

Important Information to Know about the Town Hall Meetings

Why is Bishop Graves holding town hall meetings in each district and who is invited?

The district town hall meetings are part of an ongoing conversation concerning The Commission on A Way Forward and the called General Conference scheduled for February of 2019. The purpose of these gatherings is to bring clarity and answer questions around the three proposed plans coming from The Commission on A Way Forward to the 2019 General Conference. All interested United Methodists, both lay and clergy, are invited to attend a town hall meeting in their district.

What is the agenda for the meetings?

Each meeting will begin at 3:00 PM and conclude no later than 5:00 PM. The meetings will begin with a time of spiritual reflection and centering. A video will then be shared which highlights the specifics of each of the three proposed plans. There will then be a question and answer time with Bishop Graves moderated by the host district superintendent.

What are the three proposals we will discuss? They are listed in the order they can be found on the judicial council docket – see link below.

- **The One Church Plan** would have the denomination recognize that marriage is between two adults, not explicitly between one man and one woman. 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.

Will any votes be taken at the town hall meetings? If not, who will vote on these plans and when?

No vote will be taken at the town hall meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to bring clarity around the three proposed plans and provide space for questions. The three proposed plans will be presented to the delegates of the called General Conference at their session in February of 2019 in St. Louis, MO.

Does General Conference have to accept one of these three options?

General Conference could approve one of these plans, approve an amended plan, create a new plan, or affirm the current language of the 2016 *Book of Discipline* without making any changes to our current language.

Are full copies of the three proposed plans currently available?

The full plans can be seen as part of the Judicial Council docket at www.awfumc.org/commissionplans.

Important Terms to Know for the Town Hall Meetings

The Book of Discipline

A book outlining the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work, and procedures of The United Methodist Church. Each General Conference amends *The Book of Discipline*, and the actions of the General Conference are reflected in the quadrennial revision. We are currently under *The 2016 Book of Discipline*.

The Annual Conference

The regional, organizational unit of The United Methodist Church, as well as the yearly meeting of that unit, both presided over by a bishop. The business session is composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity, with at least one layperson from each pastoral charge. We are a part of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference.

The General Conference

The highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church. The voting membership consists of an equal number of clergy and lay delegates elected by the annual conferences. General Conference convenes every four years to determine the denomination's future direction. It is the only body that can speak for the denomination.

The 2019 Called General Conference

The 2016 General Conference made plans for a called General Conference to be held in 2019. Its only purpose is to address our denomination's ongoing struggles around the topic of human sexuality. The called General Conference is scheduled for February 23-26 in St. Louis, MO.

The Delegation

The delegation consists of the voting delegates to General Conference. Every four years, each annual conference elects an equal number of lay and clergy delegates to attend General Conference. At annual conference 2015, the Alabama-West Florida Conference elected five lay persons and five clergypersons (plus alternates) to attend the 2016 General Conference. These delegates were affirmed at the 2017 session of annual conference as the voting delegates to the called General Conference. A list of our delegates can be found at www.awfumc.org/delegation.

The Commission on A Way Forward

The Commission on a Way Forward was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination of all topics concerning human sexuality in the church. Its 32 members were named by the Council of Bishops, including 8 bishops, 11 laypersons, and 13 clergypersons. The Commission has prepared and will present the three proposed plans to the 2019 called General Conference.

The Constitution

This is the fundamental constituting and legal document of The United Methodist Church. It establishes the basic outline for the organization of the denomination as well as establishing the office and role of the bishop. The Constitution can only be amended by 2/3 approval of The General Conference AND 2/3 approval of the aggregate vote of all annual conferences.

The Judicial Council

Nine persons, both lay and clergy, elected by General Conference who rule on questions of constitutionality in church law and practice.