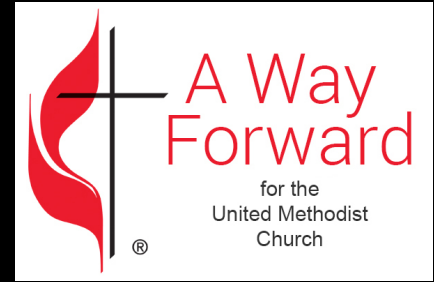


What our church needs to know about...



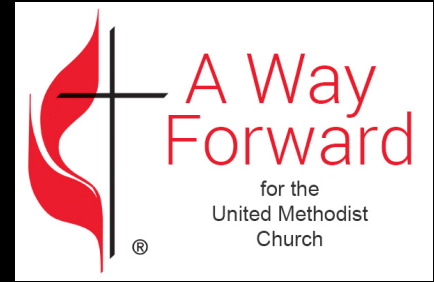
Why we're here today



- Share information to prepare for GC2019 (Commission on a Way Forward, Council of Bishops' work).
- Learn principles of dialogue to enable clergy to lead our congregations through difficult conversations.
- Practice “3 Simple Rules”: Seek to do all the good we can, to do no harm, and to stay in love with God.



Way Forward Covenant



“Finding a Way Forward” Handbook Page 13

- What covenantal practices are so essential to our work together that we must perform them with excellence in order to fulfill our mission?
- What behaviors are so harmful that they put the success of our mission at risk?



Our Covenant

For today and beyond



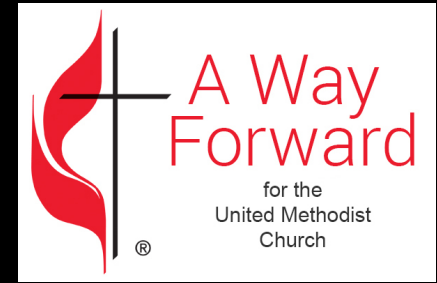
- We will carefully listen to one another.
- We will be careful not to judge one another.
- We are not here to change one another's positions.
- We will ask questions.



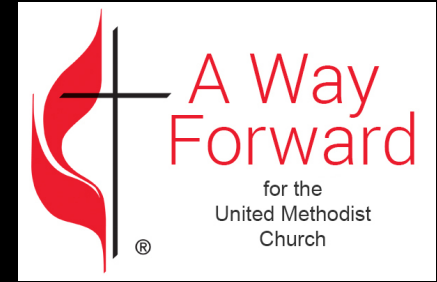
Our Covenant

For today and beyond

- We will speak our truth in love.
- We will assume trust, not suspicion.
- We will protect the confidentiality of the conversation.
- Let everyone participate, no one dominate and allow all voices to be heard.



'Way Forward' purpose



- Design a way for being church:
 - United Methodist witness
 - Contextual differentiation
 - Balance differences and unity
 - Ground our unity in the Triune God



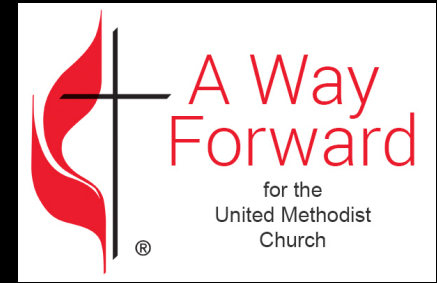
How We Got Here



- **2016 General Conference**: Asked Council of Bishops to lead in overcoming UMC impasse on homosexuality.
- **Council of Bishops**: Proposed creating commission to examine every paragraph in The Book of Discipline related to human sexuality and provided possibility for a called General Conference.



How We Got Here



- January 2017: Commission convenes for first of a dozen meetings.
- January 2018: Handbook released for use by the UMC.
- May 2018: Council of Bishops decides what Commission will present to 2019 General Conference.



