



GREAT PLAINS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
of The United Methodist Church

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On the same day I preached about considering how decisions will impact people as many as seven generations later, our General Conference delegates provided for new possibilities for The United Methodist Church when they chose to remove language that restricted openly LGBTQ+ clergy from serving as pastors.

The delegates here in Charlotte, North Carolina, also voted to eliminate penalties for clergy or churches who hold — or refrain from — holding same-gender weddings. And it is the spirit of that latter piece of legislation that I want to share with clergy and churches today.

The people joining together here from around the world to do the work of the church have been removing various punitive pieces of the Book of Discipline added during the 2019 special session of General Conference, as well as language inserted into the Discipline as long as 52 years ago.

These votes offer us a tremendous opportunity as the church to live up to our standards for social justice. I, for one, am excited about the possibilities for ministry that we can do together as we focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I believe we will be more inclusive because we no longer will be marginalizing a group of people.

We will be much fairer because we will no longer disqualify people for ministry based on a single factor, but instead we will fully consider a person's gifts and graces for ministry.

We will exhibit love for all persons, as Jesus continues to direct us to do.

And, finally, we will have freedom to fully enter our diverse mission fields across the Great Plains and beyond.

It's important to note that the work here does not shift the church in general or any local congregation into a position of promoting any group or stance. Instead, it moves the denomination to a place of neutrality. As I will address further in the weeks and months ahead, no church will have to do anything that makes it uncomfortable regarding aspects of human sexuality. Nor will any pastor be forced to do anything that goes against that person's conscience.

The Cabinet and I strive in every appointment to make the best match for each pastor and congregation. To allay any concerns, I want to be clear. The Cabinet and I would not send an openly gay pastor to a church that would not be accepting because doing so would not be healthy for the local church nor for the pastor.

Also, local churches have the authority to determine wedding policies. That does not change with any of the decisions made at General Conference.

It is my prayer that after so many years of acrimony, we will build and rebuild relationships, that we will make note of the numerous parts of our faith that unite us, and that together we will be more effective witnesses for Jesus Christ as we journey toward a brighter, fully inclusive, vibrant future for generations to come in The United Methodist Church.

Bishop David Wilson
Great Plains Conference

