

## Timeline to 2019 Special General Conference

- **May 18, 2016:** Delegates at the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, USA, approve request from Council of Bishops to delay a debate on homosexuality until a proposed commission can study church regulations. Instead, the bishops asked for the body's permission to name a special commission that would completely examine and possibly recommend revisions of every paragraph in *The Book of Discipline* related to human sexuality. The commission would represent the different regions of a denomination on four continents as well as the varied perspectives of the church.
- **May 21, 2016:** The Council of Bishops meet in Executive Session following the close of General Conference discuss and plan for the ongoing unity of The United Methodist Church.
- **July 25, 2016:** Executive Committee of Council of Bishops approve framework for implementing the **Commission on a Way Forward** and discussed possible scenarios for a Special of the General Conference. The Council adopted a **purpose statement** for the Commission, including its **mission, vision and scope**, and determined that it will be composed of 20-25 members to be identified by August 31 with a target of October for an initial meeting. Each bishop would nominate up to five persons. Bishops **Ken Carter, Sandra Steiner Ball** and **David Yemba** selected to serve as a team of moderators to preside, provide spiritual guidance and pastoral care.
- **August 18, 2016:** Bishop **Debra Wallace-Padgett** of the North Alabama Conference, who chairs the "Council Life Together" team, and **Bishop Al Gwinn**, who leads the prayer subcommittee of the Council of Bishops, chosen to design and guide a complementary prayer initiative called "Praying Our Way Forward." In the first phase of the endeavor, the bishops of the church were asked to pledge 15 minutes a day in prayer for the selection and initial work of the Commission on A Way Forward.
- **October 24, 2016:** The Council of Bishops announces the 32 members of the Commission on a Way Forward. See full list on Page XX.
- **December 19, 2016:** Council of Bishops announces second phase the "Praying Our Way Forward" initiative to be launched New Year's Day with **75 weeks of focused prayer** for The UMC. The effort will begin January 1 in the North Carolina Conference, and wrap up in the West Angola Episcopal area in June 2018. Each annual conference will take one week to have intentional prayer for the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and for the work of the Commission on a Way Forward.
- **January 23-26, 2017:** The Commission on a Way Forward held its first meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, with 32 members from nine countries in attendance. Presentations from Dawn Wiggins Hare, General Secretary of

## Commission on a Way Forward

the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, and Erin Hawkins, General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, focused on gender, race and culture and provided some principles for self-monitoring and laid the groundwork for the group to agree on behavioral norms and build a covenant for their work together. A significant portion of the four-day meeting was spent in small group discussions, with the aim of building relationships and establishing a foundation of trust and understanding among members.

- **February 27-March 2:** Commission on a Way Forward holds second meeting in Atlanta as commission members spend time in reflection, discussion and work team meetings.
- **April 6-8:** The third meeting of the Commission on a Way Forward is held in Washington D.C., with members expressing optimism at reaching consensus on a plan or plans to guide the Council of Bishops in leading The United Methodist Church into the future. The members also began discussing possible outcomes and timelines.
- **July 19-21:** The Commission on a Way Forward holds its fourth meeting on at the Wespeth building in Chicago, Illinois, and issues a **Status Report**, updating the church and the leaders on the faithful work of the Commission after four meetings. See report on page 69.
- **September 18-20:** The Commission on a Way Forward meets in Berlin, Germany, to start sketching models to share with the Council of Bishops as options for finding a way forward regarding human sexuality. Members of the Commission express the need for the unity of the UMC, yet recognizing the different theological understandings and expressions on human sexuality.
- **October 30- November 1:** Commission on a Way Forward meets in Nashville
- **November 5-10:** Council of Bishops meets at Lake Junaluska
- **January 18-20, 2018:** Commission on a Way Forward meeting
- **February 25-28:** Council of Bishops meeting
- **March 19-22:** Commission on a Way Forward meeting
- **April 29-May 4:** Council of Bishops meeting
- **May 14-17:** Commission on a Way Forward meeting
- **July 8:** Deadline for Petitions to 2019 Special Session of General Conference
- **November 4-9:** Council of Bishops meeting
- **February 23-26, 2019:** Special Session of General Conference, St. Louis, Missouri. USA