

Results of General Conference 2019

Some are asking for more details about what actually passed at General Conference. Here is my brief summary:

- 1). Wespath petitions passed. Exiting churches must pay their fair share of pension liability. Exiting clergy retain their pension but it is converted to limit further liability to the conference.

- 2). Current language around sexuality and restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals is retained.

- 3). The Traditional Plan passed except for the main petition. This means there will be no required certification by annual conferences and bishops that they will follow the Discipline and no method for annual conferences to leave the denomination.

- 4). Eight parts of the Traditional Plan passed and have previously been ruled constitutional by the Judicial Council. The Judicial Council will consider their constitutionality again in April but are not likely to reverse their decision. This means that the definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual now includes those who are in a same-sex marriage. Bishops cannot commission or ordain lesbian or gay pastors or consecrate them as bishops. Boards of ordained ministry must do a full examination of clergy candidates including whether they are a self-avowed practicing homosexual. Pastors who perform weddings and are convicted by trial will have minimum penalties of suspension (1st offense) and surrender of credentials (2nd offense). Bishops can only dismiss complaints for reasons of law or fact. Just Resolutions must acknowledge all harm done and be agreed to by the person bringing the complaint. The church can appeal a decision for egregious errors of law.

- 5). One part of the Traditional Plan passed but it may or may not be constitutional and awaits the decision of the Judicial Council. It would require all members of the board of ordained ministry to certify they will follow the Discipline.

- 6). An amended exit plan for churches passed but it may or may not be constitutional. It would allow for local churches to exit with their property and assets if 2/3 of the members vote to do so and they care for pension liabilities and one year of apportionments.

So now we wait for the results of the Judicial Council. Legislation is not official church law until January 1, 2020. We will elect delegates to the 2020 General Conference at annual conference in June.