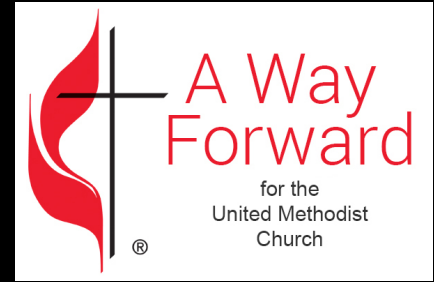
How We Got Here



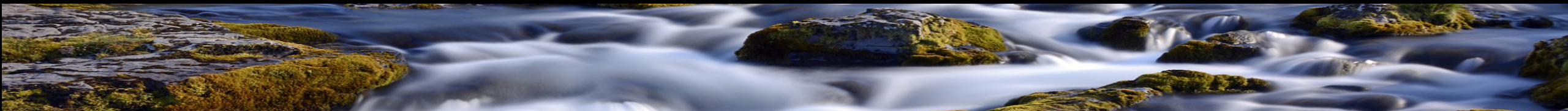
- **July 2018**: Council of Bishops asks Judicial Council to rule on constitutionality of three plans submitted for consideration – the One Church Plan, the Traditional Plan, and the Connectional Conference Plan – based on the work of the Commission on a Way Forward.



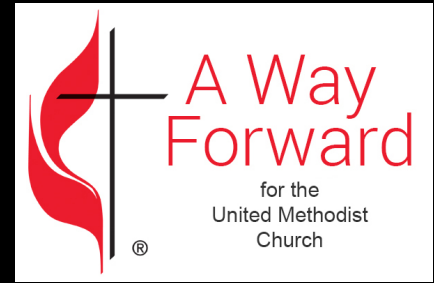
One Church Plan



- Would eliminate Book of Discipline language: “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”
- Would delete requirement that ordained clergy not be “self-avowed practicing homosexuals.”
- Conference boards of ordained ministry, clergy sessions could set standards for ordination/certification re: human sexuality.



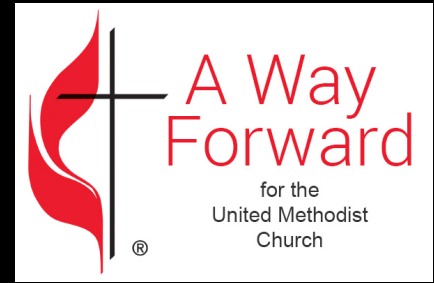
One Church Plan



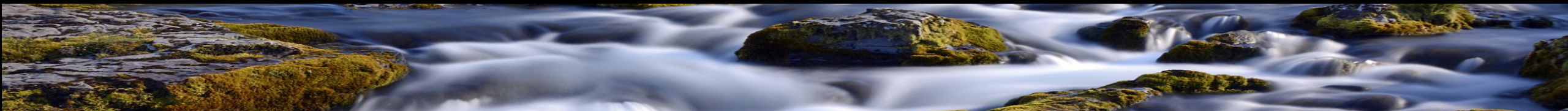
- No annual conferences, bishops, congregations or pastors would be “compelled to act contrary to their convictions.”
- Where civil laws allow, no United Methodist elder or deacon would be required to celebrate/ bless same-sex union.
- Clergy would not be prohibited from performing same-sex marriages, unions or blessings.



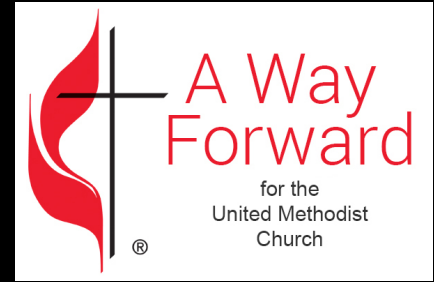
One Church Plan



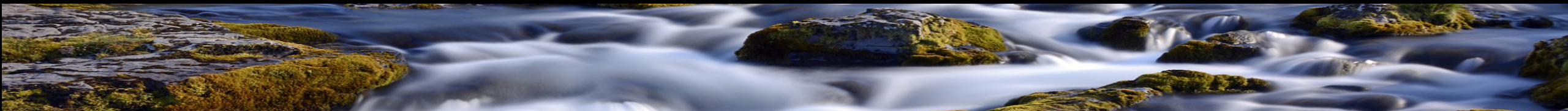
- Clergy who cannot in good conscience continue to serve in a conference or church based on the standards for ordination regarding homosexuals would be able to seek to transfer.
- Local church members would be able to decide in church-wide vote whether to allow same-sex marriage on church property.
- Changes would apply only to U.S. jurisdictional conferences, not central conferences, which would be allowed to retain language on homosexuality in the 2016 Book of Discipline.



