

A South Georgia Conference Timeline of the Way Forward, for Bonaire UMC

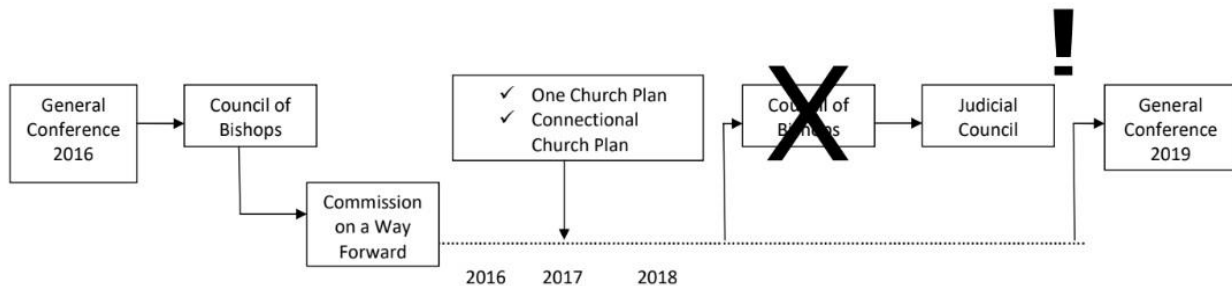


Figure 1as developed by S Hagan and J Stone

May 18, 2016: General Conference, in Portland, a critical motion passed on the floor stated that bishops would appoint a commission “to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.” It further stated that the bishops would call a special General Conference exclusively devoted to resolving the denomination’s impasse on this issue. Exact details of the process were not thoroughly spelled out, but the Council of Bishops committed “to maintain an on-going dialogue with this Commission as they do their work, including clear objectives and outcomes.”

September 6 & 11, 2016: Bonaire UMC holds Town Hall meetings to learn of the Bishop’s charge as outlined in Portland, to receive feedback, and to develop and sign a petition that was sent to the members of the Commission and Council of Bishops expressing our desire to maintain the existing biblical standards.

October 24, 2016: Council of Bishops announced members of the Committee on a Way Forward (COWF).

January 23-26, 2017: First meeting of the Commission on a Way Forward is held in Atlanta.

March 19-22, 2018: Commission on a Way Forward

The Council of Bishops offers feedback on the three plans being developed and directs the COWF to cease working on the Traditional Plan. They are instructed, instead, to focus on the One Church Plan and Connectional Conference Plan, in time for the Council of Bishops to receive them by May.

April 29 – May 4, 2018: Council of Bishops Meeting

They receive the final draft report from Commission on a Way Forward. Consider, amend, and vote on final report to go to the 2019 Special Session of General Conference. Some Bishops speak

May 23-25, 2018: Judicial Council Meeting

In May 2018 Judicial Council ruled that any proposed legislation for the 2019 special General Conference must be submitted by the Commission on a Way Forward, not the Council of Bishops. The Council of Bishops had presumed that the COWF would report to the bishops, and then the bishops would submit a specific report with recommendations to the special General Conference to consider in 2019. Others in the UMC contended that the Council of Bishops was overstepping its supervisory and administrative role in the church and transgressing into legislative affairs, which are the specific purview of General Council only. The court stated, "There is nothing in the proceedings of the 2016 General Conference suggesting that the Commission on a Way Forward was supposed to submit its recommendations to the Council of Bishops." The Judicial Council further ruled that legislative proposals at the special General Conference are not limited to those recommended by the commission.

July 8, 2018: Petition Submission Deadline

Petitions from laypersons and clergy for the 2019 special session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church were required to be submitted to the petitions secretary through July 8.

July 31, 2018: Final Report Released in all 4 official languages of General Conference

Final report in full release format is officially sent to the Secretary of the General Conference and released electronically by the Council of Bishops to the whole church.

August and September of 2018: District Meetings

Bishop Bryan held six district meetings for laity and clergy to discuss the final report from the Council of Bishops.

October 2018: Delegation Listening Posts

Our South Georgia Delegation provides three opportunities for South Georgia United Methodists to share their thoughts on the Way Forward.

October 23-26, 2018: Judicial Council Meeting

The Judicial Council pointed out the constitutional problems with both the One Church Plan and the Traditional Plan. Because the Connectional Conference plan already contains proposed constitutional changes required for implementation, the court declined to review the Connectional Conference plan at this time.

February 23-26, 2019: Special Session of the General Conference in St. Louis

864 Laity and clergy delegates will prayerfully consider and act upon a way forward. They will begin with the proposed plans, but amendments can be made and voted on.

March 9 & 10, 2019: Informational Sessions for South Georgia & Bonaire

Conference-wide meeting in Tifton, GA on March 9 to talk about the outcome of the 2019 called General Conference Session, followed by church-wide meeting in Bonaire on March 10.