

General Conference: Day 2

The morning was opened by Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata who welcomed everyone and called everyone to worship. The Council of Bishops then entered in processional to “Lift High the Cross”. Worship was a moment of joy and praise in an otherwise stressful and tensioned filled climate. Worship concluded with a unifying message from Council of Bishop President Kenneth Carter of the Florida Episcopal Area. Bishop Carter spoke telling his story, our stories, and God’s story. “Your story is not the only story. So, we sit in these places, these privileged places, to share our stories and to listen to the stories of others. The good news is that God has a story too”, said Bishop Carter. He went on to talk about what divides us and breaking down those divisions through Christ. “Could it be that Jesus has already broken down the dividing wall of hostility that is between us and made peace through the blood of the cross?”, Bishop Carter asked. He finished up with the driving fact that God is able to heal the divisions and separations.

“Bishop Carter’s sermon this morning was powerful and reminded us of our task as delegates as we look for a way forward”, Rev. Thomas Salsgiver, Clergy Delegate, Assistant to the Bishop.

Following the message from Bishop Carter, Gary Graves, Secretary of the General Conference, named Bishop Christian Alsted from the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference as name presiding bishop for the morning. The session quickly moved into business by completing roll call and establishing the bar. The Committee on Agenda and Calendar presented their report which was adopted. Then the Committee on Reference presented their report. Next, the Plan of Organization and Rules of Order for sustaining votes was a yes vote.

The morning continued with a presentation from the Commission on a Way Forward. Moderators for the Commission, Bishops Ken Carter, Sandra Steiner Ball, and David Yemba introduced the Commission with a brief overview. Rev. Thomas Salsgiver began to introduce commission members. Salsgiver was then joined by Rev. Julie Hager Love to introduce the balance of the commission members. Next up, Rev. Jasmine Smothers presented the One Church Plan. Followed by Mazvita Machinga who presented the Connectional Plan. Lastly, Rev. Jessica LaGrone, gave an overview of the Traditional Plan.

The morning closed with members of the commission conveying their experience working together. They spoke of the tremendous love and respect they have for one another. The difficulties of coming from so many diverse backgrounds and agreeing to disagree on view points. Not approaching each other with judgements or anger but with mutual understanding, admiration, and love.

The afternoon started with the business of prioritization of the petitions. Delegates had to vote on what petitions they would deem high priority.

Prioritization Results

Wespath Recommendations – Pension Liabilities and CRSP Amendment – Par. 1504	90016–90017	518	63.56
Traditional Plan	(Except 90041 and 90048), 90032–90040, 90042-90047	459	55.57

Disaffiliation - Taylor	90066	412	50.06
Disaffiliation – Boyette	90059	406	49.51
One Church Plan	(Except 90015) 90001-90014	403	48.67
Disaffiliation – Ottjes New Par. 2548	90058	395	48.41
Retain Paragraph 161.G	90062	214	26.13
A Simple Plan	90068-90075	153	18.68
A Traditional Way Forward with Enhanced Enforcement	90052	148	18.03
A Graceful Exit as a Way Forward	90051	133	16.24
Inclusiveness	90082	107	12.94
Human Sexuality	90083	104	12.73
Inclusiveness	90087	104	12.70
Connectional Conference Plan	(Except 90018) 90019-90031	102	12.44
Abeyance of Trust Clause Enforcement	90056	99	12.03
Marriage	90067	87	10.64
Chargeable Offenses	90088	87	10.57
Definition of Gender	90057	70	8.54
Interpretation of Fidelity in Marriage for Deacons	90077	69	8.42
Fully Inclusive Way Forward	90090-90092	67	8.18
Replace Paragraph 161.G	90055	64	7.79
One New Discipline Plan	90084	61	7.42
Sexual Practices	90089	45	5.47

Next came the votes to decide the legislative committee Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. The results are as follows: Joe Harris, Chair with 51%; Betty Kazadi Musau, Vice-Chair with 52%; Carlene Fogle-Miller with 58%. Following the vote the petitions were open for discussion with the legislative committee. First up, was the petition that addressed Wespeth pension liabilities of departing churches and the accrued benefits of departing clergy. In the legislative committee’s first vote, delegates passed Wespeth’s petition 768 to 44, moving it on to the plenary session. Concerns about being so close to scheduled adjournment led delegates to vote to adjourn early and begin Monday with discussion of the Traditional plan.