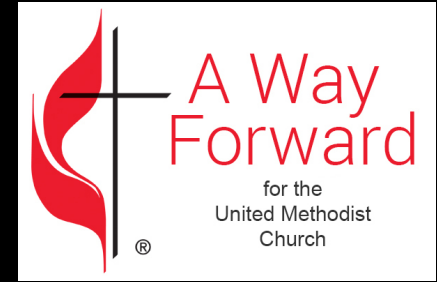
Traditional Plan



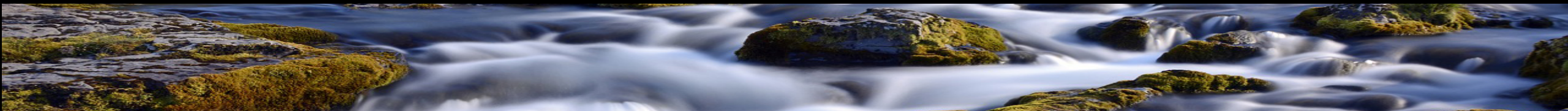
- Would affirm current Book of Discipline language banning “self-avowed, practicing” gay clergy, blessing of same-sex unions.
- Would broaden definition of “self-avowed, practicing homosexual” to include anyone living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or who publicly states that he or she is a homosexual.



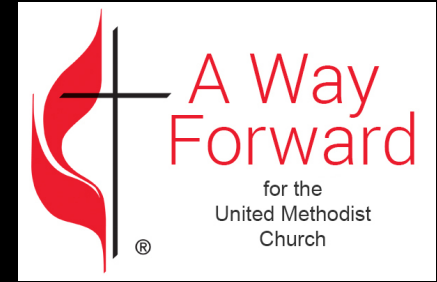
Traditional Plan



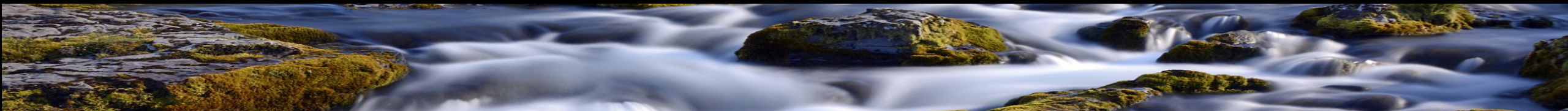
- Would set minimum penalties and swifter consequences.
- Would require bishops and annual conferences to certify that they would uphold, enforce and maintain disciplinary standards on LGBTQ marriage and ordination.
- Would provide way for churches, annual conferences that disagree with strict enforcement to set up “autonomous, affiliated, or concordant” churches or conferences.



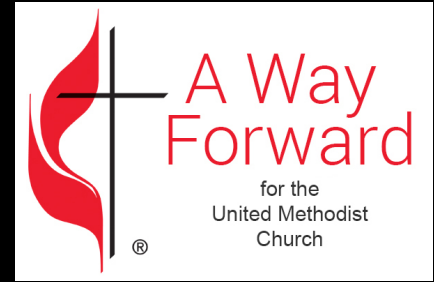
Traditional Plan



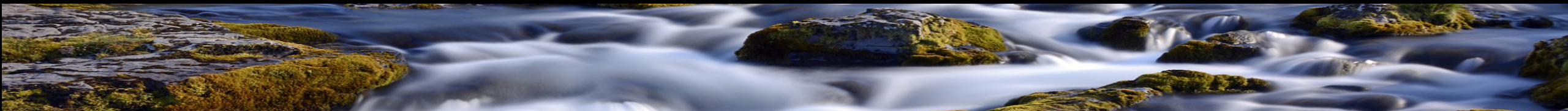
- Would prohibit bishops from consecrating, ordaining or commissioning a “self-avowed homosexual,” even if that person had been elected or approved by the relevant jurisdictional conference or clergy session.
- Would create Council of Bishops’ Council Relations Committee to review status of bishops who could not certify they would uphold the discipline.



