

CENTRAL  
TEXAS  
CONFERENCE  
DISTRICT

EPISCOPAL  
TEACHINGS ON  
*A WAY FORWARD*  
AND THE CALLED  
2019 GENERAL  
CONFERENCE

SHARINGS

WITH *Bishop Mike Lowry*

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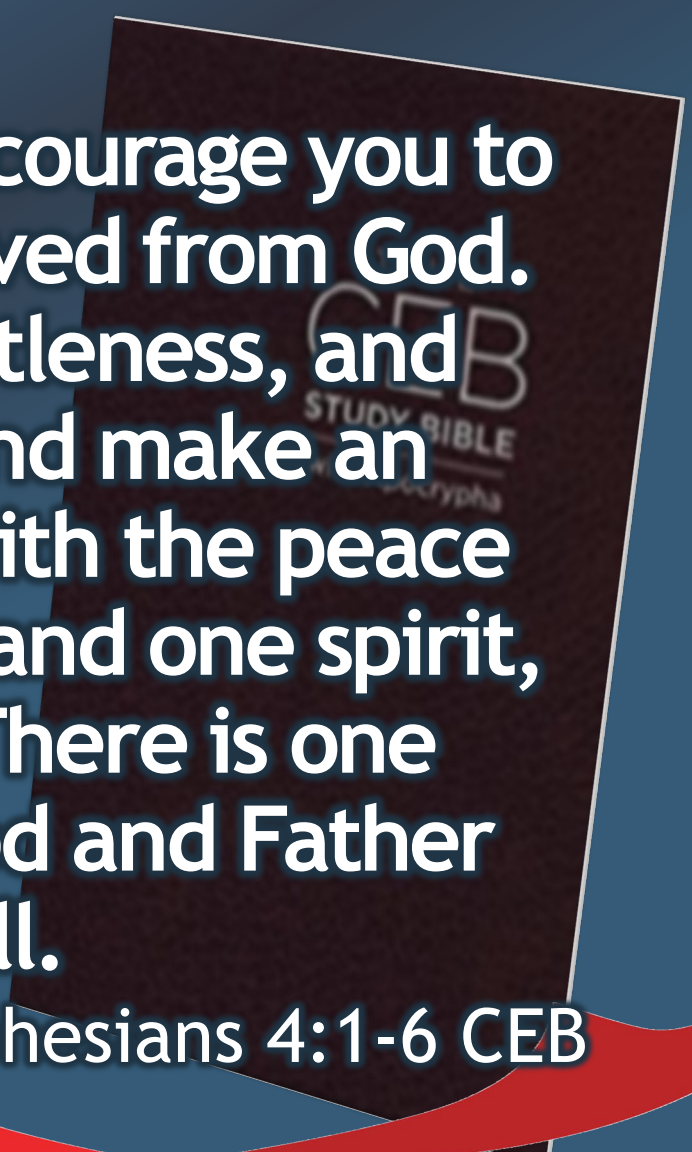
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# Centering Ourselves in The Word

Therefore, as a prisoner for the Lord, I encourage you to live as people worthy of the call you received from God. <sup>2</sup> Conduct yourselves with all humility, gentleness, and patience. Accept each other with love, <sup>3</sup> and make an effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit with the peace that ties you together. <sup>4</sup> You are one body and one spirit, just as God also called you in one hope. <sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> and one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6 CEB



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# Today's Purpose & Aim

- A time of teaching and sharing on the three plans put forth by the Commission on A Way Forward as presented to the 2019 Called General Conference (Feb. 23-26, St. Louis)
  - During the 2016 General Conference the Bishops of the UMC pledged to provide spiritual leadership throughout the Way Forward Process
  - The Council of Bishops asked each active Bishop to actively and personally engage in times of learning and sharing like this one.
  - This is not a time for debate
- Provide some clarity and insight into the upcoming General Conference process

