

# Parents: A Guide for talking to your youth about the 2019 General Conference decisions impacting The United Methodist Church

**How did we get here?** Some amazing leaders at my church provided this [toolkit](#) to our members. It is a very helpful way to educate yourselves on the process before you talk to your kids.

**What exactly happened?** Our conference has provided reporting [here](#). Basically, the One Church Plan (OPC) was voted down and the Traditional Plan was voted in 438 to 384. The OCP was a plan allowing churches and clergy who disagreed on the issues of ordination and marriage for those who identify as LGBTQ to remain in the same unified global church body. The Traditional Plan reaffirms our existing language excluding persons who identify as LGBTQ from ordination and marriage in our church.

**What else do I need to know?** LGBTQ persons remain welcome in our congregations, ministries, and leadership positions. The UMC is a legislative body. Much like a government, our democratic process allows for continued changes to our Book of Discipline. This may be more difficult in the future as the UMC continues to grow overseas but continues to decline in membership in the United States. But, the process for change remains available.

## **How do I talk to my kids about this?**

Explain the process. There are many knee-jerk and understandably emotional reactions to these events, but knowing the facts is key to understanding the process and implications.

Listen. It is critical that we listen to young people even if we do not agree with their opinions. Young people will never remain in the church if their voices are not heard.

Encourage engagement. If we want influence, we must participate. Prioritize worship. Participate in ministries. Meet Christians and United Methodists from different cultures. Participate in the countless local and global missions that make the United Methodist Church so important to so many of us and those around the world. Your youth leader, pastor, and district and conference leaders can all help you find amazing ways for your child to engage in the processes and ministries on a local, district, conference, jurisdictional, and global level.

Pray as a family. Pray for the United Methodist Church as a family. This is critical. Imagine the impact on our denomination if all the young people around the world prayed daily with their families for our church.

**Know this:** The Gospel is messy. It is not neat and tidy. It was never meant to be. It involves risk, heartbreak, relentlessness, frustration, and personal discipline. There is no “easy button” to unifying God’s people. We cannot and should not expect to decide how to move forward without prayer, listening, discussion, engagement, and personal reflection and accountability.

**Be encouraged:** Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. God’s Holy Spirit is present with us and transcends all denominations, disagreements, and political processes. Whenever we are suffering, God draws us ever closer in God’s arms.