Traditional Plan



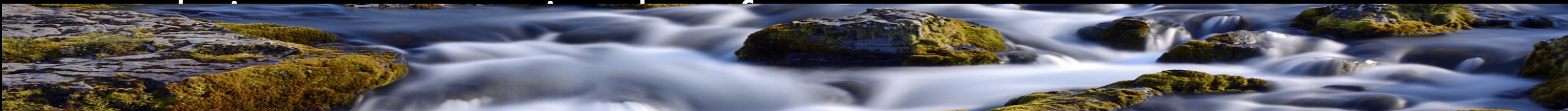
- Would allow local churches that disagree with a conference decision not to enforce the discipline to remain with UMC.
- Would allow local churches that disagree with a conference decision to enforce the bans to join the “autonomous, affiliated, or concordant” church.
- Would require conference boards of ordained ministry to conduct an examination to ascertain whether a clergy candidate was a practicing homosexual.



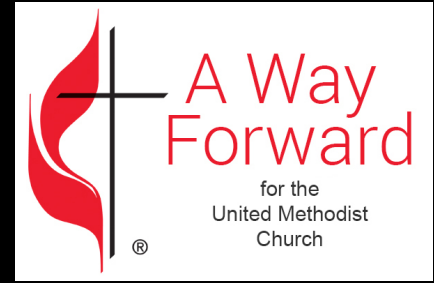
Connectional Conference Plan



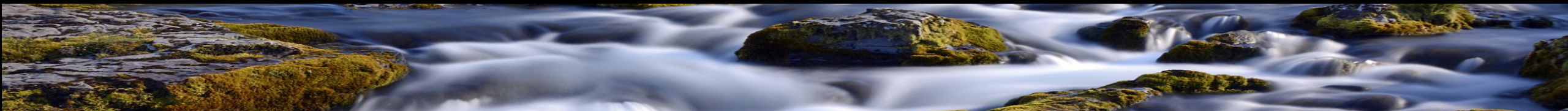
- Would replace the five geographic U.S. jurisdictions with three connectional conferences that are “values-based.”
- Current central conferences (outside the U.S.) could join one of the three U.S. values-based conferences or create their own connectional conference.
- Each connectional conference would create its own Book of Discipline that includes items “commonly agreed upon by United Methodists,” with the authority to adapt other items.



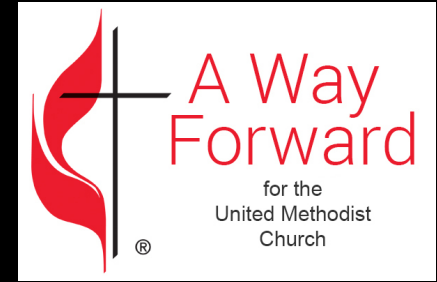
Connectional Conference Plan



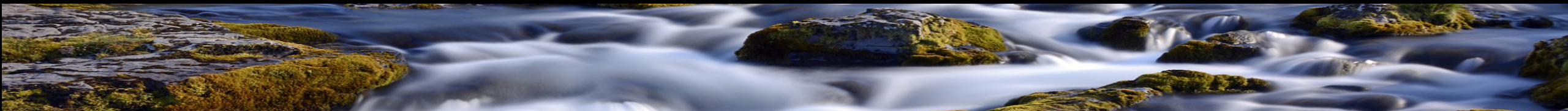
- Each connectional conference's College of Bishops would provide episcopal oversight and accountability, would handle elections, assignments and funding.
- UMC Council of Bishops would focus on ecumenical relations and shared learning.
- Shortened General Conference would retain authority over shared doctrine, continuing general agencies; would serve as a gathering place for worship, inspiration, sharing best practices.



