

# LOCAL CHURCH STUDY OUTLINE: A WAY FORWARD OR SCHISM?

- **Purpose:** *To enable the local church to have informed dialogue about the dilemma The United Methodist Church faces as a special February 2019 General Conference prepares to meet to discuss the future of the church. The minimum three sessions are designed to acquaint congregants to the challenges the denomination & local churches must address in the immediate years ahead as the church debates whether it will become more inclusive or exclusive, united or divided. Some suggested materials are included in this packet and may be reproduced. See attached Harvey C. Martz, "Resources from the United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy for Teaching and Preaching about Human Sexuality." Others will be forthcoming. Prepared by the United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy and Friends umarc@org*

## Session One: Schism or Church Unity?

1. Challenge church faces
2. Why a Special General Conference in 2019
3. Decisions and Possible Consequences

### Resource Materials:

- Messer, Donald E. *"United Methodism: Is Schism Inevitable?"*
- Oliveto, Karen P. *"Our Strangely Warmed Hearts: Coming Out Into God's Call"* (Abingdon, 2018), pp.35-65.
- Weems, Lovett. H., Jr., *"What's At Stake When Schism Is An Option?"* 2017  
<https://www.churchleadership.com/focus/whats-stake-schism-option/#>

## Session Two: Human Sexuality and the Church

1. The Church's Historic Struggle
2. Understanding Biblical Teaching about Homosexuality
3. Why Christians Differ

### Resource Materials:

- Invite persons related to the LGBTQ community to be engaged in the discussion
- Hamilton, Adam. *"Making Sense of the Bible"* (Harper One Press, 2014)
- Martz, Harvey C. *"An Approach to the Bible & The United Methodist Book of Discipline"*
- Messer, Donald E. *"Sex and the Church"*
- Wink, Walter. *"Homosexuality and the Bible"*

## Session Three: The Bishop's One-Church Plan

1. Way Forward Commission & UM Bishops
2. Optional Approach & Judicial Council
3. What Might Happen in 2019

### Resource Materials:

- "Understanding Council of Bishops One Church Plan"
- Astle, Cynthia B. *"Judicial Council Allows Alternative Proposals for 2019 General Conference"* <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/163984af89dc481f>
- Hodges, Sam & Heather Hahn. *"Bishops' Action Leads to Questions"*  
<http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/bishops-action-leads-to-questions>
- *"One Church Model: A Statement of Support from Uniting Methodists"*  
<http://unitingmethodists.com/one-church-model/>

