



## A Way Forward Listening Session: Wisconsin Annual Conference

### Information Summary

Debates on this topic go back almost to the formation of The UMC, and didn't just emerge in 2016. At the 1972 General Conference, differences in scriptural interpretation around human sexuality first surfaced. Debates have continued at each subsequent General Conference (GC). The 2016 GC voted to authorize the Council of Bishops (COB) to "form a commission to explore options that help maintain and strengthen the unity of the church" (Commission report, p. 4).

The Commission on a Way Forward submitted its full report in July 2018. It is available for download: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/way-forward-report-released-in-all-four-official-languages-of-general-conference>

Of the three plans covered in the report, the Council of Bishops has recommended the **One Church Plan**, which allows for decision-making at local levels.

The **Connectional Conferences Plan** would divide The UMC into multiple separate but equal entities, would require extensive Constitutional changes, and would require annual conferences and local congregations to make decisions about which part of the newly defined connection they would associate with going into the future (Progressive, Unity, or Traditional).

The **Traditionalist Plan** concepts were talked about in broad terms by the Commission on a Way Forward, but the legislation was not vetted by either the Commission or the Council of Bishops. It would mandate bishops and clergy sessions of the AC to sign mandatory pledges to not violate Disciplinary language as it applies specifically to homosexuality teachings and prohibitions. Those who refuse would be asked to leave The UMC.

The constitutionality of the provisions of the three plans will not be known until after the Judicial Council meets October 23–26, 2018.

Though a number of petitions (61) have been submitted—in addition to the 48 that cover the three plans in the Way Forward Commission report—it will not be known until later this fall which might meet the necessary criteria to be considered by the Special Called General Conference.

The Special Called General Conference will be held February 23–26, 2019, Saint Louis, Missouri

Wisconsin Delegation members attending the 2019 Special Called General Conference (in order of election):

- *Clergy*: Dan Dick (ddick@wisconsinumc.org), Sam Royappa (sroyappa@wisconsinumc.org), Steve Zekoff (szekoff@charter.net), Amanda Stein (first reserve, pastorastein@gmail.com)
- *Laity*: Lisa King (lisa.king6179@gmail.com), Barbara Dick (barbara.a.dick@gmail.com), Gail Burgess (hb53104@aol.com), Katie Crise (first reserve, estremke42@gmail.com)

Additional Reserve Members of the Wisconsin Delegation (in order of election):

- *Clergy*: Jorge Mayorga, Dan Schwerin, Jeremy Deaner, George Kafer, Jenny Arneson
- *Laity*: Tom Popp, Judy Vasby, John Lawson, Julie Schubring