

Decisions of the 2019 General Conference

Timeline for Implementation in Central Conferences

- In general, when legislation before a GC is approved, it goes into effect on January 1 of the following year.
- Central Conferences (outside the U.S.) have additional time because they can adapt and change the Book of Discipline to fit their context. These groups will not be meeting until after the 2020 General Conference. This legislation gives them until May of 2021 to implement any of the legislation we approved at this special session.

WESPATH Pension Liabilities and CRSP amendment.

- These two pieces of legislation give guidance for if a local church leaves the UMC or if a clergy person terminates their conference relationship regarding pensions. The local church that leaves has to pay their share of unfunded pension liabilities.
- An amendment was made that also notes that nothing in this legislation prevents the Annual Conference from collecting other obligations.
- Clergy that terminate their relationship will have their pension benefits converted to the actuarial equivalent balance, which can continue to be invested in their personal defined contribution account through Wespath.

Traditional Plan

- Seven of the Seventeen petitions included in the Traditional Plan are constitutional, one was amended, and one is partially unconstitutional.
- The entire plan has been referred to the Judicial Council, which will meet in April to declare what, if anything, from the plan will take effect. There are arguments to be made that if any part is unconstitutional, it is unconstitutional as a whole.
- The seven fully constitutional pieces are as follows:
 - o #1 Update of the footnote that describes what a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” is according to recent Judicial Council decisions. This does not essentially change our Book of Discipline, rather notes current rulings.
 - o #5 Expands episcopal responsibilities by adding that Bishops are prohibited from consecrating, commissioning, or ordaining people who are self-avowed homosexuals. (NOTE: Everywhere else in our Book of Discipline we use the word “practicing.” This word was inadvertently left off of this piece of legislation, but it was never amended by the body. This means that if someone is openly gay or lesbian, even if they are celibate, they cannot be consecrated/commissioned/ordained.)
 - o #11 Mandatory Minimum Penalties for clergy who have been convicted of conducting same-sex weddings or celebrations of homosexual unions: First offense – one year suspension without pay.

Second offense – termination of conference membership and revocation of credentials. (Note: this is the ONLY mandatory penalty we have in the Book of Discipline)

- #12 The District Committee on Ordained Ministry and Board of Ordained Ministry cannot approve/recommend for candidacy, licensing, commissioning or ordination, someone who does not meet the qualifications for ordained ministry (which include being a self-avowed practicing homosexual). The bishop shall rule unqualified candidates out of order.
 - #13 When a complaint/charge is brought to the Bishop regarding a violation, the Bishop has discretion about how to proceed. Now, the Bishop cannot dismiss the complaint, unless it has no basis in law or fact.
 - #15 One of the results of a complaint/charge is a Just Resolution. This changes the process so that the complainant has to be part of the process and has to agree with the resolution.
 - #16 One of the results of a complaint/charge is a church trial. Previously, the Church could not appeal those decisions. This legislation allows the Church to appeal to the committee on appeals or to the Judicial Council.
- Amended or Partially unconstitutional:
- #6 Before anyone can be nominated to the Board of Ordained Ministry, they must certify that they will uphold the entirety of the Book of Discipline, including the sections related to the ministry and marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. ***(Note: an amendment was made in order to make this petition constitutional, but the Judicial Council will determine in April if the amendment is itself constitutional)***
 - #14 One of the results of a complaint/charge is a Just Resolution. Now, Just Resolutions have to name all identified harms and how they will be addressed. ***The unconstitutional part is that it has to also include a commitment not to repeat the violation. This was not amended.***

Disaffiliation – Taylor/Minority Report Version

- If a local church wants to disaffiliate over matters of human sexuality this is the process that can be used from Jan 1, 2020 – Dec 31, 2023. It requires a 2/3 majority vote of professing members present at the charge conference. Terms will be negotiated with conference Board of Trustees w/ advice of cabinet, and other conference officers. Standard terms will include any unpaid apportionments from the previous 12 months plus an additional 12 months of apportionments, its share of unfunded pension liabilities, and payment or assumption of all debts/loans/liabilities prior to departure. ***(Note: The Judicial Council said that this petition was unconstitutional because it did NOT also include a requirement that 2/3 of the annual conference vote.)***