

CONNECTIONAL CONFERENCE PLAN

I'd like to share with you some information about the Connectional Conference Plan, one of two plans presented in detail to the Council of Bishops in May, 2018.

The Connectional Conference Plan creates three distinct connectional conferences based on theology. Those are:

.Traditional Connectional Conference in which marriage shall continue to be defined as between one man and one woman, same-sex weddings cannot be performed, those practicing homosexuality cannot be ordained, and a covenantal commitment to a more traditional understanding of the doctrine and standards of the church must be made.

.Unity Connectional Conference, which acknowledges that members are not of one mind regarding biblical interpretations related to human sexuality, in which pastors are allowed but not required to perform same-sex weddings, annual conferences are allowed but not required to ordain those practicing homosexuality, local churches are allowed but not required to receive an LGBT person as pastor, and in which no bishop, pastor, or congregation is compelled to act against conscience in these matters.

.Progressive Connectional Conference, in which same-sex weddings are performed by all clergy, all annual conferences, ordain qualified LGBT persons, and all local churches welcome LGBT pastors who match the needs of the congregation and its ministry.

These three connectional conferences would replace the five US jurisdictions, each covering the whole country.

The connectional conferences would continue to partner for mission and ministry like the current jurisdictions, and support and sustain mission work outside the U.S.

General Conference would still have authority over shared doctrine and would be a place for the connectional conferences to share worship, best practices and deal with justice issues.

Some general agencies would continue (such as Wespeth, Publishing House, GCFA, Archives and History, and part of GBGM), while others would continue based on whether the connectional conferences are willing to support them financially.

Current Jurisdictional Conferences would have the first level vote regarding connectional conference affiliation. Annual conferences that disagree with the decision of their jurisdiction may decide to affiliate with a different connectional conference. Local churches that disagree with the choice of their annual conference may vote to join a different connectional conference.

Clergy will choose to affiliate with a connectional conference, agreeing to meet the qualifications of that connectional conference and maintain the standards of conduct as set forth by that connectional conference.

Each US based connectional conference would fund its own Bishops at comparable levels through GCFA, with all US based annual conferences sharing funding for bishops outside the U.S.

Contextuality is a high value of this plan - the church is called to reach people in diverse places, and church structures need to be shaped by those contexts. This plan seeks to maximize our ability to reach and do ministry from a variety of theological perspectives, while honoring different core convictions.

This plan would require the adoption of nine constitutional amendments, which would be voted on by Annual Conferences in 2019 or early 2020 and the plan must be affirmed by 2/3 of all Annual Conferences.

I am not advocating this plan, just seeking to explain it.

Sharon Ragland & Paul Gomez 10/2/18; 10/9/18