



# One Church Plan

As supported by a majority of bishops of  
The United Methodist Church

## FAQ

### 1. Why the One Church Plan?

The One Church Plan provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context without disbanding the connectional nature of the church.

### 2. Why is the Council of Bishops recommending the One Church Plan over the other options?

The One Church Plan is the only plan with a recommendation from the Council of Bishops. This plan gives churches the room they need to maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible. This plan appears to most fully meet the mission, vision, scope, and key foundational ideas presented by the Commission to the Council. The One Church Plan offers the Church a way to live in spiritual community despite theological differences on LGBTQ inclusion.

### 3. How many constitutional amendments does this plan require?

The One Church Plan requires no constitutional amendments. Legislative changes to The Book of Discipline can be authorized through petitions sent to the General Conference. Unlike the other plans, the One Church Plan was deemed largely constitutional by the Judicial Council's unanimous decision. None of the sentences flagged in its ruling is critical to the legislation.

### 4. What if I (pastor) am uncomfortable presiding at a same-sex wedding? What if our church doesn't agree to host same-sex weddings?

No annual conferences, bishops, congregations, or pastors are compelled to act contrary to their convictions. The plan grants space for traditionalists to continue to offer ministry as they have in the past with explicit disciplinary assurances that no pastor or church shall be compelled to perform ministries that represent a conflict of conscience. The One Church Plan provides space for all United Methodists to continue without disrupting their ministries. There is no mandate that requires a local church, conference, or pastor to participate in a vote that divides, segments, or separates. Voting is kept to a minimum except where it is helpful. The United Methodist Church remains in connection, upholding unity of mission without uniformity of practice.

### 5. What if I (pastor) agree to preside at same-sex weddings but my local church approves a wedding policy that prohibits same-sex weddings on church property?

The plan gives space to provide more complete ministry with LGBTQ persons by allowing pastors to preside at same-sex weddings. If a local church where the pastor is located does not allow same-sex weddings, pastors may seek to preside outside their church property or seek permission from a pastor at another church that does allow for same-sex weddings to be hosted on church property.

### 6. What are my options if I (pastor) am uncomfortable with the current stance related to LGBTQ individuals in my annual conference through the Board of Ordained Ministry and/or episcopal leadership?

Those who are uncomfortable with any new policies or restrictions within their current annual conference or in their episcopal leader's approach to ordination may request a transfer to conferences that more closely reflect their personal convictions.

### 7. Does this mean our local church has to vote on a local church wedding policy?

Local churches are not required to vote. Most would likely make no changes in practices at the local level. There may be some local congregations that choose to rewrite their wedding policies to either explicitly allow or prohibit same-sex weddings in their facilities. Local churches cannot restrict the activity of their pastor(s) related to presiding at weddings. Pastors who want to perform a wedding outside church property could do so based on their own conscience and should do so in consultation with church leaders.



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## FAQ (CONTINUED)

### **8. Will the bishop and cabinet send an openly gay pastor to our church?**

The vast majority of U.S.-based annual conferences practice missional appointment making. The bishop, in consultation with the cabinet, takes into account the missional needs of the local church and surrounding community and works very hard to match those needs with a ministerial leader who possesses gifts for those needs. It is always a conversation with everyone involved – local church leadership through the SPRC or equivalent and the pastor. Cabinets work very hard to honor the call of pastors and the missional needs of local churches. Cabinets take great care to ensure the well-being and effectiveness of pastors sent to local churches. The consultation process with SPRCs or equivalent and the district superintendent may include conversation around the local church's theological convictions and acceptance of openly gay and lesbian pastors.

### **9. Does this plan have any consequences to clergy and lay pensions with Wespath?**

The plan maintains the leadership and connectional structures of the United Methodist Church, including annual conferences, the Council of Bishops, the General Conference, General Boards and Agencies, and the Judicial Council. Wespath (the Board of Pensions) will continue to offer its services without disruption. In fact, this is the only plan that can make that claim. Wespath has provided further details on the implications of each plan at <https://www.wespath.org/wayforwardwespathfaq/>.

### **10. Who decides which plan the UMC pursues?**

The General Conference is the body that makes legislative decisions for the denomination. The decision about which plan the UMC adopts rests with lay and clergy delegates as they meet in Special Session on February 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis. The 864 delegates are split 50/50 between laity and clergy. Bishops do not vote at General Conference.

### **11. Does the One Church Plan provide for lay assent/dissent to ordination of gay and lesbian people in an annual conference?**

Ordination in the United Methodist Church still comes down to the gifts and call of the individual candidate and the affirmation of those gifts and call by the community. Laity are involved every step of the way during the discernment process for credentialing pastors (local church via an SPRC and charge conference vote, the district Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry). By the process outlined in The Book of Discipline, the last step of a lengthy process of discernment is the vote of the clergy session. The bishop may choose to seek the nonbinding advice of an annual conference session on standards relating to human sexuality for ordination to inform the Board of Ministry in its work.

### **12. How quickly would this plan go into effect?**

That decision will be up to the General Conference lay and clergy delegates as they meet in Special Session on February 24-26, 2019, in St. Louis. Given the simplicity of the plan, it could go into effect as early as January 1, 2020. However, it is the recommendation of the Council of Bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward that the One Church Plan be implemented December 31, 2020.

### **13. Will the 2020 General Conference have the ability to reverse the 2019 decision?**

That will be up to the General Conference lay and clergy delegates. Part of the legislative action in 2019 could include a moratorium on legislative action in order to allow for a “settling in” period to all involved and the opportunity to engage in conversation and discernment regarding issues related to marriage and ordination.



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## FAQ FOR CENTRAL CONFERENCES (I.E., CONFERENCES OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES)

### **14. Will a gay bishop be sent to a central conference if the One Church Plan passes?**

Episcopal leaders will continue to be elected in central conferences the same way they have been elected in the past.

### **15. Will the One Church Plan redefine marriage for central conferences?**

No. Central conferences will not be forced to adopt any definition of marriage in conflict with their cultural context.

### **16. In the One Church Plan, will central conferences continue to have authority to pass legislation adapting The Book of Discipline to their own context?**

Yes, the One Church Plan does not change the current legislative process for central conferences.

### **17. Does the One Church Plan mandate central conferences support homosexuality?**

No. In fact, central conferences are allowed to maintain the current language on human sexuality within their respective Book of Discipline.

### **18. How does the One Church Plan uphold and protect the unity of the UMC?**

The One Church Plan is designed to focus on the mission of the United Methodist Church while respecting the diverse ministries and cultural contexts of the world. The One Church Plan fulfills the Commission on the Way Forward's vision to maximize "the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible."

### **19. Will the One Church Plan allow space for those with different opinions regarding human sexuality?**

Yes. The One Church Plan protects the conscience and decisions of all United Methodists, regardless of their views on human sexuality.