

# Resources for a Way Forward

As we prepare our hearts and minds for the Special Session of General Conference (Feb. 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri), here are some highly recommended resources for you to use individually, with a small group, or with your congregation. The book and small group study resources are available through Cokesbury, unless otherwise noted. All of these resources can be found on the Northern Illinois Conference website at [www.umcnic.org/wayforward](http://www.umcnic.org/wayforward).

## Praying Our Way Forward:

The Council of Bishops launched a multi-phase “Praying Our Way Forward” initiative that invites all United Methodists, between now and the Special Session of General Conference, to:

1. Engage in a weekly Wesleyan 24-hour fast from Thursday after dinner to Friday mid-afternoon. Those who have health situations where food fasts are unadvisable might consider fasting from social media, email, or another daily activity.
2. Pause and pray for our church’s mission and way forward daily for four minutes from 2:23 through 2:26 a.m. or p.m. in your own time zone (or at another time of your choosing). The reason for the recommended time period is that the Special Session of General Conference will be held Feb. 23-26, 2019.
3. Pray using a weekly prayer calendar posted at [UMCPrays.org](http://UMCPrays.org) that goes through the end of February 2019. The calendar lists a unique cluster of names each week. The names include United States bishops and delegates, Central Conference bishops and delegates, general secretaries, Commission on a Way Forward members, the Commission of the General Conference, and General Conference staff.



## Legislation:

- **Commission on a Way Forward full report:** The Commission on a Way Forward’s full report to General Conference, including all three plans that the Commission submitted to the Council of Bishops for their consideration. Find the report here: [tinyurl.com/COWFreport](http://tinyurl.com/COWFreport)
- **A Way Forward: Summary of the three plans:** Points included in this document are provided as a summary of the recommendations to the special 2019 General Conference put together by the Great Plains Conference. Find it here [www.greatplainsumc.org/files/way+forward/three+plans+summary+sheet.pdf](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/files/way+forward/three+plans+summary+sheet.pdf)

## Books:

- **“The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict” by The Arbinger Institute:** This is one of the books studied by the Commission on a Way Forward. It seeks to inspire reconciliation through the premise that people whose hearts are at peace do not wage war, whether they’re heads of state or members of a family.
- **“God Unbound: Wisdom from Galatians for the Anxious Church” by Elaine Heath:** Just as Paul led the Galatians through a radical cultural change to expand their view of God, themselves, and the church’s mission, today’s Christians are challenged to boldly follow the Holy Spirit’s leadership beyond buildings and programs to join what Jesus is doing in the world.
- **“Unafraid and Unshamed: Facing the Future of United Methodism” by Wil Cantrell:** This book cultivates faith, respect for disparate opinions, appreciation for the Wesleyan means of grace, and commitment to the church. It was designed as a tool for effectively communicating the issues facing the denomination in a manner that strengthens the church.
- **“Finding a Way Forward” handbook:** This tool for United Methodist Church bishops is a compilation of some of the resources that the Commission on a Way Forward used that includes resources for witness,

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contextual leadership, and unity. It can be used as a tool for study, reflection, and prayer. Find it at [tinyurl.com/wayforwardhandbook](http://tinyurl.com/wayforwardhandbook)

### Small Group Studies:

- **“Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality” by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry:** Suitable for a four-week study, this resource addresses how the church be a witness and provide for a diversified human community. It gives United Methodists an opportunity to think about what has become a cultural and ecclesial flashpoint—human sexuality—and comes out of the conviction that the church is thirsty for theological conversation.
- **“Living Faithfully: Human Sexuality and The United Methodist Church” by Abingdon Press:** This four-week study will help you understand the shape of the debate about human sexuality. Each chapter includes background on the Bible, Christian theology, history, stories from diverse viewpoints, and United Methodist structure and practice to guide reflection and conversation.

### Large Group Conversations:

- **Courageous Conversation about the Way Forward:** Discipleship Ministries offers a detailed outline for four 90-minute sessions that provide background about the current debate on human sexuality, give an overview of the three plans from the Commission on a Way Forward, and afford an opportunity for participants to discuss the three plans in a respectful and healthy manner. Find the outline at [tinyurl.com/courageousconversation](http://tinyurl.com/courageousconversation)

### Videos:

- **“Council of Bishops on One Church Model” (03:52):** The Council of Bishops is recommending the One Church Plan to the Special Session of General Conference as the way forward for The United Methodist Church. Several bishops, including Bishop Bruce R. Ough, talk about why that model makes sense. Find the video at [tinyurl.com/onechurchmodel](http://tinyurl.com/onechurchmodel)
- **“A Way Forward” (03:56):** Bishop Bruce R. Ough and Dave Nuckols, a member of Minnetonka UMC and the Commission on a Way Forward, provide an overview of the Commission and what's next as The United Methodist Church seeks a way forward. Find the video at <https://tinyurl.com/wayforwardoverview>
- **“A Parable for Today” (05:15):** Gil Rendle, a consultant to the Commission on a Way Forward, uses a parable to explore the difference between positions that are taken and the convictions that lead us to those positions. He maintains that when we look beyond our positions and talk about what's important to us, the Spirit moves. Find the video at [tinyurl.com/gilrendle](http://tinyurl.com/gilrendle)
- **“Sugar Packets: An Illustration” (19:23):** Rev. Tom Berlin, a pastor in the Virginia Annual Conference and member of the Commission on a Way Forward, uses sugar packets to outline in simple terms the dynamics at play in the debate about human sexuality and poses some key questions to ponder in the conversation about this issue. Find the video at [tinyurl.com/sugarpacketillustration](http://tinyurl.com/sugarpacketillustration)

### Other Resources

- **Wespath’s Frequently Asked Questions:** Wespath Benefits and Investments does not have a preference among the church models presented as a way forward. Instead, the agency is preparing to make whatever changes required to serve the denomination in whatever form it takes. Read the FAQ page at [www.wespath.org/WayForwardWespathFAQ/#3c](http://www.wespath.org/WayForwardWespathFAQ/#3c).



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