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Michigan Bishop responds to United Methodist General Conference

ST LOUIS, MO... At the 2019 General Conference of The United Methodist Church in St. Louis, MO, delegates voted to maintain its stance on human sexuality. Also, enhanced enforcement provisions were approved as a way to encourage pastors, bishops, and churches to follow Disciplinary requirements. It is not yet clear how much of the plan will be ruled constitutional.

“What is clear is that many LGBTQ persons find this language hurtful and feel it leaves them on the margins of our church life,” Said Michigan Bishop David Bard, “We need to acknowledge that hurt and pain and sadness, which is shared by their family members. People who were hoping for more space for LGBTQ persons are deeply disappointed.” He added, “No vote at General Conference diminishes the absolute worth of LGBTQ persons.”

The 864 delegates (half lay, half clergy) from all over the world met in St. Louis from Feb. 24-26 to discuss and act on a report of the Commission on a Way Forward over the issue of human sexuality. The decision of the General Conference offered majority support for the Traditional Plan. The vote was 438 to 384. Research indicated approximately 2/3rds of delegates representing U.S. churches voted for more inclusive plans, but the more traditional delegates representing Africa and Asia resulted in support of the Traditional Plan. The delegates then voted to ask the Judicial Council, the highest court in the denomination, to review the constitutionality of the approved legislation.

Bishop Bard commented, “Even while there is a great deal of uncertainty, Michigan United Methodist Churches remain committed to being places of help and hope, of offering food and friendship, of strengthening families of all kinds, of working with the poor and those who struggle. We remain committed in the spirit of Jesus to make a difference in the lives of others and in the communities in which we exist.”

No progressive or traditional local churches in Michigan have indicated they plan to leave the denomination. 2000 clergy and laity (non-clergy) will meet in Traverse City, MI May 30 to June 2, 2019, for the Michigan Annual Conference. The Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church represents approximately 800 local United Methodist churches and over 130,000 members in Michigan. The Michigan Conference Office is located in Lansing, Michigan and is led by Bishop David Bard.

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