



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
 CONSEIL JUDICIAIRE DE L'EGLISE METHODISTE UNIE  
 RECHTSHOF DER EVANGELISCH-METHODISTISCHEN KIRCHE  
 CONSELHO JUDICIAL DA IGREJA METODISTA UNIDA  
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**Report by Bishop on Decision of Law**

This form is to be used for (please check one):

Reporting of decisions of law made by bishops in response to questions of law submitted to them in writing during the regular business of a conference session (§ 56.3 Const. and § 2609.6 *The Book of Discipline* 2016).

Reporting of episcopal decisions on questions of law when such decisions are appealed by one-fifth of the members of the conference (§ 56.2 Const. and § 2609.7 *The Book of Discipline* 2016).

Name of Bishop: J. Michael Lowry

Address: 3200 E. Rosedale Street City: Fort Worth

State/Province: Texas ZIP/Postal Code 76105 Country: United States of America

Phone: 817-877-5222 Fax: 817-338-4541 E-mail: bishop@ctcumc.org

Annual Conference: Central Texas Conference Date of session: June 12, 2019 (month/day/year)

Question(s) of Law: \_\_\_\_\_

"I appeal to the Bishop for a decision of law as to the "A Resolution on what's next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019"

Authorities Cited (indicate paragraph or decision number where applicable):

Constitution: ¶51, ¶56.3\* Book of Discipline: ¶ 2609.6

Judicial Council Decision(s): 1044, 1283, 1340, 1357

Signature: J. Michael Lowry Date: July 9, 2019

Bishop of The United Methodist Church (month/day/year)

**The following must be attached:**

- Decision of Law, including facts, rationale and ruling
  - Text of the written request for decision
  - Minutes of annual conference proceedings (relevant portions only)
  - List of names and addresses of interested parties
  - Other relevant materials (e.g. conference rules, resolutions, policies, reports)
- Eight (8) hard copies must be submitted via USPS or other delivery service to:  
 Clerk Price of the Judicial Council, 5556 N. Sheridan Road, #610, Chicago, IL 60640, USA
- Electronic copies in both Word and PDF (with security features disabled) must be submitted to: [secretary@umcjudicialcouncil.org](mailto:secretary@umcjudicialcouncil.org).

\*1) Division three - Episcopal Supervision Article VII ¶51)

\*2) Division four - The Judiciary. Article II. 3 ( ¶56)

## **Report by Bishop on Decision of Law**

### **Report by Bishop J. Michael Lowry, Resident Bishop of the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church on a Decision of Law**

#### **The Annual Meeting of the Central Texas Conference** Debate and Subsequent vote on a Resolution entitled *“What’s Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019”* June 12, 2019

#### **Statement of Facts:**

The Central Texas Conference debated and subsequently voted on an amended version (the amendment had been previously accepted) of a resolution entitled “What’s Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019.” (see attached minutes) Carol Waddell asked for clarification on “what the body was voting on” as it related to the 4 numbered points of the second “whereas” paragraph and/or the “to be resolved” portion of the resolution. [Waddell: “Does it say that we are in agreement with What’s Next? Bishop: “‘Whereas’ reflects the movement of the motion. We are voting on the ‘Therefore, be it resolved.’ We are not able to change church law.”] Bishop Lowry added, “The ‘Whereas’ portion is informational. This does not bind the Conference or conference officials.” Rev. Margaret Stratton asked for an “Appeal for Decision of Law to make sure this resolution is legal.” Bishop Lowry ruled that the amended resolution was “appropriately before us [i.e. The Annual Conference delegates]. The amended resolution does not bind the conference or conference officials, so it is appropriate. I reiterate that the ‘Whereas’ reflect the sentiment of the conference, but the Conference is not bound by this. This is an aspirational standard. Actions adopted are in the ‘Resolved’ portion” of the Resolution.

The Resolution “What’s Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019” passed on a paper ballot vote: 426 in favor, 216 no, 2 abstentions, 3 blank ballots.

#### **Jurisdiction:**

The Judicial council has jurisdiction under ¶51 and ¶56.3 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church and under ¶2609.6 of *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*.