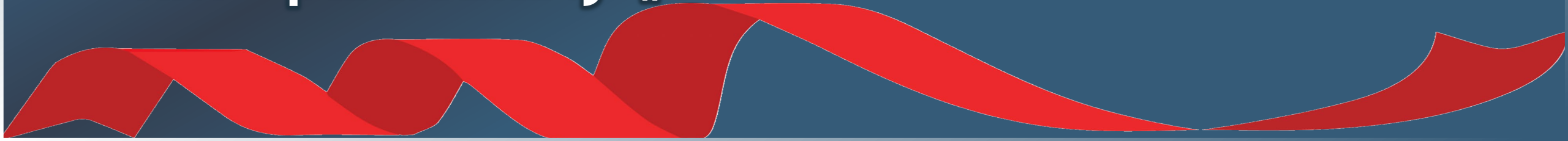
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# How Did We Get Here?

- This is an issue that the UMC has been debating since 1972. One that has dominated much of the time and energy of the last several GCs.
  - A number of Annual Conferences in the U.S. have publicly declared their decision to ignore certain parts of the UMC Discipline - aka church law - particularly ¶161.G
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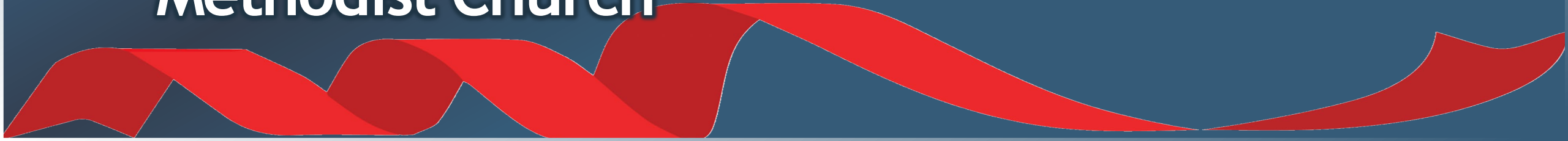
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# How Did We Get Here?

## Points Not Under Dispute

- This is NOT about a local church's desire or commitment to love, include, worship with, minister to, serve and be in community with LGBTQ+ persons.
  - ALL are welcome, wanted and loved in the Body of Christ, and especially in The United Methodist Church
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# How Did We Get Here?

## Points of Contention

- **Disagreement about ¶161.G of the Book of Discipline**
  - *The Human Sexuality* section of the Social Principles

- **How the UMC defines marriage**

- A union of a man and a woman vs. A union of two adults
- The current definition as stated in the Discipline, ¶161.C

*“We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman...We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.”*

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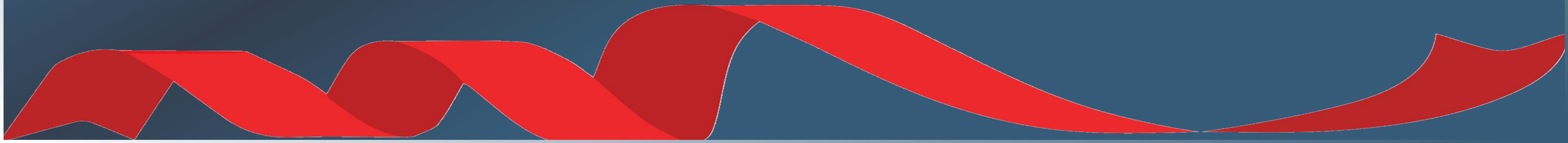
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# How Did We Get Here?

## Points of Contention (continued)

- Same-gender weddings in UMCs and/or officiated by UMC clergy
- Ordination of “self-avowed practicing” homosexual persons
  - The issue of dispute is the practice, not the person(s) or their orientation.



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# How Did We Get Here?

- The 2016 General Conference, after much discussion, debate and deadlock over the issue of human sexuality, made a formal request of the bishops of the UMC to find a way to lead us forward on this issue.
- The bishops formed the Commission on A Way Forward - a group of 32 persons from around the globe with varied opinions and positions on the Human Sexuality / LGBTQ+ question - to come together to research, discuss and recommend a way or ways forward for the UMC to consider.



