

Holy Huddle Script of Traditionalist (Traditional) Plan

The Traditionalist Plan is one of the three main possibilities to be considered by the Special General Conference next February. It is essentially a plan that reinforces and extends current limitations and prohibitions regarding how the UMC relates to LGBTQ persons. Given the way that legislation is handled at General Conferences, it is likely that any or all of the plans will be amended, perhaps extensively. There is no guarantee that any plan as presented will be adopted.

Features of the Traditional Plan

- a. Broadens the definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual” to include anyone living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or who publicly states that he or she is a homosexual. Existence of a marriage license would be viewed as a public statement.
- b. Sets minimum penalties and quicker expulsion after conviction of violations. For example, a pastor convicted of performing a same-sex marriage or celebrating a same-sex union would face a mandatory penalty of a one-year suspension without pay for the first offense and revocation of credentials for a subsequent offense.
- c. Requires bishops and annual conferences to certify that they would uphold, enforce and maintain Disciplinary standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination. Bishops who could not do so would not be eligible for compensation for expenses after 2021 and would be urged to join the self-governing churches.
- d. Prevents bishops from consecrating, ordaining or commissioning a “self-avowed homosexual” even if that person had been elected or approved by the relevant jurisdictional conference or clergy session. That petition does not include the term “practicing” as part of the ban.
- e. Reviews the status of bishops who could not certify they would uphold the Discipline through a newly created Council of Bishops’ Council Relations Committee for possible action.
- f. Handles complaints against bishops under new provisions set out in a constitutional amendment that was ratified in May and aimed at requiring the Council of Bishops to hold its members accountable. Among the possible penalties are involuntary retirement or involuntary leave.
- g. Sets a strict timeline for new provisions for handling complaints and making dismissal of complaints more difficult.
- h. Allows local churches that disagree with a conference decision not to enforce the Discipline to remain with The United Methodist Church.
- i. Allows local churches in a conference that plans to enforce the bans to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordant” church if they disagree with their conference. Groups of 50 or more churches could form new denominations. This is known as the “gracious exit” provision.
- j. Encourages clergy who could not maintain the ban on LGBTQ marriage and ordination to leave the denomination and join the affiliated churches.
- k. Requires any just resolution of a complaint to contain a commitment not to repeat the offense.
- l. Requires every annual conference to certify that they would maintain the bans and conferences that did not “would be encouraged” to form self-governing bodies.
- m. Continues the current general agencies that could negotiate their services with churches and conferences that leave the denomination.
- n. Requires the conference Board of Ordained Ministry to conduct an examination to ascertain whether a candidate was a practicing homosexual, including looking at information on social media. Such a candidate may not be recommended for ordination or commissioning. The Board of Ministry must certify that all recommended candidates satisfy Disciplinary requirements concerning sexuality and marriage. Additionally, all Board members must certify that they satisfy these requirements.

The Traditionalist Plan requires at least eighteen changes to the Book of Discipline, with several of these altering multiple paragraphs. The Judicial Council will rule on whether or not all of the provisions of this plan appear to be constitutional.