



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



July 9, 2018

TO: Annual Conference Secretaries
Heads of Delegations to the 2016 General Conference (or successors)
Secretary of the General Conference
Chairperson of the Commission on the General Conference

FROM: Bishop Kenneth Carter, President
Council of Bishops *KC*

RE: Amended Call for Special Session of the General Conference

Grace and peace to you from God, our Creator, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Out of a great sense of caution and the desire to help delegates to the Special Session of General Conference 2019 do their best work, the Council of Bishops hereby issues an amended call of a special session of the General Conference per Division Two - Section II - Article II of The Constitution of The United Methodist Church (§14 of The Book of Discipline (2016)).

This amended call is issued in response to footnote 6 of Judicial Council Decision 1360 handed down on May 25, 2018. A copy of Decision 1360 is attached hereto.

The Council of Bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward have worked collaboratively regarding the report to the General Conference. Because the Council of Bishops seeks to honor the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and because the focus must be what is best for The United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops has determined that issuing an amended call is the best way forward.

The purpose of this special session of the General Conference shall be limited to receiving and acting upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based upon recommendations of the Council of Bishops.

The information below was included in the original call letter dated April 24, 2017. It remains a part of the call and is included for information since these steps are already in process per the original call letter.

The Special Session of the General Conference will be held February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.

According to Article II of The Constitution (§14 of the Book of Discipline (2016)), this special session of the General Conference shall be composed of the delegates to the 2016 General Conference or their lawful successors, except when a particular annual conference or missionary conference shall prefer to have a new election.

The Secretary of the General Conference will be in communication with annual conference secretaries regarding updated delegate information, seating of reserve delegates, and the issuance of new certificates of election for annual conferences choosing to hold a new election.

The Commission on the General Conference and the Business Manager of the General Conference will develop and forward additional information regarding the logistics of the special session of General Conference at the appropriate time.

The Council of Bishops encourages the entire church to continue in deep, unceasing prayer for Holy Spirit breakthroughs for the special session of General Conference.

Below is the referenced footnote # 6 from the Judicial Council Decision 1360

⁵ *DCA* Vol. 4, No. 9, page 2488.

⁶ The undertaking of a "complete examination" of the subject of human sexuality presupposes that there will be some kind of report, document or study which supports the "possible revision of every paragraph in our *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality," which, in turn, presupposes that the Commission (not the Council of Bishops) will put forth legislation to fix the problem. The special called General Conference is to consider "their work," i.e., whatever the Commission desires to put before General Conference in terms of its "complete examination."

However, in passing, we note that the question here is whether a special commission created by the General Conference can report to a body other than the General Conference. Specifically, is the Commission on a Way Forward amenable to the General Conference or the Council of Bishops, and can it present its findings and report to the General Conference through the Council? See JCD 424.

There is nothing in the proceedings of the 2016 General Conference suggesting that the Commission on a Way Forward was supposed to submit its recommendations to the Council of Bishops. Similarly, there is no evidence in the legislative debate prior to the vote on the motion indicating that the Council of Bishops would develop specific legislative proposals based on the recommendations of the Commission and present them to the called special session of the General Conference.

The language of *An Offering* strongly suggests that "the work" of the Commission on a Way Forward, and only this body, is the rationale for calling a special session of the General Conference.