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# Commission on A Way Forward

## Mission

Exploring the potential future(s) of the  
United Methodist Church in light of  
General Conference and subsequent  
Annual, Jurisdictional and  
Central Conference actions

For more details, visit [umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us](https://umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us)

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# Commission on A Way Forward

## Vision

**Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible.**

For more details, visit [umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us](https://umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us)

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# Commission on A Way Forward

## Scope

Be open to new ways of embodying unity that moves us beyond where we are in the present impasse and cycle of action and reaction around ministry and human sexuality...

Give consideration to greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present connectionality.

For more details, visit [umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us](https://umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us)

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# Tension Between Unity & Contextualization

- The Commission's vision and scope placed a high value on "unity" while seeking to "allow for as much contextual differentiation as possible."
- Paragraph 101 of The Book of Discipline says "We are a worldwide denomination united by doctrine, discipline and mission through our connectional covenant."
- The COWF met many times during a two-year period and offered three plans, each of which proposes a different way forward.

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# The Three Way Forward Plans

as put forth by the Commission on A Way Forward

## One Church Plan

allows for different forms of expression

## Traditional Plan

emphasizes enhanced accountability to our  
connectional covenant

## Connectional Conference Plan

offers commitment to Central Conferences with  
differences in doctrine around Human Sexuality & LGBTQ+



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# One Church Plan

- Allows conferences, local churches and clergy to make different decisions regarding ministry with or by LGBTQ persons
- Congregations control how facilities are used
- Pastors retain the right to decide for whom they will or will not officiate a wedding
- Clergy Session still determines who will or will not get ordained
- Bishops will have the right to decide who they will or will not ordain
- Definition of “marriage” changes from “a man and a woman” to “two adults”

The BOOK of  
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# Traditional Plan

- Retains the current UMC Book of Discipline Language regarding human sexuality and the existing definition of marriage
- Encourages enhanced levels of accountability and enforcement
- Gracious Exit

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# Connectional Conference Plan

- Create three (3) Connectional Conferences, each with clearly defined values and/or theology
- Eliminates the five (5) U.S. Jurisdictions
- Each Conference determines its affiliation with one of the three Connectional Conferences
- Local Churches have the option to join a Connectional Conference different from the one chosen by the Annual Conference
- Clergy may choose to join another Connectional Conference
- Requires multiple amendments to the existing UMC Constitution

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# Is there an “official” COB Plan?

- In a split 37-24 decision (61% to 39%), the Council of Bishops voted to officially recommend one of the three plans presented by the Commission on a Way Forward - the One Church Plan
- The Judicial Council has ruled that all three plans presented by the COWF to the COB will be open for consideration and discussion at GC19



# So, What's Next?

- **The Judicial Council released its decision\* on the constitutionality of each plan on Oct. 23**

[ctcumc.org/GC19-WayForward\\_JudicialCouncilRuling](http://ctcumc.org/GC19-WayForward_JudicialCouncilRuling)

- Questions were raised about all three plans
- One Church Plan ruled mostly in line with UMC Constitution
- Nine of 17 petitions in Traditional Plan were ruled to have issues that must be addressed to pass constitution test
- Council ruled it had no jurisdiction over Connectional Conference Plan due to included Constitutional changes required for implementation

\*Decision was unanimous. Replay at [umc.org/who-we-are/judicial-council-october-2018-webcast](http://umc.org/who-we-are/judicial-council-october-2018-webcast)

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# So, What's Next?

