Commission on a Way Forward
Apex UMC Family
AGENDA

• Greetings – Tim Catlett/Deb Murphy
• Song – Holy Spirit you are welcome here
• Prayer to the Holy Spirit – Deb
• Introduction – Tim
• UMC: How are we organized? – Tim
• Commission on a Way Forward – Deb
• Table Conversation
• Discussion
• Closing Prayer
SONG

Holy Spirit You are welcome here
PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Introduction/Reflections

Acts 2:41-47
United Methodist Church

How the global UMC is organized/governed
United Methodist Church

- Founded in 1968 by union of the Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren Church (both tracing roots back to John and Charles Wesley)
- 80 million Methodists/Wesleyans globally
- 12+ million members of the United Methodist Church globally (UMC is largest Methodist/Wesleyan denomination in the world)
  - 7+ million members in the US
  - 4.4 million in Africa, Asia, and Europe
- 2015, Pew Research estimated that 3.6% of the US population, or 9 million adults, self-identify with the United Methodist Church
- 2nd largest Protestant Denomination (Southern Baptist Convention is the largest), UMC is the largest mainline protestant denomination
United Methodist Church

• Organization and governance
  • General Conference
  • 5 Jurisdictional Conferences (US) plus 7 Central Conferences
  • Annual Conferences
  • Districts
  • Local Churches
As the primary legislative body, General Conference is the only entity with the authority to speak on behalf of the entire United Methodist Church. The General Conference meets every four years to consider the business and mission of the church. An equal number of lay and clergy delegates are elected from United Methodist conferences around the world to decide matters of policy and procedure for the denomination. These policies and procedures are published in the Book of Discipline.

- **2016 General Conference** – Most recent gathering in Oregon.
Jurisdictional/Central Conferences

Jurisdictional Conferences (Southeastern Jurisdiction – sejumc.org)

• There are five geographic jurisdictions, or regions, in the United States, which are comprised of eight to 15 annual conferences each. Bishops are elected and serve in these jurisdictional regions.

Central Conferences

• In Africa, Europe and the Philippines, there are seven geographical regions, called central conferences, each of which is comprised of annual conferences and divided into several episcopal areas.
Central Conferences Africa

Africa includes three central conferences: Africa Central, Congo Central, and West Africa

Africa Central Conference
Bishops are elected for four years as "term bishops," and with re-election, they are elected for life.

1. Bishop Jose Quipungo – Eastern Angola Episcopal Area
   • East Angola Annual Conference
2. Bishop Gaspar Domingos – Western Angola Episcopal Area
   • West Angola Annual Conference
   • Namibia District
   • East Africa Annual Conference includes Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda
   • Burundi Annual Conference
4. Bishop Joaquima Nhanala – Mozambique Episcopal Area
   • Mozambique North Annual Conference

Guinea-Bissau
Sierra Leone
Ivory Coast
Liberia
Nigeria
Cameroon
South Sudan
Democratic Republic of Congo
Uganda
Kenya
Rwanda
Burundi
Malawi
Mozambique
Zimbabwe
Namibia
South Africa
Angola
Tanzania
Central Conferences Philippines

Philippines includes three Episcopal Areas: Baguio, Davao, and Manila

Philippines Central Conference
Bishops serve a term of four years, and can be elected as many times as the people so vote until that bishop reaches mandatory retirement age.

- Bishop Peter Torio - Baguio Episcopal Area
  - Central Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - North Central Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Luzon Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northeast Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northern Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pangasinan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Tarlac Philippines Annual Conference

- Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco - Davao Episcopal Area
  - Bicol Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - East Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Northwest Mindanao Philippines Annual Conference
  - Visayas Philippines Annual Conference

- Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso Juan - Manila Episcopal Area
  - Bulacan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Middle Philippines Annual Conference
  - Palawan Philippines Annual Conference
  - Pampanga Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference
  - Philippines Annual Conference Cagayan de Oro
  - Palawan Philippines Provisional Annual Conference
  - Quezon City Philippines Annual Conference
  - Rizal Philippines Annual Conference
  - South Nueva Ecija Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southern Tagalog Provisional Philippines Annual Conference
  - Southwest Philippines Annual Conference
  - West Central Philippines Annual Conference
Annual Conferences/Districts

Annual Conferences (North Carolina Annual Conference - nccumc.org)

• The annual conference is a geographical entity, an organizational body (made up of elected lay and clergy members), and a yearly meeting. It is the fundamental body of the church (Book of Discipline, ¶ 11)

Districts (Fairway district)

• Each local church is part of a district, which is an administrative grouping of churches in a geographic area
Local Church

Charge Conferences and Local Churches

• As the visible presence of the body of Christ, the local church is the place where members grow in faith and discipleship, putting their faith into action through ministry in the world.
History

EUB, Methodism, UMC, and human sexuality
History of UMC on human sexuality

• Language introduced in the Book of Discipline in 1972
• Four primary areas for which language was introduced
  • Human Sexuality
  • Membership (inclusiveness and eligibility for membership)
  • Clergy Ordination
  • Same-sex wedding ceremonies
  • Fiscal Responsibility (Global Church, and Annual Conferences)
• Note: Updates were made to the book of Discipline or action was taken at General Conference in 1972, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988 (Committee to Study Homosexuality formed), 1992, 1996, 2000
We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.
We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.
4. Article IV. Inclusiveness of the Church

The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.
214. Eligibility to receive Sacraments (baptism and holy communion)

The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' Creed. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection (¶ 4). In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.
304.3 Qualifications for Ordination

While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
¶ 2702. 1. On performing wedding ceremonies