#### **Analysis and Rationale:**

The “Whereas” portions of the Resolution “What’s Next in the Central Texas Conference 2019” express the preference of the Conference. The second paragraph beginning with “And Whereas” reflects and restates four points adopted by a gathering of lay and clergy individuals at a meeting entitled “UMC Next” held at Church of the Resurrection in the spring of 2019 prior to the opening of the Central Texas Annual Conference. Their inclusion in the aforesaid resolution is a reporting on action taken by the “UMC Next” Conference and the endorsement of those recommended actions by the makers of the resolution. As such they constitute the opinion, desire and hope of the makers of the Resolution. The adoption of the aforesaid resolution with these four points included further states a desire and hope of a majority of the delegates of the

Central Texas Conference. As such, they are aspirational in nature and not binding on delegates, churches or officials of the Central Texas Conference. Numerous Judicial Council rulings have held that a Conference may adopt aspirational resolutions as long as they do not call for action negating *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. Those decisions include but are not limited to Judicial Council Decisions No. 1044, 1283, 1340, and 1357.

The last paragraph of the Resolution “What’s Next in the Central Texas Conference 2019” which begins with the phrase “Therefore, be it resolved” contains the applicable action elements of the resolution adopted by the Central Texas Conference. The “resolved portion” calls for 1) listening to one another, 2) praying for one another, and 3) loving one another “as Christ loves each and all of us.” The “Resolved” portion of the Resolution does not call for the members of the Central Texas Annual Conference, member churches or Conference staff to do anything contrary to *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church* 2016. The Resolution “What’s Next in the Central Texas Conference 2019” is legally before the delegates of the Central Texas Conference because the “Whereas” portion of the Resolution is aspirational in nature and the “Resolved” portion of the Resolution is legally appropriate for the reasons stated in the previous sentence.

**Bishop’s Ruling:**

The presiding bishop, J. Michael Lowry (Resident Bishop of the Central Texas Conference in the Fort Worth Episcopal Area) rules that the Resolution ““What’s Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019” as amended and voted upon is legally before the delegates of the Central Texas Annual Conference. As presented and amended, the Resolution is consistent and acceptable within the parameters of the Doctrine and Discipline of United Methodist Church as stated in *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church* 2016.

**AMENDMENT -- CORRECTION -- MOTION**

*Please circle the appropriate use of the form above*

**CENTRAL TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*(Submit this copy to the Conference Secretary)*

Date *6-12-* Time *3:00* Preliminary Report Page No.

Report Being Addressed: *What's Next Resolutions*

Wording:

*I appeal to the Bishop for a decision of law as to the "A Resolution on What's Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference 2019."*

Members Signature: *Rev. Margaret Stratton*

Church: *Lighthouse Fellowship*

Address: *7200 Robertson Road*

City, Zip: *Lak Fort Worth, TX 76135*

**A Resolution on  
What's Next in the  
Central Texas Annual Conference  
2019**

**Whereas:** On May 20-22, 2019 a group of lay and clergy members of the Central Texas Conference participated in a meeting in Kansas City, KS at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection called, UMC Next. We gathered with 600 centrist and progressive United Methodists to dialogue about how we might move forward following the passage of the Traditional Plan by the 2019 General Conference.

**And Whereas:** As a result of the group's work, a statement and four primary commitments were clearly and consensually agreed upon by the group:

“We believe these commitments are essential to a hope-filled future for the global Methodist movement as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world:”

1. We long to be passionate followers of Jesus Christ, committed to a Wesleyan vision of Christianity, anchored in scripture and informed by tradition, experience, and reason as we live a life of personal piety and social holiness.
2. We commit to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in all forms and toward all people and build a church which affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.
3. We reject the Traditional Plan approved at General Conference 2019 as inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and will resist its implementation.
4. We will work to eliminate discriminatory language and the restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons. We affirm the sacred worth of LGBTQ persons, celebrate their gifts, and commit to being in ministry together.