- **Bound & Printed copies of *The Advanced Daily Christian Advocate* - with the petitions to be considered - have been sent to delegates**
  - **Printed copies sent by Nov. 26 as Book of Discipline requires the ADCA be available to delegates a minimum of 90 days prior to the opening of General Conference**
  - **Digital copies of ADCA were available as of Nov. 7 in English, French, Portuguese & Kiswahili**

# So, What's Next?

- **General Conference (GC19) in St. Louis-Feb. 23-26**
  - This is a **GLOBAL** gathering
  - GC19 will only entertain discussions based on the 3 plans put forth by the COWF and amendments that are consistent with the call of the conference\*.
  - The Judicial Council ruled that General Conference must determine which petitions are in harmony with the call and thus will be considered.

\*GC19 can consider matters that are not in harmony with the call by a two-thirds vote.

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# When Do I Get to Vote?

- The issues are now in the hands of the General Conference and the duly elected Annual / Central Conference delegations.
- Bishops do not vote. Local Churches do not vote at this time.
- General Conference is the lone voice of The UMC
- The CTC has 8 voting delegates (4 clergy/4 laity)
- The CTC Delegation was elected at AC14 to represent the conference at GC16.
- AC17 voted to keep the 2016 delegates in place for GC19.
- A new delegation will be elected at AC19 for GC20.

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# Central Texas Conference General Conference Delegation

in order as elected by the 2014 CTC Annual Conference June 8-11, 2014

## Clergy



**Tim Bruster**  
First Fort Worth



**John McKellar**  
White's Chapel



**Clifton Howard**  
CTCSC



**Brenda Wier**  
Meadowbrook (Ret)

## Laity



**Tom Harkrider**  
Arborlawn



**Kim Simpson**  
St. Barnabas



**Steve McIver**  
First Ferris



**Darlene Alfred**  
St. James - Temple

[www.ctcumc.org/CTCDelegation-2019](http://www.ctcumc.org/CTCDelegation-2019)

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# Central Texas Conference General Conference Delegation Alternates

in order as elected by the 2014 CTC Annual Conference June 8 -11, 2014

## Clergy



Tom Robbins  
First Temple



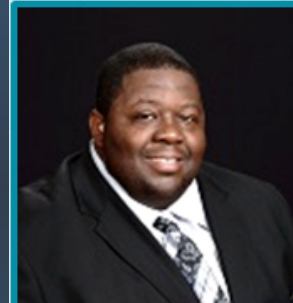
Chris Hayes  
First Keller



Jim Conner  
First Mansfield



Debra Crumpton  
St. Andrew's-Arlington



Louis Carr  
Harvest

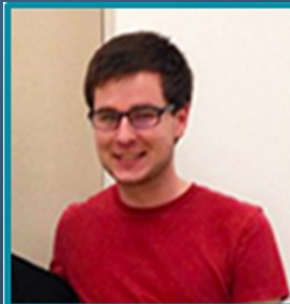


Mary Spradlin  
Arlington Heights



Jason Valendy  
First Saginaw

## Laity



Ethan Gregory  
Arborlawn



Darcy McCreedy  
First Fort Worth



Kylie Campbell  
First Burleson



Kevin Gregory  
First Mineral Wells



Mary Percifield  
Alvarado



Marianne Brown-Trigg  
Cleburne



Kathy Ezell  
First Keller

Contact the CTC Delegation at [delegation2016@ctcumc.org](mailto:delegation2016@ctcumc.org)

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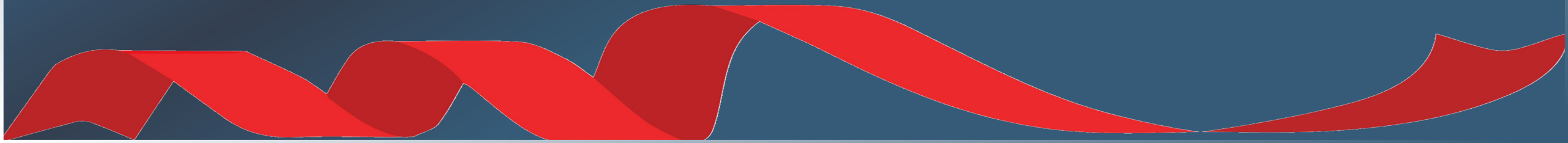
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# How to share this info in your local church?