A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 370), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in (¶ 2702.4) with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;
¶ 806.9 Fiscal Responsibilities [of the General Council on Finance and Administration]

[The General Council on Finance and Administration] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" (¶ 161F). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. It shall not limit the Church's ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.
Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation—Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting the rightful claims where people have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation.
United Methodism

Traditional, progressive, or the radical center
Progressive Non-Compatibilists

Progressive Compatibilists

Traditionalist Compatibilists

Traditionalist Non-Compatibilists

Sugar
Tom Berlin on the UMC

- Traditionalists Non-Compatibilists
- Traditionalists Compatibilists
- Progressive Compatibilists
- Progressive Non-Compatibilists
Commission on a Way Forward – MISSION

Commission on a Way Forward – established following 2016 General Conference
The Commission will bring together persons deeply committed to the future(s) of The United Methodist Church, with an openness to developing new relationships with each other and exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional and central conference actions.

We have a profound hope and confidence in the Triune God, and yet we acknowledge that we do this work in a climate of skepticism and distrust, from a human point of view.
We are a connection, and we admit that our communion is strained; yet much transformative mission across our world is the fruit of our collaboration.

The matters of human sexuality and unity are the present issues for a deeper conversation that surfaces different ways of interpreting Scripture and theological tradition.

The work is meant to inform deliberation across the whole church and to help the Council of Bishops in their service to the next General Conference in finding a way forward.
Commission on a Way Forward – VISION

Commission on a Way Forward – established following 2016 General Conference
The Commission will design a way for being church that maximizes 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.

This unity will not be grounded in our conceptions of human sexuality, but in our affirmation of the Triune God who calls us to be a grace-filled and holy people in the Wesleyan tradition.
The 32-member Commission has been meeting since January 2017 in various places throughout the global denomination to assist the bishops in their charge from the 2016 General Conference to lead the church forward amid the present impasse related to LGBTQ inclusion and resulting questions about the unity of the church.

The Commission will present its final report to the Council of Bishops at the April/May meeting in Chicago. At that meeting, the bishops will decide what will be received and acted upon by the delegates to the Special Session of the General Conference set for St. Louis, Missouri, February 23-26, 2019.
“The purpose of these meetings includes initiating healthy conversations that educate, share information, and invite people to think and dream about God’s preferred future for The United Methodist Church.

Conversation serves to break down fear, build relationships, and helps us to collectively think about what is possible,” said Bishop Steiner Ball. “Conversation also serves to remind us that no matter what position persons or groups hold within the church, they love Christ, love The United Methodist Church, and strive to be faithful in service to God and to God’s people.”
Latest Update

What we know now ... our hope for these gatherings
Commission on a Way Forward

- http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward
Current Suggestions

• In February, 2018, the Commission shared with the bishops two sketches that carry forward many of the values and principles of the three sketches that were presented to the bishops at their meeting in November
• One Church Model
• Multi-branch: One Church Model
Summary of two models/three major values

1. A renewed attention to our public mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, especially with those who are not yet a part of our churches.

2. A focus on contextuality in a global church, and our continuing call to learn from each other, listen to each other.

3. Continuing to work with traditional, contextual and progressive values that are present in two models, one that is more aligned with a contextual church with the removed language about human sexuality, a second which differentiates between these values as different branches of one church.
The One Church Model gives churches the room they need to maximize the presence of United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible. The One Church Model provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context in relation to human sexuality without changing the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church.
One Church Model

• Remove the Book of Discipline's restrictive language and place a high value on contextualization. This sketch also specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same-gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ people.
FAQ: What does contextualization mean?

• Current decision-making body:
  • Membership: Local Church/Pastor
  • Weddings (hosting): Local Church
  • Weddings (officiating): Pastor
  • Ordination (clergy): Annual Conference
  • Finances/Spending: General Conference, Annual Conference, Local Church
  • Election of bishops: Jurisdictional Conference
The Multi-Branch: One Church Model is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry (i.e. progressive, contextual, traditional branches). Annual conferences would decide which connectional conference to affiliate with; only local churches who choose a branch other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote to join another conference.
Multi-branch Model

• Create multiple branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. This model would maintain shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops.
Table Discussion

• How does this option help or hinder our ability to fulfill the mission of the UMC to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?

• How does this option help or hinder our ability to fulfill our collective mission of “inviting and equipping all to follow Jesus in transforming the world”? (Or our local campus purpose statements?)
Table Discussions

• AUMC Family: Inviting and equipping all to follow Jesus in transforming the world
• Apex UMC: Welcome all. Love all. Serve all.
• Fiesta Cristiana: ¡Más que una iglesia una familia! (More than a church, a family)
• The Peak: Welcoming all who feel disconnected to experience a compassionate God and loving community.
• 519: Love well. Live differently.
Clarifying Questions and Feedback

• Clarifying questions related to the models, the process, or next steps?

• During conversation and following (Written on index cards):
  • Feedback for our clergy and lay delegates to annual conference
  • What do we need to make sure we consider as we listen, engage, and advocate for our local church?
  • Delegation will read and pray over the feedback and keep in conversation with our church family leading up to and following Annual Conference in June
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### Delegation (Laity)

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Wrap-Up

- http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward
- https://nccumc.org/news/tag/commission-on-a-way-forward/
- https://www.facebook.com/umcforward/

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Option 1
  • Ask clarifying questions
  • Evaluate option in table discussion

Option 2
  • Ask clarifying questions
  • Evaluate option in table discussion

Index cards
  • Feedback for the Annual Conference delegates
Members of the 2016-2020 Judicial Council