**And Whereas:** We believe that we must all continue to pray for the future of our denomination and the ongoing fruitfulness of every local congregation,

**Therefore, be it resolved:** That we as members of the Central Texas Annual Conference commit ourselves to continuing to listen to one another, to be in dialogue with one another, to pray for one another, and above all, to love one another as Christ loves each and all of us.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Tom Harkrider  
Tim Bruster  
Kim Simpson  
Chris Hayes  
Jeff Smith  
Mary Spradlin  
Mary Teague  
Darlene Alfred  
Casey Orr*

*Kathy Ezell  
Bob Holloway  
Judy Holloway  
Marianne Brown  
Glenda Whitehead  
Ethan Gregory  
Johnny Brower  
Eric McKinney  
Jim Sanders*

**Report by Bishop on Decision(s) of Law**

9 July 2019

List of names and addresses of interested parties:

Rev. Margaret Stratton (“What’s Next” Resolution)

5001 Stadium

Fort Worth, TX 76133

Rev. Steve Holston (“Transparency” Resolution)

PO Box 7736

Waco, TX 76714

J. Michael Lowry

Resident Bishop, Central Texas Conference

3200 E. Rosedale

Fort Worth, TX 76105

Dr. Clifton O. Howard

Conference Secretary, Central Texas Annual Conference

3200 East Rosedale

Fort Worth, TX 76105

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE  
CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE**

**ARLINGTON CONVENTION CENTER**

**Arlington, Texas**

**June 9-12, 2019**

[The sections below are excerpts from the minutes as relevant to Bishop J. Michael Lowry's decisions of law. The official minutes will be published in the fall of 2019 in the *Journal of the Central Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.*]

**BUSINESS SESSION 5**

WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 2019

**RESOLUTIONS**

Conference secretary Clifton Howard presented a resolution titled "**What's Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference.**" Per conference policy, the resolution had been presented to the Core Team, which voted concurrence. Rev. Howard moved that the body accept the resolution. Bishop Lowry then explained procedures. There would be an opening statement from the group offering the resolution, which could then be followed by three speeches for and three speeches against. The person who made the opening statement could then make a closing statement. Rev. Tim Bruster (First Fort Worth) presented an opening statement and invited Rev. David Alexander (First Mansfield) to make a friendly amendment. Rev. Alexander amended the statement by replacing the last two paragraphs with a new paragraph. Rev. (ret.) Margaret Stratton (Lighthouse Fellowship) spoke against the resolution. Rev. Alexander makes a point of order asking if the body needed to vote on the amendment. Bishop Lowry responded that since the group proposing the resolution accepted the amendment, there is no need to vote. The resolution as amended was still properly before the body. Rev. Casey Orr (Brentwood UMC, TN) spoke for the resolution. Rev. Ryan Barnett (First Waco) made a motion to table the resolution indefinitely. Motion was seconded. By standing vote, the motion failed. Rev. Bill Killough (Alliance UMC) spoke against the resolution. Mary Teague (St. Matthew, Fort Worth) spoke for the resolution. Rev. Matt Ybanez (First Hurst) made a point of order regarding the number of speeches already offered. Bishop Lowry stated that there had been two speeches for and two speeches against. Rev. Stephen Schmidt (First Gatesville) spoke against the resolution. Elaine Anderson (Arborlawn) offered a new amendment to the resolution. Rev. Chris Hayes (Keller) made a point of order asking whether this amendment should be properly considered a substitution, which would require a different procedure. Bishop Lowry ruled that the proposed amendment was actually a substitution because it dealt with three paragraphs. Consequently, it would require a majority vote. Rev. Mary Gean Cope (First Clifton) made a point of order inquiring about the need for a second on the substitution. Bishop Lowry agreed, and someone seconded the motion for substitution. Rev. Chris Hayes (Keller) made a point of order about whether the substitution would qualify as a new resolution

that must lay on the table for twenty-four hours. Bishop Lowry stated that it did not. Rev. Steve Holston (Trinity UMC) made a point of order to ask if a copy of the substitution text can be put on the screens for the body to view. Bishop Lowry calls for a lunch break to allow time to display the substitution. Rev. Howard made announcements. Rev. Amy Alexander prayed, and the session adjourned.