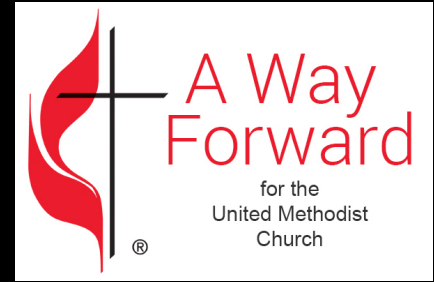
Connectional Conference Plan



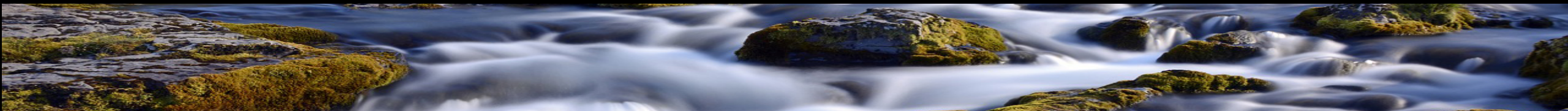
- Each connectional conference would have:
 - Its own administration and financing.
 - Its own policies re: LGBTQ weddings and ordination.
 - Its own standards for clergy.
- Cross-connectional conference cooperation and partnerships would remain; all connectional conferences would continue to support mission work and ministry outside the U.S.



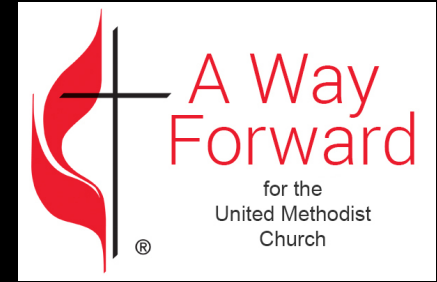
Connectional Conference Plan



- First level of connectional conference affiliation would be at the jurisdictional level.
- Annual conferences that disagree could choose a different connectional conference.
- No local church would be required to take a vote unless its choice is different than its annual conference.



What just happened



- October 26, 2018: Judicial Council:
 - Rules One Church Plan largely constitutional as written.
 - Outlines several constitutional issues that would have to be addressed within Traditional Plan.
 - Does not rule on Connectional Conference Plan.



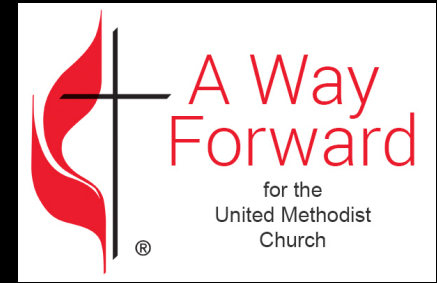
Where we go from here



- **February 23-26, 2019:** General Conference will act on Council of Bishops' report.
- We know something but not everything about the rules by which the General Conference will function.



Where we go from here



- The General Conference will determine whether petitions are “in harmony.”
- The General Conference can choose – by a two-thirds vote – to consider petitions that are not in harmony with the Council of Bishops’ report.



Where we go from here



- We are a global church, and General Conference delegates are not only from the United States.
- Only the General Conference can make changes in the Book of Discipline. We do not know what they will decide to do with the legislation before them.



Where we go from here



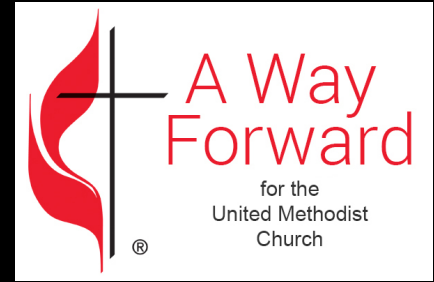
- We can anticipate that the denomination will not look the same as it does now – but we do not know how it will be different. The change could be large or small.



Preparing our local church

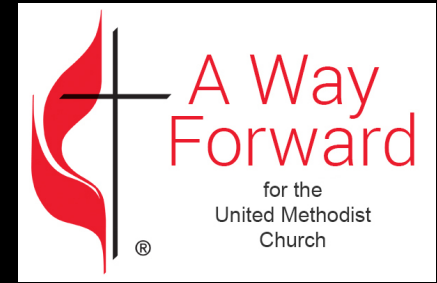
- Some useful language

Non-compatibilists: People whose convictions mean they are unwilling to remain affiliated with a church that allows others to violate their convictions.