## A Video from Dr. Gil Rendle

[ctcumc.org/DistrictSharings-AWayForward](http://ctcumc.org/DistrictSharings-AWayForward)





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THE  
CEB  
STUDY BIBLE  
with Apocrypha

Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves.  
<sup>4</sup> Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others.  
<sup>5</sup> Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:3-5 CEB

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# What's the impact on the Local Church if GC19 adopts the One Church Plan?

- Local Churches control how facilities are used
- Conflict over this issue is moved from General Conference to Annual Conference boards of ordained ministry, clergy sessions and local church charge conferences



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# What's the impact on the Local Church if GC19 adopts the Traditional Plan?

- The Traditional Plan maintains the current position of the UMC and the language of the Book of Discipline
- If a local church or clergy person chooses to be in defiance of the Book of Discipline, enhanced disciplinary responses may be required, which could involve funding & disciplinary charges
- Possibility of a Gracious Exit



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# What's the impact on the Local Church if GC19 adopts the Connectional Conference Plan?

- The Connectional Conference Plan creates (as many as) three values-based connectional conferences that have distinctive definitions of accountability, contextualization and justice.



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# What's the impact on the Local Church if GC19 adopts the Connectional Conference Plan? (continued)

- Annual Conferences follow their jurisdictions into a Connectional Conference (CC), but may choose a different CC by taking action until July 31, 2021.
- Local churches & clergy will follow their annual conference into a CC, with the option of choosing a different CC through July 1, 2022.
  - Vote to choose a different Connectional Conference would require charge conference actions.



# What happens after GC19?

- There are so many unknowns, so many possibilities to consider, that it would be pure speculation and conjecture for anyone to definitively say “Here’s what’s going to happen.”
- However...



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# The Mission is Still the Mission

- Before, During and After GC19, our focus on our Wildly Important Goal (WIG) to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World will remain constant.
- The Big Three are still paramount
  - Christ at the Center
  - Focus on the Local Church
  - Development of the next generation of Lay & Clergy Leadership



**Breathe Deep, Jesus is Still Lord**

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

Holy Scripture is Canon

Trading Wesleyan  
Commitment to Sanctification  
for Cultural Acceptance

General  
Conference  
2019

Practice  
Not  
Orientation

Human Falleness

Biblical Authority

Christian Marriage  
& Civil Marriage

LGBTQ+ Church Leadership?

Our Will vs  
God's Will

Fallen & Family

One Church Plan

General vs Representative Ministry

Justification vs Sanctification

Radical Individualism and  
Personal Satisfaction ahead  
of Divine Purpose

Traditional Plan

Societal  
Preoccupation  
with Sex

Connectional  
Conference Plan

**Breathe Deep! Jesus IS Lord!**





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# Bishop Lowry's Position

Let's get doctrinally clear about some things

- LGBTQ+ people aren't automatically going to hell anymore than heterosexual people are automatically going to heaven.
- This is not about Justification, we are all saved by grace! (Ephesians 2:8-10)
- This is about sanctification, holiness of Heart and Life. (Philippians 3:14)
- We focus unduly on sexual sins and need a fuller doctrine of human fallenness. (Galatians 5:16-21)

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## Fallen and Family

- All of us are flawed.
- Are practicing LGBTQ+ persons allowed to be members in the church and may they serve in leadership roles?
  - *"We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth... all stand in need of the ministry of the church. (§161G)*
  - Have, would and hopefully will...
- Marriage is a civil right that should be available to all.
- Christian marriage has always been understood as different from civil marriage.

