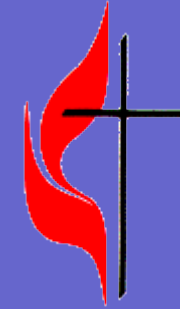


Human Sexuality Forum



**The decisions facing the 2019
Session of General Conference**

Agenda for this discussion



- 1. Vision of Methodist Temple**
- 2. General Church Structure**
- 3. The Wesley Quadrilateral**
- 4. Historical timeline**
- 5. So, what has changed?**
- 6. The 3 proposals from the Commission on the Way Forward**
- 7. The Council of Bishops recommendation**

Vision of Methodist Temple



**Striving to become a safe,
nonjudgmental community
in Jesus name.**

Out here trying to decide which path to take in Life...



General Church Structure

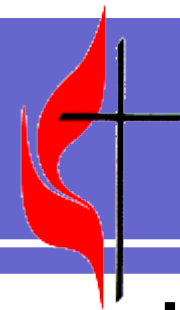


**Legislative Branch: General Conference,
Jurisdictional Conference, Annual Conference,
Local Church Conference**

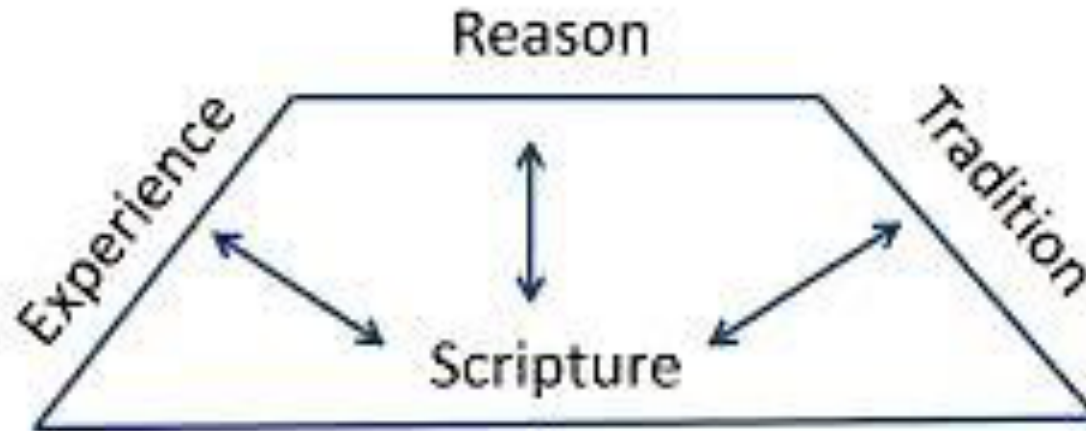
**Executive Branch: Bishops, District
Superintendents, Pastors in Charge**

Judicial Branch: Judicial Council

Wesley Quadrilateral



Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience = how we determine the truth and make our decisions



The issue of slavery as an example.

Historical Timeline



- 1784 Methodist Episcopal Church in America was created and grew rapidly**
- 1844 Split north and south over slavery**
- 1939 Merger created the Methodist Church, but also institutionalized segregation.**
- 1946 English translations of the Bible began using “homosexuality” (dropped in 1971)**
- 1968 merger created United Methodist Church, ended segregation, adopted Articles of Religion & Confession of Faith**

Historical Timeline



1972 General Conference adopted Social Principles statement on equal civil rights, but added “incompatible” language

1973 APA removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses

1976 General Conference defeated motions to rescind the “incompatible” language, and adopted motions to restrict use of any UM funds to any gay caucus or other group to promote “the acceptance of homosexuality”

Historical Timeline



1980 General Conference debated whether to prohibit self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being ordained and appointed. Defeated that proposal.

Instead adopted: *“The UMC has moved away from the prohibition of specific acts, for such prohibitions are endless. We affirm our trust in the covenant community and the process by which we ordain ministers.”*

Historical Timeline



1984 General Conference adopted this standard for ordained clergy:

“commitment to fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness”

They also added:

“Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the UMC”

Historical Timeline



1988 General Conference voted to form a study process for the 1988-1992 quadrennium on homosexuality.

Also voted to add these words to Social Principles:

“We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

Historical Timeline



1992 General Conference heard the report of the study on homosexuality but made no changes in the Discipline by a vote of 710 for and 238 against.

Historical Timeline



1996 General Conference added:

“Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.”

Historical Timeline



2000 General Conference affirmed the same statements that previous General Conferences had adopted. The “demonstrations” against those statements intensified (although such demonstrations have happened since 1992).

