

General Conference 2019

February 23-26 in St. Louis, MO

What is General Conference? Lay and Clergy Delegates from Annual Conferences all over the world meet together every 4 years. They are the highest legislative body in the UMC. General Conference (GC) is the only group that can speak for the denomination.

Why is General Conference 2019 different? The Council of Bishops has called a Special Session of GC in 2019 to receive and act on a report from the Commission on the Way Forward. While most GCs handle a variety of legislation, at this GC they will only discuss paragraphs in the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality.

What is the Commission on the Way Forward? At GC 2016 the body authorized a group of 32 people to meet and to do a complete examination of all topics concerning human sexuality in the church. The Commission consisted of Bishops, Clergy, and Laity.

What will happen at GC 2019? We don't know exactly. The Commission on the Way Forward will present their recommendations.

What are the possible plans the UMC may adopt? At the moment there are three major plans that people are talking about. Each of these plans has been reviewed by the Judicial council—and parts of each have already been ruled constitutional or unconstitutional. Each of the plans could be modified at GC 2019. GC 2019 could adopt another plan. It is important to remember that there are many issues tied with the plans, such as clergy pension, apportionments, etc, as well as human sexuality.

What can I do?

- Pray. Pray for the delegates from the Desert Southwest Conference: Rev. Dan Hurlbert and Mr. Jim Nibbelink; pray for all of the delegates to GC 2019, the clergy of the UMC, the extension ministries of the UMC, and all members of the UMC.
- Be informed. Be careful where you look for information and what information you share. There will be a lot of information published about the UMC in the next few weeks. Only GC can speak for the denomination. Trusted sources are umc.org and dscumc.org/general-conference.
- Continue to be the church. Continue to love and worship God. Continue to serve and love people.

Where can I go for more information?

- <http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session>
- Desert Southwest Conference: www.dscumc.org/general-conference
- *Commission on the Way Forward Report*: <http://bit.ly/COWF2019>
- *Judicial Council Rulings*: <http://bit.ly/JCRule2019>
- *Live Stream GC 2019*: <http://bit.ly/LiveStreamGC2019>

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The One Church Plan would have the denomination recognize that marriage is between two adults. It would allow pastors to decide whether or not to preside at same-sex weddings, and it would give local churches the right to decide whether or not same-sex weddings could take place in their sanctuaries. Finally, it would allow annual conferences to decide whether or not to ordain self-avowed, practicing homosexuals.

The Connectional Conference Plan would create three branches of the church, referred to as Connectional Conferences. While the three branches would share responsibility and receive support from a number of general church boards and agencies, and operate under a unified Council of Bishops, each branch would have a significant degree of autonomy when it comes to sexual ethics, teachings on marriage, and ordination standards.

The Traditional Plan would reaffirm The United Methodist Church's present teachings on human sexuality and call for enhanced accountability standards for clergy, bishops, and annual conferences. United Methodist clergy would not be allowed to preside at same-sex weddings, and same-sex weddings would not be allowed on United Methodist property. Self-avowed, practicing homosexuals would not be eligible for ordination in The United Methodist Church.

See also the 3 Plan Chart for detailed information about the plans: https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/WayForwardPlans_summary-sheet.pdf