One Church Plan

- One Church Plan takes a relational and compatibilist approach to unity. The restrictions underlying current conflicts are deemed "non-essential matters" over which we can agree to disagree, and thus are removed from the Book of Discipline. This plan emphasizes our external mission by removing internal conflict.
- No change to structure of UMC. No division of the UMC.
- Connectional Conference Plan creates new structures to provide space between those who disagree about Christian ethics regarding same sex marriage and suitability for ordained ministry.
- These overlapping "Connectional Conferences" defined by rules concerning same sex marriage will replace today's five Jurisdictional Conferences defined by distinct geography.
- These Connectional Conferences would be separate legal entities (501(c)(3) organizations) but deemed part of one UMC.
- This plan both invites and forces Annual Conferences who are progressive on matters of same sex marriage and gay ordination to leave the UMC to create new denomination.
- This plan allows any Annual Conference(s) and/or Local Churches to leave and create new denomination(s) for any reason.
- These new "Self-Governing Methodist Churches" would be eligible for concordat relationship and token representation at General Conference.

Rules regarding ministry with and by married gay persons

- Removes language stating that "practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." While this statement is removed, it is not replaced with any specific affirmation.
- Neutralizes language in Social Principles concerning civil marriage such that the UMC globally neither prohibits nor affirms same sex marriage.
- Removes prohibitions against ceremonies celebrating civil unions or same sex marriage.
- Removes prohibitions against gay ordination. Rules may be set by Boards of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session suitable to each Annual Conference. Our standard of Christian sexual ethics calling for "celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage" will be applied equally to gay and straight clergy. Intends no more trials.
- Each of the three new Connectional Conferences would make their own rules in this area (as well as certain other administrative areas).
- It is expected that:
  - Traditional Conference similar to the new Traditionalist Plan,
  - Unifying Conference would be similar to the new One Church Plan, and
  - Progressive Plan would provide full affirmation of married gay Christians.
- Rules and trials would remain a possibility, but a sorting process would place Annual Conferences (ACs), Local Churches (LCs), Bishops and Clergy into a Connectional Conference that matches their belief and thus intends to reduce the number of trials vs. our current situation.

Freedom of Conscience

- Where legal civilly, UMC pastors would be allowed but not forced to celebrate civil unions or to conduct same sex wedding services.
- Annual Conference processes and bishops may ordain qualified gay candidates subject to the lack ofaise in the jurisdictional Conferences (i.e., equal lay and clergy voices) may make an advisory statement to inform any such new policies.
- Adds new provisions to protect freedom of conscience for United Methodists and to bar interference by bishops and district superintendents in the decisions of clergy and local congregations.
- Provides that same sex weddings will not be celebrated in church buildings unless the local congregation has voted for it.
- It is expected that freedom of conscience (specific to same sex marriage and gay ordination) would apply primarily to the Unifying Conference. In other words:
  - Traditional Connectional Conference would strictly enforce rules against same sex marriage and gay ordination (similar to the new Traditionalist Plan),
  - Unifying Conference would operate very similar to the new One Church Model with explicit guarantees for freedom of conscience.
  - Progressive Connectional Conference would expect that all annual conferences would willingly ordain qualified gay candidates, that all pastors would be expected to conduct gay weddings for qualified couples (i.e., on same basis as straight weddings), and that all local churches would willing host gay weddings (i.e., on same basis as straight weddings).

Impact on Central Conferences outside of USA

- No change regarding same sex marriage or ordination is forced on a Central Conference by this legislation.
- No change in practice is expected in Africa, Philippines or Eastern Europe.
- Central Conferences will have to vote and they may either (a) convert to a Geographic Connectional Conference (new name, but all current rules in effect) or (b) join one of the ideologically-defined Connectional Conferences (Traditional, Unifying or Progressive) arising from the US context.
- This legislation does create new options for individual Annual Conferences or even Local Churches to opt out of the choice made by their Central Conference.
- No change regarding to same sex marriage or ordination is forced on a Central Conference by this legislation. Structure remains the same.
- Annual Conferences, Bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry have the same obligation to certify as described above for Jurisdictional Conferences.
- This legislation creates new options for individual Annual Conference(s) or even Local Churches to opt out of choice made by UMC Central Conference.

