



The United Methodist Church

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Dear Friends and Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference:

As most of you may know, yesterday the Judicial Council, the nine-member top court of The United Methodist Church, released their rulings from February's Special General Conference related to the Traditional Plan and disaffiliation legislation. You can find the complete ruling for the Traditional Plan [here](#) and the ruling for the disaffiliation plan [found here](#).

The Judicial Council did not find the Traditional Plan (made up of 17 petitions) to be "one bundle" of petitions and so ruled on the constitutionality of each individual one. Seven petitions continued to be unconstitutional, seven stand as approved and one was edited.

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,"
- that District and Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry cannot recommend LGBTQ persons for ministry and that the bishop cannot commission or ordain them,
- that bishops cannot consecrate duly elected persons to the episcopacy if they are "self-avowed, practicing homosexual,"
- 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,
- the complaint process to include a "statement of harms" and "every effort to be made" to include the complainant in the resolution, and
- 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."

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
- 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.

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 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.)

You can find other descriptions and interpretations through United Methodist News Service [found here](#) as well as a thorough synopsis from the Greater New Jersey Conference [found here](#). But I encourage you to read the actual rulings.

Most importantly, I want to say again (as I did after the Special Session of the General Conference concluded) that I am deeply disappointed that The United Methodist Church has become less inclusive of all people. The harsh penalization and limitations set within the Traditional Plan give little space for those of us who have deeply held convictions based on scripture, tradition, reason, and experience that includes all God’s people.

I fully recognize that many in our annual conference are relieved that traditional marriage has been affirmed and that there are restrictions on who can be in ministry. And while we may disagree, I am still in ministry with you! Our agreement on human sexuality is not the basis of our faith, ministry, or mission; the basis of our faith, ministry, and mission is in Jesus Christ.

This is a challenging time for us as a denomination and as an annual conference. When the legislation for our annual conference comes out later this coming week, you will see a handful of petitions that we will be discussing in June that will give direction to our future. There are some in our conference who are working on determining “what’s next” for the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition on *both* sides of the Traditional Plan. We will have robust conversations about where we are as a denomination and an annual conference at both the clergy session on May 21 and the annual conference sessions June 2-4.

I agree with those who say it has become clear we need to find a different way to be together so that we no longer harm each other. Therefore, I urge that we do not do anything that will jeopardize the ministry of others as we move toward a more gracious place and future with one another. The verse that comes to mind for me is: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be...” (1 John 3:2).

Let us pray for one another and for our church at this critical time in our history, drawing upon our long tradition and deepest resources of faith.

In ministry together,



Sally Dyck