



11 December 2018

PASTORAL STATEMENT ON THE 2019 SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE

"...Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without a doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. . . -John Wesley

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Warm Advent greetings in the precious name of our Savior Jesus Christ!

As leaders of our National Association of Filipino American United Methodists, we come to you with a word of grace as we prepare for the upcoming Special General Conference on February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri. A "major change" in our connection will be proposed at the Special Session, and while we do not know what will be decided in St. Louis, we strongly believe that the Lord will guide us and our church in the decision that will be made. God has guided us as a church throughout our history, and we all humbly pray that the Holy Spirit will again guide us in this complex issue on human sexuality.

There are three different plans which the Commission on a Way Forward has submitted for consideration. They are, namely, the One Church Plan, the Connectional Conference Plan, and the Traditionalist Plan.

The **One Church Plan** allows for contextualization of language about human sexuality in support of the mission; and allows for central conferences, especially those in Africa, to retain their disciplinary authority to adapt the Book of Discipline and continue to include traditional language and values while fulfilling the vision of a global and multicultural church. The Plan removes the restrictive language of the Book of Discipline and adds assurances to pastors and Conferences who due to their theological convictions cannot perform same-sex weddings or ordain self-avowed practicing homosexuals.¹

¹ <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/united-methodist-bishops-recommend-a-way-forward>

The **Connectional Conference Plan** This plan would create three connectional conferences based on theology or perspective, each having clearly defined values (accountability, contextualization and justice), replacing the five U.S. jurisdictions by three connectional conferences. Current central conferences have the choice of becoming their own connectional conference (up to five additional connectional conferences) or joining one of the three values-based connectional conferences.

The **Traditionalist Plan** affirms the current language about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline and seeks to strengthen enforcement for violations of church law.

As a relative late-comer, there also is the **Simple Plan**. It is not a part of the report of the Commission on a Way Forward, but the work of a progressive group within the church. It proposes to remove all language against LGBTQIA groups from the Book of Discipline.

We have been following closely the conversations across our global connectional church led by the Council of Bishops and the Commission on a Way Forward, and we recognize that in spite of their faithful leadership in this discernment process, there remain principled differences on the issue at hand.

Nevertheless, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors created a Task Force to prayerfully discern, study and draft a pastoral statement on this important issue. Recognizing our different positions within these groups, we believe, that the **One Church Plan** stands out as one that carries forward into the future those Wesleyan values we hold so dear – love for God and love for neighbors, compassion and justice for the marginalized, and further preserve the spirit of unity and connectionalism within our United Methodist Church. We strongly believe that The United Methodist Church is truly about transforming people’s lives for Christ, a commitment to God’s mission and the revelation of God’s unconditional love.

Therefore, we, the Board of Directors, endorse the **One Church Plan**, following the lead of the Council of Bishops. And so, we ask that we all pray for our General Conference when it meets in Special Session on February 23-26, 2019.

In the Service of our Lord Jesus Christ,

NAFAUM Task Force on Special General Conference

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