2004, 2008, and 2012 General Conferences also affirmed these statements, and narrowly defeated a proposal to state that we disagree. Demonstrations increased.

Historical Timeline



2016 General Conference reached an impasse, asked the Council of Bishops for help, and then approved recommendation of COB for a Commission on the Way Forward.

COB named a 32-member Commission, and they have brought their report back to the COB, which decided to forward all three of their models while recommending one of them.

What We Don't Say



What our Book of Discipline does NOT say:

- 1. Never has condemned homosexual orientation, only focuses upon behavior**
- 2. Never has prohibited homosexual persons from being official members of the UMC.**
- 3. Does not prohibit a homosexual person from being ordained or appointed, as long as that person is willing to commit to the standard of “celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage.”**

What We Do Say



Our UMC has always (at least since 1972) affirmed equal civil rights for gays and lesbians.

Our UMC has always denounced and condemned “hate language” and other forms of prejudice against gays and lesbians.

Our UMC has obvious regional differences, within the US and especially outside the US with regard to opinions on these issues.

Another Historical Note



In recent years the protests and acts of “biblical obedience” or disobedience against the Discipline have increased.

Also in recent years the number of “dialogues” and other conversations about these issues have increased in many parts of our UMC.

Recent US court decisions to legalize same-gender marriage have heightened the differences, protests, and dialogue.

So What Has Changed?



Scripture – diligent scholars disagree about the interpretation of the few verses which apply to homosexual behavior

Tradition – many Christian denominations have continued their disapproval of homosexual behavior

Experience – increasing awareness of Christians who are gay, coupled, faithful

Reason – science has raised issues about gender, identity, and behavior

Three Models from CWF



Traditionalist – maintains current stance, requires compliance, increased accountability

One Church – allows for adapting to local context, a “gracious unity”

Connectional Conference – moves to new structure of conferences grouped around their position of the issue of homosexuality

(See the UMC.org website for whole report, or the book “United Methodists Divided” by Dale McConkey, sociologist and pastor)

Traditionalist Model



Retains current “incompatible” language in Discipline and prohibitions against same-gender marriage and ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals.

Requires all bishops, annual conferences, and pastors to verify they will obey the Book of Discipline (BOD).*

Those who will not verify obedience would be encouraged to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordat church” formed by the annual conferences which will not verify obedience to the BOD.

Clergy who disobey the BOD will surrender credentials if found guilty (automatic penalty).*

(*Judicial Council has ruled these are unconstitutional)

One Church Model



Removes current “incompatible” language in Discipline and prohibitions against ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals.

Redefines marriage as a union between “two adults”

Allows pastors to determine whom to marry.

Allows each conference Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session to determine whom to ordain.

Provides for each Jurisdictional Conference to elect, assign, and pay for their own bishops.

Maintains all other current structures of our UMC.

(Judicial Council has ruled mostly constitutional)

Connectional Conference



Replaces current 5 Jurisdictions in the US with 3 new “Connectional Conferences” (Traditional, Unity, or Progressive).

Requires each Jurisdiction or Annual Conference to choose which “Connectional Conference” they want to join.

Maintains all three Connectional Conferences under the structure of The United Methodist Church, but with own BOD, College of Bishops, etc.

Provides for each Connectional Conference to elect, assign, and pay for their own bishops.

(Judicial Council did not rule on this plan)

COB Recommendation



In May of 2018 the Council of Bishops met for extended prayer and discernment.

The COB voted to send all three Models to the 2019 General Conference for consideration, while recommending the One Church model.

Judicial Council ruled that CFW brings the recommendations, not the COB, and other petitions are welcome, too.

Judicial Council has ruled on constitutionality of Traditional and One Church plans.

Other Plans/Proposals



The Judicial Council has ruled that any UM person or group can submit petitions to the special session of General Conference, so there are other plans being brought forward:

- 1. The “Simple Plan” by proponents of full inclusion of LGBT persons “simply” removes all restrictive language about homosexuality.**
- 2. Wesleyan Covenant Association is bringing proposals to allow “gracious exit” (congregations can take property and money with them if they leave).**

Who Will Decide?



The General Conference special session of 2019 and the regular General Conference session of 2020 will make this decision.

Who are those people? They are delegates elected by each Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church from around the world, half are clergy and half are laity.

Bishops have no vote, but preside over the sessions.

Next Steps



Pray for delegates

Email Pastor Andy with ?'s

Remember to see Christ in one another