## BUSINESS SESSION 6

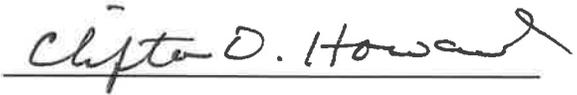
WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 12, 2019

### RESOLUTIONS (CONT.)

Rev. Tynna Dixon opened session with prayer. Bishop Lowry called the body to order and reopened discussion on the proposed substitution to the resolution **"What's Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference."** Proposer had already made a speech for the substitution. Bishop Lowry calls for up to three speeches against and two for. Rev. Ann Hitt (Annetta) states that Annetta UMC will pledge \$7575 toward the conference offering for Mooreville UMC. Rev. (ret.) Margaret Stratton (Lighthouse Fellowship) called for decision of law regarding the legality of the resolution. Bishop Lowry ruled the request out of order because the body is considering the substitution and not the original. Rev. Jason Valendy (Saginaw) spoke against the substitution. Rev. Steve Holston (Trinity UMC) spoke for the substitution. Rev. Julie Ann Allen (White's Chapel) spoke against the substitution. Rev. Jay Frazee (First Brownwood) spoke for the substitution. Courtney McGuire (Stephenville) spoke against it. Elaine Anderson (Arborlawn) offered a final statement. Rev. Mary Gean Cope (First Clifton) moved to amend the substitution by adding an additional paragraph. Rev. Lauren Christenberry (Keller) made a point of order about whether an amendment can be made after the final statement. Bishop Lowry stated that the amendment was in order because he had not yet called for the vote. Rev. Yvonne Coon (First Georgetown) asked a question of clarification about whether the proposed amendment would simply be added to the end of the substitution. The answer was yes. Lynn Whitcomb (Lake Shore) spoke against the amendment to the substitution. Rev. Eric Douglas (First Mineral Wells/Palo Pinto) made a point of order regarding a second for the amendment. Someone seconded. Rev. Jon Reeves (The Oaks) called the question. Seconded. Bishop Lowry called for a vote on the motion to call the question. The motion passed by more than two thirds. Bishop Lowry called for a vote on the Cope amendment to the Anderson substitution. The standing vote was close. Bishop Lowry called the tellers to formally count those standing. The motion to amend the Anderson substitution does not pass (302 for, 346 against). Bishop Lowry calls for a vote on the Anderson substitution. The substitution does not pass. The body returned to the resolution "What's Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference" with the Alexander friendly amendment. Rev. Tim Bruster (First Fort Worth) made a closing statement. Smith (White's Chapel) moved that the body vote by paper ballot. Carol Waddell (West) asked a point of clarification regarding what the body was voting on as it related to the four numbered points of the second "whereas" and/or the "resolved" portion. Bishop Lowry clarified that the "whereas" portion reflected the movement of the motion. He explained that the body was voting on the "therefore, be it resolved" action. Bishop Lowry added that the "whereas" portion was informational and would not bind the conference or conference officials. Rev. (ret.) Margaret Stratton (Lighthouse

Fellowship) called for a decision of law regarding the legality of the resolution. Bishop Lowry ruled that the resolution with the Alexander amendment was legal because it reflected the sentiment of the conference and would not bind the conference. He explained that the "whereas" portion is an aspirational standard. Actions adopted are in the "resolved" portion of the resolution. Rev. David Alexander (First Mansfield) offered a point of information. Rev. Randy Tucker (Godley) asked a point of clarification about whether the conference would be endorsing a UMC Next proposal. Bishop Lowry clarified that it is aspirational rather than binding. Rev. Matt Ybanez (First Hurst) moved to call the question. Bishop Lowry ruled it out of order. Rev. Dave Brower (Bethesda) stated that the resolution is informative. Ruled out of order. Edie Snider (First Crawford) proposed an amendment. Ruled out of order. Rev. Jimmy Sansom (First Hamilton) asked a question of clarification about what had been removed. The body responded "yes" it had been removed. Bishop Lowry called for a vote using written ballots. The vote was 426 in favor, 216 against, 2 abstain, 3 blank. The resolution **"What's Next in the Central Texas Annual Conference"** with the Alexander amendment passed.

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Clifton Howard, Secretary, Central Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

**Notarization:**

State of Texas County of Tarrant

This instrument was acknowledged before me on July 10, 2019 by Clifton Howard as secretary of The Central Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church.



Notary Public's Signature