Impact on Annual Conferences (AC)

- No change to structure.
- Boards of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session of each Annual Conference would have option but no requirement to address standards for ordained ministry of qualified married gay candidates.
- Re-votes by Clergy Session no sooner than 30 months after last such vote.
- This plan envisions three annual conferences – one per connectional conference – overlaying all US geography. Borders would be re-mapped for full coverage.
- Annual Conferences would have the option of agreeing or disagreeing with the alignment of their former Jurisdictional Conference with a specific new Connectional Conference. It is anticipated that most annual conferences would opt to join the Unifying Conference.
- No change to structure; however, it is anticipated that some 10 or more Annual Conferences would either opt out or be forced out of the UMC.
- It is further anticipated that each Annual Conference would need to cope with some number of Local Churches opting out the AC’s alignment – some churches would opt to go back to the UMC and others would opt to leave altogether to join a new Self-Governing Methodist Church.
### Impact on Local Churches (LC)
- Local church is not required to vote.
- If a local church wanted to host gay weddings, its church conference would need to take action before the first ceremony. Local leaders have maximum flexibility to discern need and timing for such action.
- Local Church Staff Parish Relations Committee may communicate their congregation’s preferences for appointments.
  - Specific mechanism to replace irreconcilable pastor mismatch.

### Impact on General Agencies
- No change to the UMC’s current of connectional ministry via general boards and agencies.
- This plan assumes the various Connectional Conferences have different levels of support – and in some cases no support – for specific general agencies. When these conferences are formed, they will discern which agencies to support. This will mean different levels of general church apportionments for each connectional conference.
- This plan is written so that certain agencies will be supported equally by all the US-based connectional conferences: Wespath, GCFA, Archives and History, UMCOR and some to-be-determined parts of General Board of Global Missions.
- This plan assumes that boards may not be supported by all Connectional Conferences’ apportionment giving: General Board of Church & Society, Discipleship Ministries, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Ministerial Education Fund, Black College Fund, and Africa University Fund.
- This plan eliminates GCORR and GCSRW. However, these would be continued through 2025 to assist the three Connectional Conferences in creating some other approach to fulfilling the UMC’s historic commitment to racial and gender equity.

### Impact on Bishops
- No change forced on bishops. Their conscience rights are protected.
- It could be awkward for a bishop assigned to an Annual Conference that doesn’t share the opinion of the assigned annual conference, so this will be a factor in episcopal assignments.
- An extra bishop will be provided for the ordination service if needed.

### Impact on Clergy
- No change in practices forced on clergy.
- Their conscience rights are protected.
- Clergy may transfer to different annual conference.
  - Specific mechanism to leave irreconcilable church mismatch.

### Decisioning Process
- GC2019 majority vote to remove restrictions
- AC2019 two-thirds vote to modify UMC conferencing structure
- JC2020 majority vote to align with one of three new conferences
- AC2020 majority vote to align with same or different conference
- LC2020 majority vote to align with same or different conference
- CC2022 votes on new adaptable Books of Discipline

### Beginning of new era
- Final decision Feb 2019
- Effective date for new rules Jan 2021 (after cooling off period).
- Final decision for change by March 2020
- Realignments decisions 2021-2022
- Organizing new Connectional Conferences Fall 2022
- New cycle for quadrennial General Conferences 2025
- Final decision Feb 2019
- Effective date Feb 2019
- and GCFA enforcement begins Jan 2021
- Enforcement towards uniformity 2021-2023
- First General Conference with new concordat reps 2024

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Petitions & Judicial Council deletes summarized by COWF member [Dave.Nuckols@gmail.com](mailto:Dave.Nuckols@gmail.com)  
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