global church.

Pains of this Plan:

- Creates a complex structure that is more congregational than connectional.
- It would take years of administrative work to implement—there would be many constitutional amendments that would be difficult to ratify in annual conferences around the world.
- Would not satisfy some traditional United Methodists because it would allow marriage and ordination of LGBTQ people in some parts of the UMC.
- Would not satisfy some progressive United Methodists because LGBTQ people will be discriminated against in some branches of the UMC.
- Assumes that churches are of one mind on this matter, though we know that there are varied viewpoints within congregations.
- A similar model was created in 1939 which separated a majority of African Americans and the rest of the church into distinct conferences. It was finally disbanded in 1968 with the creation of The United Methodist Church. This has caused lasting pain in our denomination.

Traditionalist Model

The Traditionalist Model would affirm the current Book of Discipline statement that the practice of homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” Boards of Ordained Ministry would still be prohibited from recommending LGBTQ candidates for ordination. Officiating same-sex marriages would remain a chargeable offense, and being a self-avowed and practicing gay clergy would continue to be a chargeable offense.

The Traditionalist Model would demand increased accountability to the Book of Discipline—not only for individual pastors but for churches, bishops, and annual conferences, all of which could face swift and strong punishment if they do not follow the Book of Discipline.

Gains of this Plan:

- Essentially preserves the status quo.
- Fully satisfies some traditionalist United Methodists.
- Requires no constitutional amendments.

Pains of this Plan:

- Disagreement on this matter would continue without resolution.
- Our mission would be compromised by costly trials.
- This plan is not a path to unity, but asks progressive United Methodist churches and clergy to form an “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church.”
- May alienate millennials and future generations, for whom this matter is not a defining part of their faith.
- Would elevate our stance on matters of human sexuality to a core function of our denomination, requiring a certification process for annual conferences and bishops around maintaining standards against LGBTQ marriage and ordination.

North Georgia Delegates to General Conference:

From Rev. Mosley originally issued June 1, 2018

CLERGY

Philip D. Schroeder
Jane Newman Brooks
P. Alice Rogers
James C. Cantrell III
Steve Wood
Richard Winn
Charles W. Savage II
K. Edward Tomlinson
Herzen Andone
Byron Thomas
Nora Colmenares
Bridgette Young Ross
Dalton Rushing
David Walters
Bernice Kirkland
Olu Brown
Rodrigo Cruz
Beth LaRocca-Pitts
Mike Cash
Juan Quintanilla
Dave Allen Grady
Leon Matthews, Jr.
James H. Lowry, Jr.
Kate Hurst Floyd
John A. Beyers
Hugh Bentley Cathey Sr.

LAITY

Mathew A. Pinson
Jane Finley
Keith M. Cox
Jeff Jernigan
Bill Stikes
Randy Brown
Lathem Postell
Rachel Fullerton
Joe W. Kilpatrick
Tonya Murphy
Gary Fuller
Jasper Russell
Leon Jourolmon
Tom Cook
Lee Highsmith
Bill Martin
Elizabeth Corrie
Sue Raymond
Janet Sligar
Dianne Spencer
Linda Culpepper
Lily Del C. Berrios

In 2016, General Conference authorized the bishops to form a commission to help find a way through the potentially denomination-splitting disagreements over how the church ministers with LGBTQ individuals.

General Conference authorized the bishops in a 428-405 vote to form a commission (A Way Forward) to advise them on possible ways forward that foster unity. The bishops' recommendation aims to bridge a decades-long division that has grown so intense that, during the 2016 General Conference, rumors of a potential church split over homosexuality reached a fever pitch.

May 4, 2018

Under what the Council of Bishops calls the One Church Plan, decisions about whether to ordain LGBTQ clergy or to officiate at same-gender unions would be made closer to the congregational level.

The plan would remove the restrictive language against the practice of homosexuality in the Book Discipline, the denomination's policy book. The plan also adds assurances to pastors and conferences who in good conscience cannot perform same-sex weddings or ordain "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy that they don't have to do so. Central conferences — church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe — could maintain current restrictions.

The plan "encourages a generous unity by giving United Methodists the ability to address different missional contexts in ways that reflect their theological convictions," said the bishops' press release.

While the majority of bishops recommend the One Church Plan, the bishops also will submit two additional plans as part of their report to the special General Conference on Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis. All three possibilities had support among some of the bishops.

The other two plans on the table are:

The Traditionalist Plan, which would affirm the current language in the denomination's Book of Discipline, the denomination's governing document, and seek to strengthen enforcement.

The Connectional-Conference plan, which would allow conferences to choose among three connectional conferences for affiliation. The connectional conferences would align based on theology or perspective on LGBTQ ministry — be it traditionalist, progressive or allowing for a variety of approaches. This plan would require multiple amendments to the denomination's constitution.

May 18, 2018

The Council of Bishops has voted by an overwhelming majority to share the work done by the Commission on a Way Forward on the three plans and to recommend the One Church Plan.

The One Church Plan will be placed before the 2019 General Conference for legislative action.

To honor the work of the commission, and in service to the delegates to the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, the Council of Bishops will also provide supplemental materials that include a historical narrative with disciplinary implications related to the connectional conference plan and the traditionalist plan. The recommendation adopted by the COB reflects the wide diversity of theological perspectives and the global nature of the UMC as the best way forward for our future as a denomination.