

## The Traditional Plan and the Book of Discipline

In February 2019, the global United Methodist Church (UMC) opted for the “Traditional Plan” from among three plans proposed at the Called General Conference. The purpose of the conference was to find a “Way Forward” for the denomination concerning its relationship with the LGBTQ community. The result of the conference (and of the adoption of the Traditional plan) was *The Addendum to The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016*. The resulting changes in policy have been incorporated into the Book of Discipline (BOD).

The Traditional plan retains and/or expands the wording in the BOD concerning homosexuality. The plan defines a “self-avowed practicing homosexual” as a person who is “living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual.” The updated BOD 1) bars bishops from consecrating, ordaining or commissioning “self-avowed practicing homosexuals” even if they have been elected or approved by the appropriate church body, 2) prohibits the use of funds to either protect or condemn gay and lesbian people, and 3) strengthens current BOD complaint procedures and penalties for clergy who officiate at a same-sex wedding. The minimum penalty for a clergy member who celebrates or performs a same-sex wedding is a one-year suspension without pay for the first offense and termination of conference membership and church credentials for a second offense.

The Traditional Plan also created the provision for “a gracious exit” for local churches that want to leave the denomination. Because St. John has no intention of leaving the United Methodist Church, those portions of the Traditional Plan are not highlighted in the BOD language shared below.

A complete reading of the changes to the BOD generated by the 2019 conference including the “gracious exit” language can be found at <https://www.umofficialresources.com/updates/>. A second resource highlights BOD paragraphs concerning homosexuals: <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/homosexuality-full-book-of-discipline-statements>. Finally, the entire BOD can be found at <https://www.ngumc.org/bookofdiscipline2016>. These are the resources used for the information in this enclosure.

On the following three pages, you will find the BOD’s policies which are pertinent to our open forum sessions.

First, there are two paragraphs concerning inclusiveness in the United Methodist church (paragraphs 140 and 214). The 2016 BOD language in these two paragraphs did not change at the 2019 conference. The page numbers from the 2016 BOD are included.

Following the paragraphs on inclusion are paragraphs from both the BOD and the 2019 Addendum. In these paragraphs, BOD policies concerning LGBTQ persons are re-stated and/or expanded. They are the policies prohibiting the ordination of an LGBTQ person, the policies prohibiting use of funds spent to either protect or condemn LGBTQ people, and the policies prohibiting UM clergy persons from officiating at same-sex marriages. The listed page numbers in the heading for these paragraphs are the page number in the BOD as well as the page number in the Addendum where applicable.

## Part IV. THE MINISTRY OF ALL CHRISTIANS

### Section VI. Called to Inclusiveness

¶ 140., page 101 BOD. We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons.

Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons.

The mark of an inclusive society is one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world. A further mark of inclusiveness is the setting of church activities in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.

In The United Methodist Church inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place. In the spirit of this declaration, United Methodist seminaries will begin or continue to improve access to facilities, to information and communication, and to appropriate support services and accommodations as delineated by The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and applicable World Council of Churches guidelines.

## Part VI. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

### Chapter One, THE LOCAL CHURCH

#### Section V. Church Membership

¶ 214. Page 151 BOD, *Eligibility*. 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.

### Chapter Two, THE MINISTRY OF THE ORDAINED

#### Section I. The Meaning of Ordination and Conference Membership

¶ 304.3, page 226 BOD, page 1 Addendum. 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<sup>1</sup> are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

**footnote 1. 1.** "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual; or is living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual.

¶ 304.5, page 226 BOD, page 1 Addendum. In all votes regarding license, ordination, or conference membership, the requirements set forth herein are minimum requirements. Each person voting is expected to vote prayerfully based on personal judgment of the applicant's gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness for the mission of the Church. The district committee on ordained ministry and the Board of Ordained Ministry shall not approve or recommend any person for candidacy, licensing, commissioning, or ordination who does not meet the qualifications of ¶ 304.1-3, based on the full examination and thorough inquiry into the person's fitness by the committee and board (see Judicial Council Decisions 1343 and 1344). The bishop presiding in the clergy session shall rule any such unqualified candidate out of order and not eligible to be acted upon.

¶ 362, pages 314-317 BOD, page 1 Addendum, *Complaint Procedures*.  
(Please see <https://www.umofficialresources.com/updates/> to find this information)

¶ 415.6, page 341 BOD, page 3 Addendum. To consecrate bishops; to ordain elders and deacons; to commission deaconesses, home missionaries, and missionaries; and to see that the names of the persons commissioned and consecrated are entered on the journals of the conference and that proper credentials are furnished to these persons. Bishops are prohibited from consecrating bishops who are self-avowed practicing homosexuals, even if they have been duly elected by the jurisdictional or central conference. Bishops are prohibited from commissioning those on the deacon or elder track if the Board of Ordained Ministry has determined the individual is a self-avowed practicing homosexual or has failed to certify it carried out the disciplinarily mandated examination, even if the individual has been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference. Bishops are prohibited from ordaining deacons or elders if the Board of Ordained Ministry has determined the individual is a self-avowed practicing homosexual or has failed to certify it carried out the disciplinarily mandated examination, even if the individual has been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the clergy session of the annual conference. As these services are acts of the whole Church, text and rubrics shall be used in the form approved by the General Conference.

#### Chapter Four, THE CONFERENCES

##### Section IX. The Annual Conference

¶ 613.19, page 429 BOD, *Responsibilities*. To ensure that no annual conference 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 UMC "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall not limit the Church's ministry in response to the HIV epidemic, nor shall it preclude funding for dialogs or educational events where the Church's official position is fairly and equally represented.

#### Chapter Five, ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

##### Section II. General Council on Finance and Administration

¶ 806. 9, page 550 BOD, *Fiscal Responsibilities*. It 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" (¶ 161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. It shall not limit the Church's ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.

Chapter Seven, JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

**Section II. Investigations, Trials, and Appeals**

**¶ 2702.1, page 788 BOD.** 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; (c) crime; (d) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (e) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (f) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (g) child abuse; (h) sexual abuse; (i) sexual misconduct including the use or possession of pornography, (j) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; (k) racial or gender discrimination; or (l) fiscal malfeasance.

**¶ 2711.3, page 809 BOD, page 6 Addendum.** *Penalties – If the Trial Results in Conviction.* Further testimony may be heard and arguments by counsel presented regarding what the penalty should be. The trial court shall determine the penalty, which shall require a vote of at least seven members. The trial court shall have the power to remove the respondent from professing membership, terminate the conference membership, and revoke the credentials of conference membership and licensing, commissioning, ordination, or consecration of the respondent, suspend the respondent from the exercise of the functions of office, or to fix a lesser penalty. However, where the conviction is for conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies under ¶ 2702.1(b) or (d), the trial court does not have the power to and may not fix a penalty less than the following: a) First (1st) offense – One (1) year’s suspension without pay. b) Second (2nd) offense – Not less than termination of conference membership and revocation of credentials of licensing, ordination, or consecration.

The penalty fixed by the trial court shall take effect immediately unless otherwise indicated by the trial court. Should any penalty fixed by a trial court be altered or reduced as a result of the appellate process, the respondent shall be restored and/or compensated as appropriate, provided that in no instance and under no circumstances shall the respondent be entitled to receive an award of compensation for or reimbursement of any expenses or fees associated with the respondent’s use of an attorney.