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## Fallen and Family (continued)

*“The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.” (¶161 G)*

- **Creative intent** (Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25)
- **Practice not orientation**
- **Before we go further we must address the greater issue of heterosexual fidelity, serial marriages and the cultural dynamic of radical individualism and personal satisfaction over and above divine purpose.**
- **What must we do .... “repent (turn!) and believe the gospel, change your heart and lives!” (Acts 2:38)**

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## The Rule of Faith

*“United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine.” (¶ 105)*

- We are not free to set aside Scripture when we don't like it.
- We may wrestle with the context and meaning (using reason, experience and tradition) but must do so with an understanding that Scripture is the ultimate rule of faith. (Canon - i.e. rule of faith)
- A crucial issue at stake in this disagreement is an understanding of biblical authority.

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## An Examination of Romans 1:18-32

- Tied to a doctrine of creation
- Issue of disobedience - preferring our will to God's.
- This is the churches foundational position since inception

The context of the letter is to the Church of Rome addressing the wider Roman culture and not just a specific portion of it (i.e. temple prostitutes)

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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## An Examination of Romans 1:18-32 (continued)

- The decrees of God “...are built into the fabric of creation itself. Evil behavior is inherently destructive. It points, like a signpost, towards death. This is obvious in the case of murder and other violence; it should be almost as obvious in the case of gossip and slander, where someone's reputation and life are pulled to pieces.”

(N. T. Wright, *Paul: Romans, Part 1*, p.p. 26-27)



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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## An Examination of Romans 1:18-32 (continued)

- We have steadily sacrificed a Wesleyan commitment to sanctification for purposes of cultural acceptance and the result has been to steadily be marginalized by the culture itself.

(James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World.*)



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# Bishop Lowry's Position

## Ordination

- General vs. Representative ministry
- The Christian movement for almost 2000 years & The United Methodist Church since its inception have always added categories of acceptability and/or requirement.
  - Behavior with regards to extramarital affairs, the handling of money, racism, honesty, education, etc.
  - To what degree is Biblical authority and Representative Ministry separate from General Ministry (i.e. the Ministry of all baptized believers)?
- “Redemptive-movement hermeneutic”



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# Bishop Lowry's Position A Witness...

“Yet surely we can hold an orthodox position and still be good, kind and embracing people. That certainly is the challenge of those, like me, whose conscience hold them to a more traditional understanding.”

Debra Hirsch, *Redeeming Sex: Naked Conversations About Sexuality and Spirituality*, p. 139

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# PRAYING OUR WAY FORWARD



We are One in Christ

UMCprays.org • A UMC Prayer Community

Look for CTC-specific initiatives and details at  
[ctcumc.org/prayforward2019](http://ctcumc.org/prayforward2019)

# Praying Our Way Forward

- Beginning immediately, pause and pray daily for our church's mission and way forward for 4 minutes from 2:23 - 2:26\* (a.m. or p.m.)  
**OR at another time.**

*\*The Special Session of General Conference will be held Feb. 23 - 26, 2019.*

- Pray intentionally for our delegation and all the global delegates to GC19.
- Pray for the bishops of the UMC, the General Secretaries, Commission on a Way Forward members, the Commission of the General Conference and the staff of the General Conference.



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# Trust Through Tumultuous Times

**We need to be a people who  
trust the Lord in a time of tumult**

***14** In fact, if you don't speak up at this very important time, relief and rescue will appear for the Jews from another place, but you and your family will die. But who knows? Maybe it was for a moment like this that you came to be part of the royal family."* Esther 4:14 (CEB)



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# Stay Focused on the Mission

