

Committee on a Way Forward Timeline

May 18, 2016	General Conference asks bishops to find a way forward.
October 24, 2016	Council of Bishops announces members of the Committee on a Way Forward.
January 23-26, 2017	First meeting of the Commission on a Way Forward is held in Atlanta.
March 19-25, 2017	North Georgia Conference Week of Prayer for the Commission on a Way Forward.
April 29-May 4, 2018	Council of Bishops April/May Meeting. The Commission on a Way Forward presents its final report to the Council of Bishops.
May 14-17, 2018	Final Commission on a Way Forward Meeting.
May 18, 2018	The Council of Bishops sends its final report to the publisher for printing and translation.
May 23-25, 2018	The Judicial Council meets to discuss any issues that may arise from the Council of Bishops' final report.
July 8, 2018	The final report will be sent to the Secretary of the General Conference by the Council of Bishops.
Fall 2018	North Georgia delegation continues to meet.
TBA	Listening session with North Georgia delegation.
November 4-9, 2018	Council of Bishops meeting.
February 23-26, 2019	Special Session of General Conference, St. Louis, Missouri

One

**WITH CHRIST.
WITH EACH OTHER.
IN MINISTRY
TO ALL THE WORLD.**



Special Session of General Conference Q&A and Timeline

What is the Commission on a Way Forward? *

The Commission on a Way Forward (COWF) is a group of 32 United Methodists appointed by the Council of Bishops for the sole purpose of examining the Book of Discipline as it relates to matters involving human sexuality.

The COWF is guided by a specific mission, vision and scope that calls for the design of a way of being for the church that maximizes the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible. The COWF's ultimate goal is to provide recommendations for how the denomination can move forward in a way that preserves and strengthens the unity of the church.

Keep in mind that, although the COWF's work is meant to inform deliberation across the whole church, the COWF reports to the Council of Bishops and not to the General Conference. Additional information about the COWF can found here: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-about-us>.

* Note that these answers were prepared by the North Georgia Conference Communications Office in April 2018 using [umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward).

Who is on the Commission on a Way Forward?

The 32 members of the COWF were selected from all parts of the world where The United Methodist Church has membership. They are from all jurisdictions, nine nations and 15 states. They are an inclusive group of men and women, laity, clergy and bishops. They span generations and theological positions and views. We are proud that Jasmine Smothers, the senior pastor at Atlanta First United Methodist Church, was selected to be a member of the COWF. Additional information about the members of the COWF can be found here: <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward-members>

What is the Commission's role in this process?

The COWF's role is to work diligently to study, explore and discern how The United Methodist Church can collectively move forward in a way that preserves and strengthens the unity of the denomination, both now and in the future. However, it is important to remember that the COWF will not issue a recommendation to the general church. The COWF reports only to the Council of Bishops.

What models are being considered?

The COWF spent considerable time building trust and listening to one another on various models and sketches of the future of The United Methodist Church, receiving input and guidance from the Council of Bishops along the way.

It appears as though there are two models that are currently driving the conversation. Keep in mind, however, that these models are being reviewed with a "pencil in one hand and an eraser in the other," meaning that they are guiding the discussion but aren't necessarily the only models that are being considered. The COWF's final report is due to be submitted to the Council of Bishops in May 2018.

When will the Council of Bishops issue a recommendation?

It is anticipated that the Council of Bishops will receive and review the work from the COWF in May 2018. The Council of Bishops will then submit its final report to the Secretary of the General Conference in summer 2018.

What do we know about the Special Session of General Conference?

The Book of Discipline requires a specific reason and stated agenda

for a special session. The 2019 General Conference will be "limited to receiving and acting on a report from the Council of Bishops based on the recommendation of the Commission on a Way Forward."

When will actions taken by the General Conference be implemented?

Just like any General Conference, changes could be made to the Book of Discipline and those changes could be implemented as soon as the following year. Because some changes may require constitutional amendments that must be ratified by Annual Conferences, it is difficult to project a timeline for implementation without knowing what has been decided.

Will there be an opportunity to hear from our North Georgia Conference delegation before the Special Session in 2019?

Yes. There will be a day for a listening session with the Delegation. Details on this listening session and opportunities to engage are forthcoming.

Additional resources

Anatomy of Peace, The Arbinger Institute, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2015

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when Stakes are High, Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, McGraw-Hill, 2011

UMC.org/who-we-are/committee-on-a-way-forward

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