

Connectional Conference Plan

The Connectional Conference Plan adds three connectional conferences to the existing structure of the UMC. These three conferences are non-geographical, and are instead, based on theological viewpoints: progressive, conservative, and moderate. The entire UMC would still be united under its doctrinal standards, joint missions and ministries (like UMCOR), and shared administration. Each AC would vote, by a simple majority, to join one of the three connectional conferences, as would the Jurisdictional Conferences. Here is how it would affect the UMC.

Churches

- Each church would vote to either follow the Annual Conference (AC) to which they belong into a connectional conference, or would vote by a simple majority to join a different connectional conference.

Clergy

- Each clergy person may affiliate with one or more conferences, but they must qualify and abide by the rules of the conference to which they affiliate. Affiliation does not affect membership to the AC.
- The chosen affiliation will be a factor as each AC makes appointments each year.
- Ordination is recognized by all connectional conferences but ability to serve and to affiliate will be determined by each connectional conference.

Bishops

- The current Council of Bishops will be maintained.
- The College of Bishops, instead of being gathered based on jurisdiction, will be organized along affiliation lines.
- The bishops will continue to offer leadership in ecumenical relations, and will serve as a creative hub for learning and sharing ministry practices.

Central Conferences can choose to join one of the US connectional conferences or create up to 5 different connectional conferences of their own.

General Church

- Some general administrative agencies would continue to exist and be jointly supported by all of the connectional conferences: Wespeth, the Publishing House, General Council on Finance and Administration, Archives and History, etc.
- The general program boards and agencies would be reorganized and revamped based on the future agreements of the connectional conferences that decide to utilize and financially support them. For example, United Methodist Women would have to be chosen to be supported by a connectional conference, and then they would negotiate funds given and resources received.
- Each connectional conference would devise its own Book of Discipline, using the current Articles of Religion, Confessions of Faith, the General Rules, etc., as a common starting point.
- The Judicial Council would be comprised of two representatives from each connectional conference and would still have ultimate authority over matters of church law. Additionally, each connectional conference will be free to organize their own judicial body to decide matters related to their Book of Discipline.
- A much shorter General Conference would still retain authority over the constitution as well as the shared administrative agencies and services. It would also provide opportunities to share best practices related to mission and ministry.

This plan would take at least 7 years to implement, maybe longer depending on negotiations.

One-Church Plan

The One-Church Plan gives local churches, annual conferences, and clergy the ability to make decisions about inclusivity, marriage, and ordination based on individual and communal convictions, and the needs of specific ministries. It does not change the organizational structure of the church. It lifts restrictions, removes most discriminatory language from *The Book of Discipline*, and gives permission for local and regional decisions. This plan was supported by 69% of the Commission on a Way Forward and 60% of the Council of Bishops.

Churches

- Each church decides for itself whether to host same-sex weddings.
- Each church is permitted to indicate its openness to receiving LGBTQ clergy.

Clergy

- Each clergy is encouraged to file statements expressing their views on homosexuality, which will be used during the appointment process.
- Clergy are free to decide whether they are willing to preside at same-sex weddings or not, based on individual conscience.
- End of trials against clergy for celebrating same-sex weddings.
- Clergy unwilling to continue serving in the UMC will be permitted a gracious exit with their pensions protected, or may transfer to a AC that shares their views.
- LGBTQ candidates in the ordination process in a conference that will not ordain them will be supported in transferring to a more compatible conference.

Annual Conferences

- The clergy session of each AC will determine if the AC will ordain LGBTQ+ clergy candidates.
- Annual conferences will use current disciplinary processes to facilitate the transfer/gracious exit of candidates/ordained clergy, as well as congregations seeking to leave United Methodism.
- The current restrictions on using funding of the UMC for LGBTQ+ ministries will be maintained.

Bishops

- The current Council of Bishops will be maintained.
- Episcopal assignments will be made in a manner that considers each bishop's convictions as well as the needs of jurisdiction.
- No bishop will be forced to ordain LGBTQ candidates, but s/he will be required to make arrangements for another bishop to fly in and do the ordination.
- The Episcopal Fund will continue to support the salaries and expenses of bishops in the Central Conferences. But GCFA will develop a plan to ensure that each episcopal area in the U.S. covers the costs related to its bishop's compensation package as well as each area's apportioned share of the Episcopacy Fund.

