

The 1GC2019 Delegate

November 1, 2018
Issue 1

Unity *by Tim Crouch | Lay Delegate, North Texas Annual Conference*

I have been a member of the North Texas delegation since 1996. I have voted for many years to keep the language on homosexuality the same in the Discipline. However, I voted to ask the Bishops to lead us on this issue during the 2016 General Conference. I believe that if we ask the best and brightest of our church to lead we need to be prepared to follow. A significant majority of the Council of Bishops voted to recommend the One Church Plan because they believe it best preserves our unity as a denomination. It may not be a perfect plan, but I believe that the unity of the church is the most important part of this decision. I will vote for a plan that seeks unity.

I am a cradle Methodist; my father was a pastor and my sister is a pastor.

She and I grew up in a church that was always home to us. When my mother asked us to get out of the house, we went next door to the church. I am saddened that this issue is threatening to tear our church apart.

It is my belief that if human sexuality is a church defining issue, then we have lost sight of what it means to be the church. The one church defining issue is our faith in Jesus Christ. After that there is room for people from all ends of the spectrum. We need people from the left and the right in our church. A big tent helps us better understand the Gospel because that big tent has helped us to address issues of women in ministry, slavery, and segregation. We need everyone at the table as part of

witnessing to our faith from different perspectives. Perspectives that are all rooted in Jesus Christ.

The reason that I cannot support the Traditional Plan is because it is in opposition to the unity of the church. It is a plan that is designed to drive people of good faith out of the church. My question is where is grace in the Traditional Plan? The core of Methodism is grace and the Traditional Plan simply does not feel like the Methodist church. It will pain me if we lose even one member or one church because of the decision at the special session. But my vote will be to support the One Church Plan that offers the best opportunity for preserving our unity as the United Methodist Church.

The Commission on the Way Forward chose not to do a "liberal" plan or a "conservative" plan, but only to work on plans for **holding the church together**. A few very conservative bishops—who have not self-identified—refused to accept the nearly 2/3 majority of the Council of Bishops in recommending the One Church Plan. Instead these bishops drafted the "Traditional Plan." This plan is not the work of the Commission on the Way Forward and has been placed in the Appendix of the COWF report.



Please support the One Church Plan



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Wesley: Schism is a Breach of the Law of Love¹

Many who are supporting the “Traditional Plan” are seeking schism. Their multiple attempts to divide or destroy the denomination are well documented in their own public statements. They have positioned themselves as the illegitimate mother before King Solomon in 1 Kings 3:16-28 saying, “It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide the baby in two.” We must entrust the church with those who desire for the church to be whole.

- Rob Renfroe, President of Good News Magazine, has publicly attacked the integrity of our Bishops. He stated in a video that the Bishops have “declared war” on the church by recommending the One Church Plan.² He claims that nearly 2/3 of our Bishops are filled with “hubris” and “don’t teach the doctrines of the church” because he disagrees with them.³ These attacks on our episcopal leadership are divisive and damaging to our church.
- The Wesleyan Covenant Association has publicly stated that they are prepared to leave the denomination on March 1, 2019 if the Traditional Plan does not pass. In other words, either they get their way, or they are leaving.⁴
- Rev. Keith Boyette, the President of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, has submitted a petition to the 2019 General Conference calling for the dissolution of the United Methodist Church!⁵
- Maxie Dunham, one of the founders of the Confessing Movement, has submitted a petition to GC 2019 that would liquify the assets of the General Agencies and give \$200,000 to every annual conference that leaves. In other words, your apportionment dollars would be given away as an incentive for conferences to leave the church.⁶
- Bishop Scott Jones announced years ago to the Great Plains Annual Conference, “If one pastor does a gay wedding, there will be one trial. If 100 pastors do 100 gay weddings, there will be 100 trials.” Bishop Jones is the leading episcopal voice for the Traditional Plan and he acknowledges on Facebook that he is ready to embrace more church-splitting trials.⁷
- The last time the Methodist Church had a major schism was in 1844. Christians in the southern United States quoted the Bible to defend slavery and split away.⁸ The country later descended into civil war. Using the language of “war” now is inappropriate. The Bishops are calling us to have “a heart of peace.”

¹ John Wesley Sermon 75 *On Schism* “Schism is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love.”

² Confessing Movement Luncheon: <https://tinyurl.com/ycb99a8x>

³ <https://goodnewsmag.org/2018/07/failure-of-leadership/>

⁴ <https://wesleyancovenant.org/2018/06/21/the-long-and-winding-road-to-st-louis/>

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/ycoaeg78>

⁶ <http://tomlambrecht.goodnewsmag.org/upgrading-the-traditional-plan/>

⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/y9n2mv7t>

⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/y56aws>



Traditional Plan Pushes People Out

The Traditional Plan calls for all who disagree with one reading of scripture to leave the church. In other words, if they get their way, everyone else is leaving. Here are examples of how the Traditional Plan pushes out those who disagree.¹

- Within one year, every Annual Conference must vote to certify that it agrees with one interpretation of scripture or leave the denomination.
- Every local church must vote if they do not agree with their conference.
- Every pastor who disagrees with one interpretation of scripture is “encouraged to transfer” to another denomination.
- Every Bishop must certify that they agree to one interpretation of scripture or leave the denomination.
- The Council of Bishops can investigate and charge with misconduct any Bishop whose annual conference does not follow the new rules, holding the bishop personally responsible for group action over which he or she may have little or no control.
- A simple majority vote of the Council of Bishops can place any Bishop in retirement status, regardless of age.
- Every member of the Board of Ordained Ministry must certify that they agree with one interpretation of scripture or not serve on the Board.

“The Traditionalist Plan organizes our church around one issue—human sexuality... and it diverts our attention and resources to legal processes.”

Bishop Ken Carter, speaking on behalf of the One Church Plan before the Judicial Council, Oct. 23, 2018



Please support the
One Church Plan

Many of the leaders of the organizations supporting the Traditional Plan are willing to throw away 250 years of Methodism over the issue of homosexuality. Our bishops have shown us that we can disagree on this issue AND stay together to “Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.”

- The Plan has seven pages covering how everyone else can leave the denomination...this is called “gracious exit.”
- The Traditional Plan also allows conservative churches to leave the denomination. The criteria for a departure with your property includes an undefined clause “irreconcilable conflict for reasons of conscience.” So even if it passes, the advocates of the plan are not committing to stay.
- The Plan has 6 pages covering harsher penalties for those who disagree and try to stay. This plan has no grace and is the plan for church-splitting trials.
- In short 13 of the 22-page plan are dedicated to people leaving or harsh church trials.
- The Judicial Council in Decision 1366 has unanimously ruled that 7 of the 17 Traditional Plan petitions are unconstitutional.²

¹ Read the divisive Traditional Plan here: <https://tinyurl.com/y8jk284u>

² Read JC Decision 1366 here: <https://tinyurl.com/jyc29gr5k>

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