



The General Conference of The United Methodist Church met in St. Louis from Feb 23-26. The 864 delegates (half lay; half clergy) from all over the world acted on the report of Commission on a Way Forward, which focused on the issue of human sexuality, with related petitions.

The General Conference is the highest legislative body in The United Methodist Church and the only group that can decide church law and speak officially for the global denomination.

From among the proposals, the delegates approved the Traditional Plan by a vote of 438 to 384.

In summary, the Traditional Plan:

- keeps the current *Book of Discipline* language about homosexuality
- increases accountability by streamlining the processes to enforce penalties for violations of the *Book of Discipline* related to marriage and ordination of homosexual persons
- would go in effect January 1, 2020

Some parts of the Traditional Plan were ruled unconstitutional by the denomination's Judicial Council (supreme court), which will conduct a further review at its April meeting.

Responding to the actions of the Judicial Council, Bishop Laurie said, "While many people are grateful for the decisions of the General Conference, others are devastated. I pray that you will treat one another with compassion and kindness during this time."

What is the next step for the UMC?

The bishops are urging all United Methodists to stay focused on the mission that glorifies God and reaches new people with the Gospel.

Bishop Laurie will be present at three locations around the conference to debrief and answer questions about the 2019 General Conference. All laity and clergy are encouraged to attend whichever session is most convenient for you.

- Sunday, March 10 3:00 - 4:30 p.m. Salem UMC, Cedar Rapids (livestream)
- Saturday, March 16 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. New Hope UMC, Des Moines (livestream)
- Sunday, March 17 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Trinity UMC, Fort Dodge

In addition, there will be a clergy orders gathering on April 8 and 9, location TBD.

Bishop Laurie will also be present at the annual Laity Day on Saturday, April 6 at Collegiate UMC in Ames. There will be a Q&A about General Conference as part of this day.

For more information about the 2019 General Conference, go to gc2019.iaumc.org or umnews.org.