

Dear Bishops,

We, the undersigned, faithfully request the Council of Bishops issue a pastoral letter calling for a moratorium on all complaints, charges, and trials of LGBTQ clergy and for clergy performing same-gender weddings pending the outcome of the May 2020 General Conference. We ask you to be proactive to reduce the harm that will occur once the Traditional Plan takes effect January 1, 2020.

These complaints, charges, and trials are deeply harmful to our clergy, divisive to our congregations, and destructive to our connection. Faithful people throughout the connection are actively seeking a solution to the global impasse around human sexuality; this judicial process only exacerbates the impasse. Our history has proven we cannot and should not adjudicate our divisions in the church's courts. Failing to call for an immediate moratorium on these processes could cause irreparable harm to our connection at this fragile moment when we are engaged in negotiating an amicable, global solution.

There is precedent for such a time of gracious waiting, as expressed by the North Central Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals in March of 2018 regarding the complaint filed against Rev. David Meredith in the West Ohio Annual Conference. The Committee wrote in part: "In fairness to all parties, we order...the West Ohio Conference of [The] United Methodist Church [to] pause this judicial proceeding until after the proceedings of the Special Session of the General Conference in 2019 are concluded."

While non-binding, our bishops calling for a moratorium will help prevent the denomination from diverting valuable resources from outreach, mission, and ministry to church trials. Our history shows that processing a single trial can cost \$100,000 or more. In addition to the exorbitant financial cost, local churches are increasingly unwilling to fund conference apportionments for this purpose. Imagine the lost opportunities across the connection for service, mission, and witness these funds represent! Taking a stand to preempt complaints, charges, and trials that will follow the Traditional Plan is good stewardship of the time, energy, and resources in our annual conferences.

We understand that no one can control what others will do. Yet, a letter of moratorium from our episcopal leaders will establish a spirit of cooperation and give direction to annual conferences on how to proceed. Anything our bishops can do to discourage and postpone charges being filed once the Traditional Plan goes into effect will give our delegates more space to find an amicable agreement. We seek your help to reduce the harm and create a better environment for constructive and courageous conversation.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

In Christ,

The Undersigned

