

Handout 4b

Matthews United Methodist Church

August 2018

A Way Forward/Connectional Conference Plan (pp 26-54 of UMC Report)

Theological and Biblical Foundations (pp 28-30)

- grace & holiness
- contextuality & diversity
- connection & mission
- freedom of conscience

Summary

- reflects a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services
- creates three values-based connectional conferences that have distinctive definitions of accountability, contextualization and justice; each conference covers the whole country
 1. Traditional- marriage shall continue to be defined as between one man and one woman, same=gender weddings cannot be performed and those practicing homosexuality cannot be ordained along with a covenantal commitment to a more traditional understanding of the doctrinal and moral standards of the church with enhanced accountability
 2. Unity- acknowledges that members are not of one mind regarding biblical interpretations related to human sexuality, in which pastors are allowed but not required to perform same-gender weddings, annual conferences are allowed but not required to ordain those practicing homosexuality, local churches are allowed but not required to receive an LGBTQ person as pastor, and in which no bishop, pastor or congregation is compelled to act against conscience in these matters
 3. Progressive- same-gender weddings are performed by all clergy, all annual conferences ordain qualified LGBTQ persons and all local churches welcome LGBTQ pastors who match the needs of the congregation and its ministry
- current Central Conferences have the choice of becoming their own connectional conference
- each connectional conference would create its own *Book of Discipline*
- does not maintain current leadership structure of the UMC- redefined Council of Bishops focuses on ecumenical relationships and shared learning...episcopal oversight, accountability, elections, assignments and funding occur within the College of Bishops of each connectional conference

Local Churches

- plan seeks to maximize our ability to reach and be in ministry from a variety of theological perspectives with those who are unchurched and de-churched
- multiplies our capacities to do ministries in a variety of contexts while honoring differing core convictions around LGBTQ marriage and ordination

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- may choose to align with a connectional conference different from the one decided by their annual conference
- only local churches that choose a connectional conference other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote
- can choose to define the parameters of their building use and/or wedding policies as it relates to same-gender marriage by affiliating with the appropriate connectional conference; those in the unity connectional conference have flexibility to move in either direction

Clergy

- clergy will choose to affiliate with a connectional conference
- appointment process takes into account the stated desires of clergy related to the connectional conference they would prefer and the covenants they can uphold
- ability to serve in a particular connectional conference is determined by the qualifications and expectations set by that connectional conference

Annual Conferences

- central conferences and US jurisdictional conferences would have first responsibility to determine what connectional conference to join...simple majority vote
- annual conferences that want to join a different connectional conference than the one chosen by their jurisdiction or central conference may do so by a simple majority vote
- annual conferences must administer a process for local churches who decide to depart from their annual conference and join a different connectional conference through the church conference process...the church conference will make its decision by a simple majority