Making disciples of  
Jesus Christ  
for the Transformation  
of the world



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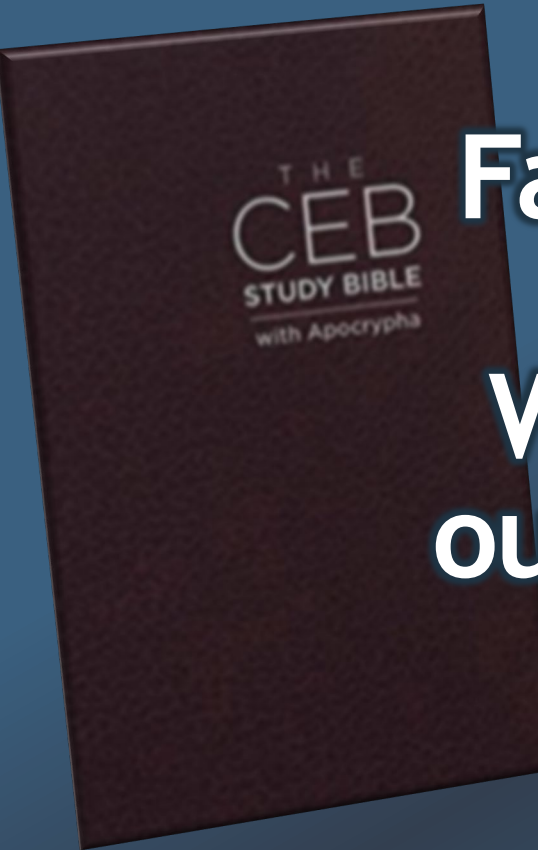
WITH *Bishop Mike Lowry*

EPISCOPAL  
TEACHINGS ON  
A WAY FORWARD  
AND THE CALLED  
2019 GENERAL  
CONFERENCE


# Closing Prayer

based on Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21 CEB



This is why we kneel before the Father. Every ethnic group in heaven or on earth is recognized by him. We ask that he will strengthen us in our inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. We ask that Christ will live in our hearts through faith.



DISTRICT

SHARINGS

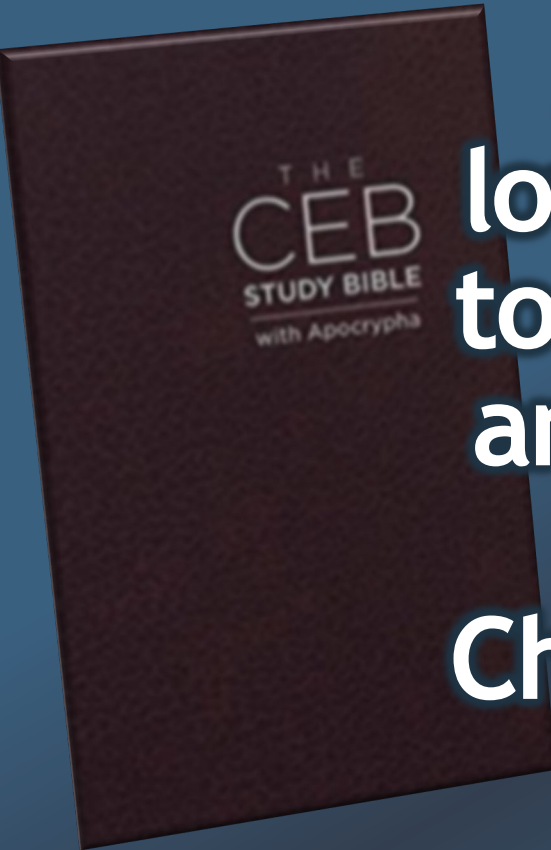
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# Closing Prayer

based on Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21 CEB



As a result of having strong roots in love, We ask that we'll have the power to grasp love's width and length, height and depth, together with all believers. We ask that we'll know the love of Christ that is beyond knowledge so that we will be filled entirely with the fullness of God.



DISTRICT

SHARINGS

WITH *Bishop Mike Lowry*

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# Closing Prayer

based on Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-21 CEB

Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us; glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus for all generations, forever and always.

Amen.