Preparing our local church

- Some useful language



Traditional non-compatibilists: Unwilling for the denomination to alter its current stance on this issue and committed to strong lines of accountability for those who break the covenant.



Preparing our local church



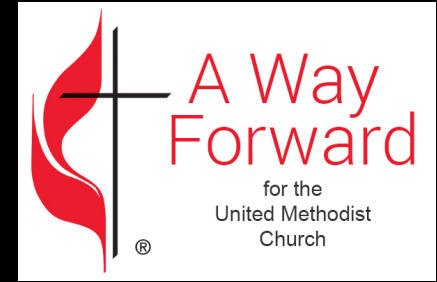
- Some useful language

Progressive non-compatibilists: Want every UMC congregation to hold same-sex marriages and allow openly gay clergy to serve, and they will work toward this goal until it happens.



Preparing our local church

- Some useful language

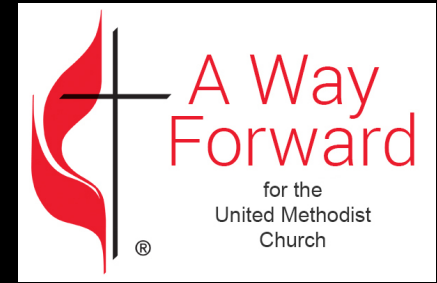


Compatibilists: People who have strong convictions, but do not insist on universal conformity to their biblical interpretation of sexuality as a condition for being in communion.



Preparing our local church

- Some useful language



Traditional or progressive compatibilists:

Value unity as an expression of Christian community. Willing to live within the same denomination as those who believe differently than they do. Respect for individual conscience.



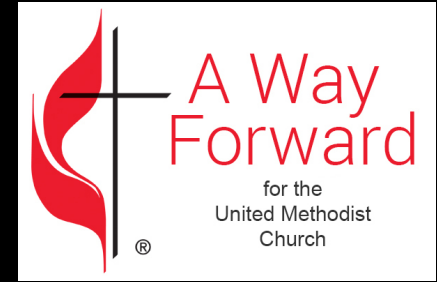
Preparing our local church



- What is your story?
 - What's the best thing that has happened to you in the United Methodist Church?
 - Is your identity more rooted in the traditionalist/progressive axis or the compatibilist/non-compatibilist axis?



Preparing our local church



- What is our congregation's story?
 - What are the key points in our history that shape who we are as a community of faith?
 - What are the most important things to our congregation about being United Methodist?



