

WHAT DID GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019 DO?

Introduction: This summary sheet is taken from the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area Website. Commentary by David Braden related to the significance of the changes is in [blue](#).

Church teaching on homosexuality

Retained current language in the *Book of Discipline*, which considers “homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth,” and finds that “...the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching” and bans “self-avowed practicing homosexuals from being ordained or appointed to serve in United Methodist Churches.” [No substantial change. We’re now in year 47 of the discriminatory “incompatibility clause.”](#)

Definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual”

“Self-avowed practicing homosexual” defined as including “people living in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union, or is a person who publicly states she or he is a practicing homosexual.” (Petition 90032) [This is significant because it makes it substantially easier for the Church to convict queer clergy.](#)

Pension funds of participants leaving The United Methodist Church

Defined how pension funds managed by Wespath will be managed if a pension participant leaves The United Methodist Church. Contributions earned to the date a participant leave the UMC will be transferred to United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (“UMPIP”). (Petitions 90016, 90017, effective as of close of General Conference)

Instructions to bishops

Prohibited bishops from:

1. consecrating bishops who are self-avowed homosexuals even if they have been elected.
2. commissioning or ordaining deacons or elders if the Board of Ordained Ministry has determined the individual is a self-avowed practicing homosexual. (Petition 90036)

Instructed bishops to rule out of order a recommendation by the board of ordained ministry of any unqualified candidate for ministry. (Petition 90043)

Instructions to boards of ordained ministries

Prohibited the district committee on ordained ministry from approving or recommending persons who do not meet the qualifications after full examination. (Petition 90043)

Complaints against clergy, including bishops

1. Minimum penalties if a person is convicted in a church trial of conducting ceremonies or same-sex weddings: one-year suspension without pay for first offense and termination for a second offense. (Petition 90042) [This is significant and will have serious repercussions for local churches and clergy.](#)
2. A bishop can dismiss a complaint against a clergy person only if it has no basis in law or fact and the reason for the dismissal is shared with the complainant. (Petition 90044) [Bishop Sally in Northern Illinois has indicated that she will not accept complaints come January 1, 2020; however, she can be charged with a complaint for failing to uphold the Discipline by failing to receive and process such charges. Remember: anyone from inside or outside the Annual Conference may file charges against another.](#)
3. A just resolution reached at any stage in a complaint process against a clergy person, including a bishop, must “state all identified harms and how they shall be addressed by the Church and other parties to the complaint.” (Petition 90045)
4. Required that “every effort shall be made to have the complainant agree to the resolution before it may take effect.” (Petition 90046) [Some predict that more complainants will refuse to agree to just resolutions, which means we are more likely to have trials – and remember that we now have mandatory minimum sentences.](#)

Local Church disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church

Allows a local church, by a 2/3 vote of members, to disaffiliate from the UMC, under terms set by the annual conference board of trustees, before December 31, 2023, “for reasons of conscience...related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals.” (Petition 90066) [\(As of November 1, 2019, the Judicial Council has ruled most of this provision constitutional, but will consider the issue of voter irregularities related to the passage of this provision at the 2019 General Conference at a later session of the Judicial Council.\)](#)