



The United Methodist Church

CHICAGO AREA EPISCOPAL OFFICE

77 West Washington Street • Suite 1820 • Chicago, Illinois 60602
Office: (312) 346-9766 x 702 • Fax: (312) 214-9031

Sally Dyck
Bishop

E-mail: bishop.dyck@umcnic.org

Rev. Arlene W. Christopherson

Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Connectional Ministries

E-mail: achristo@umcnic.org

March 1, 2019

Dear Friends and Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference:

The long-awaited Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in St. Louis, Missouri has finished its work. The three days were very painful for people who attended or watched at home via livestream. The pain inflicted upon our LGBTQI members, friends and families was intense. But there was also pain in seeing the deep divide among the delegates. Likewise, many of us feel this doesn't reflect the United Methodist Church's doctrine on grace.

The One Church Plan, which was recommended by the Council of Bishops, and which would have given space for clergy, all churches (no matter what their stand on human sexuality), and annual conferences to be in ministry within their contexts was defeated by a very close margin: 438-384, 54 votes.

Instead, the Traditional Plan was approved. It not only affirms what is presently in the Book of Discipline about homosexuality but places far more restrictions and penalties on clergy performing weddings for LGBTQI members. It also tightens the existing restrictions on ordination based on sexual orientation.

The Traditional Plan was referred to the Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, for a declaratory decision on its constitutionality (a number of the items have previously been declared unconstitutional). We will know more about what portions of the legislation will become church law after the Judicial Council meets April 23-26 in Evanston, Illinois.

Because I supported the overwhelming recommendation of the Council of Bishops for the One Church Plan, I will unabashedly say that I am deeply disappointed that the One Church Plan did not prevail and the Traditional Plan did. The hurt has been tremendous across the global church and certainly within our annual conference, beginning with our delegates and all the observers who attended. I'm deeply disappointed because it is so hurtful to the LGBTQI community, family and friends. I'm deeply disappointed because I believe we have just lost another generation who will not want to be a part of a church that seems so judgmental. I'm deeply disappointed because I think we will lose members and have difficulty reaching new people (not just LGBTQI people) due to the message this action sends.

To our LGBTQI members, friends, families, and welcoming congregations: 438 votes can't take away God's love for you! You are beloved children of God and of sacred worth. I love you, and so many in our churches love you, and will continue to care for you.



I know that not everyone is grieved by the actions of the General Conference. We are more diverse as an annual conference than many realize. I will be the bishop of the whole annual conference, including those of you who are relieved that the Traditional Plan has prevailed.

Northern Illinois Conference has in effect lived in the One Church Plan for some time. The reality is that most of our churches, especially the larger the congregation, are very diverse within the same wide spectrum of traditional and progressive that was found at General Conference. Somehow, we've learned to be church together and love one another in spite of our differences on human sexuality and many other things. Also, remember that these restrictions do not exclude laity from membership or leadership in the local church or beyond.

What happens next? There are so many unknowns. I would encourage us all to pause and take a breath. We need clarity of mind and spirit. We need to talk with each other about how we live into this new reality as an annual conference. We have opportunities to learn more and to talk with each other.

Please attend one of the following debriefing sessions:

- Saturday, March 30 at 9:30 a.m.**—Orland Park: Faith UMC, 15101 S 80th Ave., Orland Park, IL.
- Saturday, March 30 at 2 p.m.**—Barrington UMC, 98 Algonquin Rd., Barrington, IL.
- Sunday, March 31 at 3 p.m.**—Oregon UMC, 200 S. 4th St., Oregon, IL.

As I've said all along, the day after the Special Session of General Conference we will continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Yes, we will continue to grow in our love for our neighbor and God. We will feed the hungry and provide relief for those who have experienced a natural disaster. We will visit the sick and care for the dying. We will work to eliminate gun violence and to care for the immigrant with mercy and justice. We will love and care for our LGBTQI members, friends and families. We will be the church!

Thank you for your faithfulness in serving Christ and your community!

Holding you all in my prayers,



Bishop Sally Dyck

SJD:mla