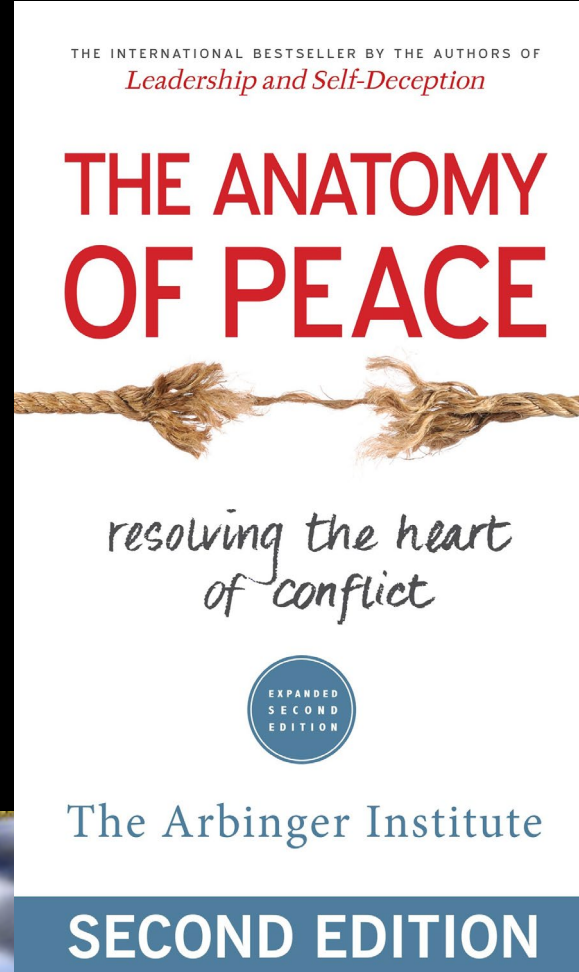
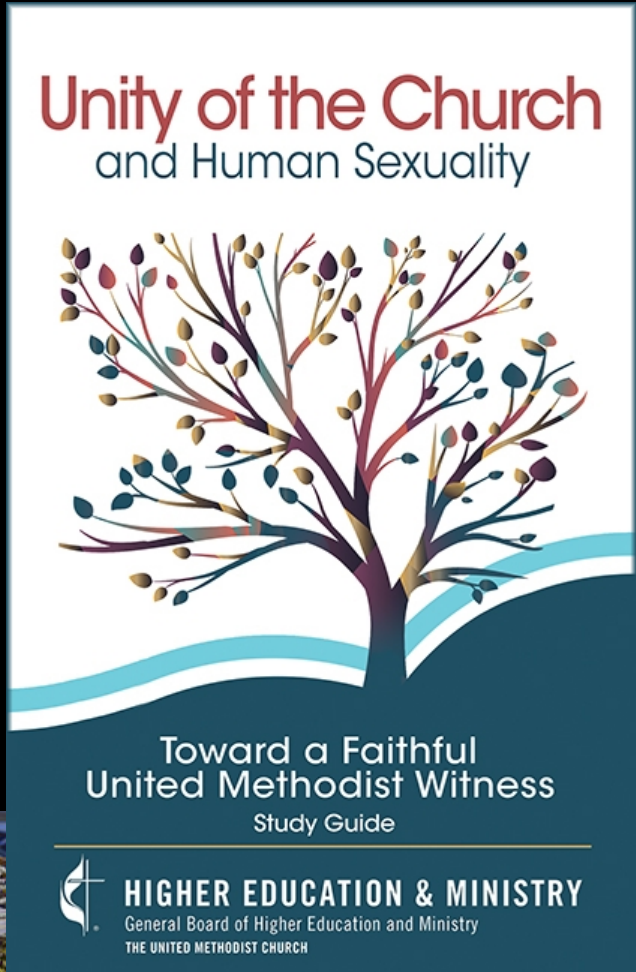
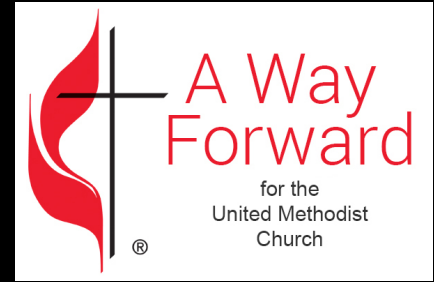
No matter what happens



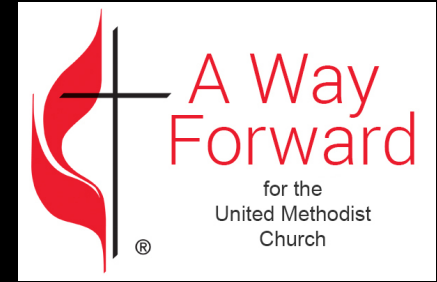
- Focus on the mission of the church.
- Continue to focus on the mission of the church.
- Be calm.
- Trust that God is present in the midst of the uncertainty.



Resources



Resources



Faultlines – Cokesbury resources to encourage and inform robust conversations about challenging questions being debated by faithful United Methodists.

tinyurl.com/UMCfaultlines



A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition (UMH 607)

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me
with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid
aside for thee, exalted for thee
or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have
nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed
God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

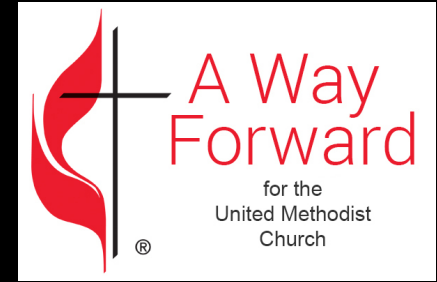
Thou art mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made
on earth, let it be ratified in
heaven. Amen.



Questions?



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South Carolina Conference

The United Methodist Church

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