THE  
CEB  
STUDY BIBLE  
with Apocrypha



CENTRAL  
TEXAS  
CONFERENCE  
DISTRICT

EPISCOPAL  
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SHARINGS

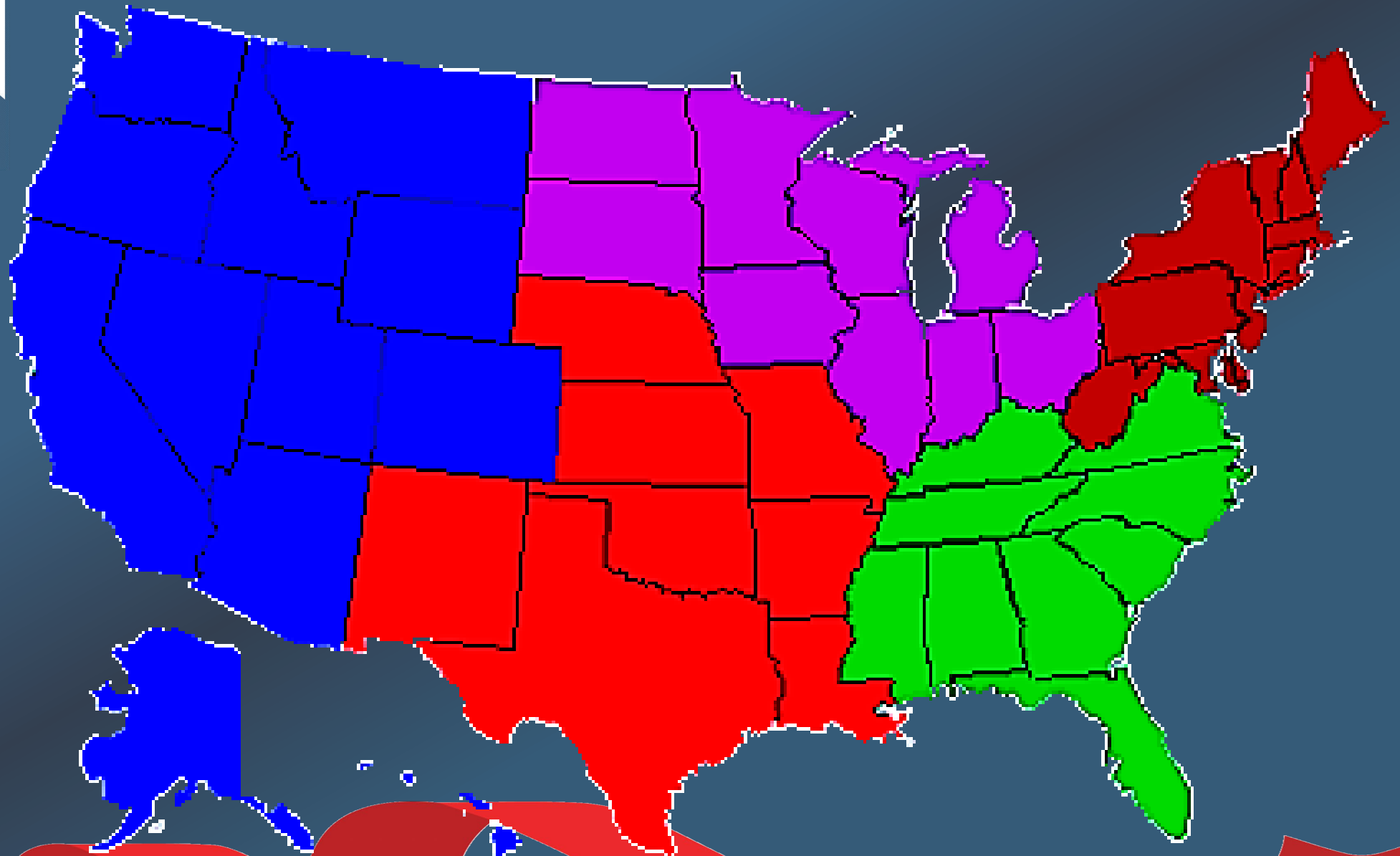
WITH *Bishop Mike Lowry*

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# DISTRICT SHARINGS

WITH *Bishop Mike Lowry*

EPISCOPAL  
TEACHINGS ON  
*A WAY FORWARD*  
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DISTRICT

SHARINGS

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