Central Conferences will not have to act contrary to their beliefs and will retain their ability to adapt the Book of Discipline to fit their contexts, including language about human sexuality. Same-gender weddings may only be conducted at conferences where the civil law permits them. General Agencies will remain the same and maintain their relationship to all annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, and the general church.

The One-Church Plan will take approximately 18 months to implement.

The Traditional Plan

The Traditionalist Plan was never fully developed by the Commission on the Way Forward and instead was prepared by a few members of the Council of Bishops, who remain nameless. Only 9 out of 32 “A Way Forward” participants supported it in the end. The Traditionalist Plan broadens the definition of “a self-avowed, practicing homosexual” to include anyone living in the context of same-sex marriage or civil union, and any public statement (including social media) claiming an LGBTQ identity. It removes peer accountability from trial processes and ensures minimum sentences for particular LGBTQ-related offenses.

Churches

- Churches that disagree with the tighter restricts may vote to withdraw from the UMC and/or join a newly created, autonomous denomination.

Clergy

- Clergy who are not willing to support disciplinary provisions around same-sex marriage and ordination are to leave United Methodism and join another denomination.
- Clergy found guilty of breaking current or future disciplinary provisions regarding the performance of same-sex marriages are required to surrender their credentials.
- This plan mandates that any just resolution reached during a clergy complaint process must include a commitment not to repeat the offense.

Annual Conferences

- Annual Conferences must certify that they will enforce current and future disciplinary provisions related to LGBTQ issues before the 2020 General Conference.
- Annual Conferences with alternate views to the current Discipline are encouraged to leave United Methodism and form autonomous-affiliated or concordat churches.
- Annual Conferences that do not certify their compliance with the Discipline by 2021 will no longer receive UM funds or be allowed to use the UM name or logo.

Bishops

- Both active and retired bishops must certify that they will uphold disciplinary restrictions by 2021 or lose the ability to be compensated for their expenses by General Council of Finance and Administration.
- Bishops who do not certify comply to the heightened anti-LGBTQ restrictions are to leave United Methodism and join an autonomous-affiliated or Concordat Church.

No changes are anticipated for Central Conferences or the structure of the general church according to the Traditional Plan. However, a reduction in the number of churches in the denomination would mean a decrease in funding to the general agencies of the church.

The Traditional Plan would take approximately 12-18 months to implement.

The Simple Plan

The Simple Plan proposes to “simply” remove the language from the Book of Discipline that excludes LGBTQ people from full participation in the church. It is the shortest legislation of the four plans. All churches and clergy can choose for themselves regarding same-sex weddings. Ordination is open to the LGBTQ+ community. Bishops and Annual conference may ordain LGBTQ+ individuals who meet all ordination requirements. There will be no more trials or charges filed regarding inclusion of LGBTQ+ laity or clergy. Central Conferences where homosexuality is not criminalized may perform same-sex weddings if they choose. Restrictions of funds for ministries with the LGBTQ+ community will no longer exist. General agencies will be permitted to engage in LGBTQ+ ministries. And, no one who disagrees with LGBTQ+ ministries will be forced to participate with these ministries.

Effective immediately.

The Plan of Dissolution

The Wesley Covenant Association proposes the following:

“All conflicting provisions of the Constitution and Book of Discipline are hereby suspended for the purpose of implementing a plan of dissolution. The dissolution shall make available at least two new entities, one providing full inclusion for LGBTQI+ persons in marriage and ordination, and another maintaining the church’s current teaching and provisions regarding marriage and ordination for LGBTQI+ persons. Additional entities may be proposed by groups during the initial implementation. Provisions that do not conflict with implementation of the plan shall continue in force until the termination of The United Methodist Church is declared. At the conclusion of the implementation process, all assets and liabilities of The United Methodist Church shall have been equitably divided among the two or more entities which shall become the successor denominations, and The United Methodist Church shall cease to exist.”

The work of dissolving the UMC would begin immediately. A session of General Conference would be held in four years, at which the denomination would end and all assets and liabilities would be equally distributed. These four years would be spent in creating a smooth transition to the two or more new denominations.