

## ***Special General Conference 2019 - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)***

- **What exactly happened in St. Louis at the special called session of General Conference (GC)?**
  - GC delegates came to St. Louis and experienced the same two major oppositional, intractable forces that have played out on the plenary floor of our General Conference for decades. Basically, the GC (our UMC version of “Congress”) passed legislation supporting what is known as the Traditionalist Plan, as well as one of the disaffiliation (allowing churches to leave) plans, but the Traditionalist Plan has been referred to the Judicial Council (the “Supreme Court” for The UMC) because much of the plan has been previously ruled unconstitutional and is fundamentally un-Methodist.
  - While awaiting that official ruling which would delete unconstitutional legislation or unconstitutional portions of legislation, we continue in ministry.
  
- **What does it mean for us?**
  - We know that the actions of General Conference were deeply hurtful for many of us, but none more than our LGBTQIA siblings. We continue to walk with each other and care for one another as we await the dust settling after General Conference.
  - Some facts that might ease the pain are that fully two thirds of US delegates and over 80% of our bishops supported the One Church Plan, which although an imperfect plan would have been a better result than the Traditionalist Plan for those that hold a centrist or progressive theological stance.
  - Ultimately, we assume that the enhanced punishments that are currently part of the Traditionalist Plan will be deemed unconstitutional, and thus those in the Western Jurisdiction that have provided an inclusive witness to God’s grace will continue to be the church in the same way without fear of reprisals.
  
- **Where do we go from here?**
  - In the short term we don’t expect immediate radical changes in our region; however, in the medium and long term we are *NOT* advocating for a status quo. We are grateful for the witness of the Western Jurisdiction in living out many of the values of the Simple Church Plan and the One Church Plan for some time now, and we are not changing.
  - It is not enough for us to keep ourselves safe and we are now really concerned about how we might extend that safety to others around the UM connection. We must work to stop the harm being done to our siblings elsewhere (clergy, laity, and congregations). Many in the rest of the United States are looking to the Western Jurisdiction to lead and we intend to do that. We are working on a specific plan and generative conversations are happening that may very well emerge as a “new thing” (Isaiah 42:9). Whether that is within The UMC or in a new expression of Methodism is yet to be determined, but we value the good work the larger structure and General Agencies of The UMC have been doing.
  
- **When will everything start to take effect? What decisions need to be made when?**
  - Most of the provisions adopted will take effect January 1, 2020, but some of the provisions were to take place at the close of this special session. We are still investigating the things that took place and should have more clarity soon, but please see the answer above for our encouragement to not take to heart any of the language or provisions of the Traditionalist Plan.
  
- **What does it mean for our Boards of Ordained Ministry as they just completed or prepare for interviews?**
  - We don’t believe it will affect the ordination process in our conference at all. We encourage all of our Conference Boards and Agencies to continue doing your good work to help God’s realm come into being.

- **What does it mean for potential ordinands who question whether they want to be ordained in this “Traditionalist Plan” church?**
  - We would encourage candidates and potential ordinands to continue their ordination process in The United Methodist Church. For many years ordinands have disagreed with some of the language in the Book of Discipline and yet they became a part of The UMC anyway. Even if you disagree, yet are willing to work on changing the denomination we would encourage you to join us in this work.
  
- **What is the actual process from this point on? For Judicial Council review? For implementation? Etc.**
  - We believe the Judicial Council will offer its ruling on the Traditionalist Plan in May.
  - As far as implementation of this plan, we don't expect it to be implemented in our conference in any way.
  - The provisions of the disaffiliation plan are still unclear, so we aren't able to answer clearly at this time. Stay tuned.
  
- **What about our church property? What if a local church wants to leave the denomination?**
  - The first step in any conversation like this would be for the pastor and church leadership to contact their district superintendent and engage in conversation.
  - There was one petition passed at General Conference that deals with disaffiliation. At this time our best understanding is that it would require a two-thirds vote at an all-church conference as well as a two-thirds vote at annual conference. There was a lack of clarity about when it would be implemented and which provisions need to be satisfied before this can happen. We are continuing to investigate and find details that will help churches and district superintendents that are engaging in this conversation.
  - This legislation may also end up being referred to the Judicial Council, so we will likely wait until their ruling before proceeding too far down that path.