

2019 General Conference Special Session Report  
Submitted by Carolyn Dove, Head of the Louisiana Delegation

The 2019 General Conference Special Session held in St. Louis, Missouri February 23-26, 2019 passed the Traditional Plan by a vote of 438 to 384. The Judicial Council was requested to review the Traditional Plan and the Disaffiliation Plan that were passed at the General Conference Special Session. The Judicial Council found portions of the Traditional Plan previously deemed unconstitutional were upheld as unconstitutional and portions previously deemed constitutional remained constitutional. (Decision 1378)

The Disaffiliation Plan that would allow churches to leave the UMC with their property was initially ruled unconstitutional, but the court reconsidered their decision and deemed it constitutional with the caveat that churches choosing to leave the denomination would only be allowed to do so once the Annual Conference session ratifies the decision. (Decision 1379)

**The Traditional Plan:** The Judicial Council ruled **constitutional**.....

- an expanded definition of “self-avowed, practicing homosexual” to include anyone in a same-sex marriage or who publicly states that he or she is a practicing homosexual, (petition 90032)
- that District and Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry cannot recommend LGBTQ persons for ministry and that the bishop cannot commission or ordain them, (petition 90043)
- that bishops cannot consecrate duly elected persons to the episcopacy if they are “self-avowed, practicing homosexual,” (petition 90036)
- mandatory penalties (one-year suspension for the first offense and termination for the second offense) for clergy who are convicted by a jury of peers for performing a same-sex marriage, (petition 90042)
- the complaint process to include a “statement of harms” and “every effort to be made” to include the complainant in the resolution, and (petition 90045)
- the church’s ability to appeal the verdict of a trial court to the committee on appeals and then the Judicial Council in cases of “egregious errors of Church law or administration.” (petition 90047)

The Judicial Council ruled **unconstitutional**.....

- that the annual conference certify that the bishop had only nominated persons to the Board of Ordained Ministry who would “uphold, enforce, and maintain the Discipline in its entirety,” and (petition 90037)
- that the Board of Ordained Ministry is required to conduct a thorough examination specifically to determine whether someone is LGBTQ, including through the use of social media. (petition 90038)

### **The Disaffiliation Plan (petition 90066)**

The disaffiliation petition was ruled constitutional with the reminder that the requirements include the annual conference vote, which is stated elsewhere in the Book of Discipline.

The Disaffiliation Petition....

- focuses on “the current deep conflict within The United Methodist Church around issues of human sexuality,”
- and provides “a local church...limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate” with the church property. The standards for disaffiliation shall be developed by the General Board of Finance and Administration. The terms and conditions for disaffiliation shall be established by the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with the advice from the Cabinet, the Annual Conference Treasurer and Benefits Officer, the Director of Connectional Ministries and the Annual Conference Chancellor. The petition delineates the requirements to disaffiliate, including a 2/3rds vote of professing members present and voting at a charge conference, 24 months of apportionment payments, “other liabilities” (which may include past health and property insurance and unpaid pension payments, and timelines for decision making).

The Traditional Plan and the Disaffiliation Plan are slated to take effect January 1, 2020.

There are numerous caucus groups and individuals who will bring petitions to the 2020 General Conference to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota May 5-15, 2020 in an attempt to restructure how the Book of Discipline can be interpreted throughout the global church.

For additional information view Bishop Harvey’s reflection on the 2019 General Conference Special Session and the Judicial Council rulings on the Louisiana Conference web site [www.la-umc.org](http://www.la-umc.org).

Respectfully submitted,

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