

Handout 5b

Matthews United Methodist Church

August 2018

A Way Forward/The Traditionalist Plan (pp 55-84 of UMC Report)

Background

- The Commission on A Way Forward submitted sketches for the One Church, Traditionalist and Multi-Branch (later called Connection Conference) Models to the Council of Bishops in November, 2017. The Council of Bishops did not vote on or express any preference on the models, but when asked which model(s) the Commission should develop into full plans, both the One Church and Multi-Branch sketches were the focus.
- The One Church sketch and Multi-Branch sketches were developed into full plans and submitted by the Commission for consideration by the Council of Bishops in February 2018. The Multi-Branch Plan was renamed to the Connectional Conference Plan.
- At the April 29-May 4, 2018 of the Council of Bishops, the Commission was asked to provide a Traditional Plan by the end of its May 14-16 meeting

Summary (as presented to the Council of Bishops at their November 2017 meeting)

This Plan maintains the current stance of the church regarding the definition of marriage and the ministry of and with LGBTQ persons.

It flows from the presupposition that The United Methodist Church ought to have one unified moral stance on the issues of marriage and sexuality. The Plan continues to affirm that LGBTQ persons are welcome to attend worship services, participate in church programs, receive sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members and upon taking vows of membership become members of local churches.

At the same time, the Traditionalist Plan acknowledges the deep conscientious objections on the part of some to the current stance and practices of the church. It accommodates those objections by fostering a gracious and respectful way for those persons who cannot live within the current boundaries of church practice to form self-governing bodies that allow them the freedom to follow their conscience and institute practices in keeping with their understanding of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Such a self-governing body could constitute a Wesleyan denomination that could maintain an ongoing connection with The United Methodist Church through a Concordat Agreement.

Thus, in order to provide contextualization for members, this plan results in two different Wesleyan bodies who teach differently on the question of Christian marriage between same gender persons.

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Primary Action: Accountability to the current *Book of Discipline* language

Book of Discipline Language changes:

- broaden the definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual to include persons living in a same-gender marriage or civil union or persons who publicly state they are practicing homosexuals
- more accountability
- greater enforcement

Local Churches

- not required to vote
- most would likely make no changes in current practice
- local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to not enforce the *Discipline's* standards could vote to remain with the UMC
- local churches that disagreed with their annual conference's decision to enforce the *Discipline's* standards could vote to withdraw from the UMC and unite with the "autonomous, affiliated or concordat church"

Clergy

- clergy who could not maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination would be encouraged to join the "autonomous, affiliated or concordat church"
- mandate that any just resolution shall include a commitment not to repeat the offense
- clergy would surrender their credentials if found guilty of breaking provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to same-gender marriage
- the expectation is that clergy who cannot conform to the provisions in the *Book of Discipline* related their identity as self-avowed, practicing homosexuals or the performance of same-gender weddings would be expected to leave the church (in accordance with a yet to be developed process in the Constitution)

Annual Conferences

- require every annual conference to certify that they will uphold, enforce and maintain the *Discipline's* standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination
- annual conferences that did not so certify would be encouraged to form something similar to an "autonomous, affiliated or concordat church"