

## **PROTOCOL OF RECONCILIATION & GRACE THROUGH SEPARATION**

### **Statement of Principles**

- A. Whereas, The United Methodist Church and its members—after careful reflection, discussion and prayer—have fundamental differences regarding their understanding and interpretation of Scripture, theology and practice;
- B. Whereas, The United Methodist Church at its February 2019 Special Session of the General Conference in St. Louis did not resolve their differences specifically related to the full participation of LGBTQ persons in the life of the Church;
- C. Whereas, The United Methodist Church and its members are at an impasse, the Church's witness and mission is being impeded, and the Church itself as well as its members have been injured;
- D. Whereas, The United Methodist Church and its members have a deep desire to fulfill our long-stated mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- E. Whereas, The United Methodist Church is committed to recognizing, respecting and protecting the rights and personal dignity of every person, including people of all races, sexual orientations, genders, national origins, ages, and social classes;
- F. Whereas, the undersigned came together as an outgrowth of a consultation initiated by Bishop John Yambasu and other Central Conference Bishops, and were asked to represent various constituencies of the Church in reaching a gracious and dignified resolution of the impasse;
- G. Whereas, the undersigned propose restructuring The United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences, allowing each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person; and
- H. Whereas, the undersigned, in recognition of the regional contexts and divergent points of view within the global United Methodist Church, propose separation as a faithful step with the possibility of continued cooperation around matters of shared interest, enabling each of us to authentically live out our faith;

NOW, THEREFORE, the undersigned, seeking to serve The United Methodist Church, hereby agree as follows, to this Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation ("the Protocol"):

**ARTICLE I: Agreement and Commitment to this Protocol**

1. This Protocol is unanimously agreed to by each of the undersigned laity, pastors, and bishops of The United Methodist Church. The undersigned further covenant to fully support this Protocol and each other in our joint effort to seek its implementation. Each of the undersigned also agree to recommend the Protocol's implementing legislation to be voted upon and adopted by the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church.
2. The United Methodist Church and its members aspire to multiply the Methodist mission in the world by restructuring the Church through respectful and dignified separation.
3. The undersigned will continue to work together to develop legislation to implement the Protocol, to be voted upon and adopted by the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The undersigned will not challenge the constitutionality or legality of legislation implementing this Protocol and will jointly and individually defend the provisions of the Protocol and any enabling legislation in case of review by the United Methodist Judicial Council.
4. The undersigned agree to use their best efforts to persuade any groups or organizations with which they are affiliated to support the legislation necessary to implement the Protocol. Consistent with the commitment in Article I, Paragraph 1, the undersigned will not participate in or support legislation or other efforts that are inconsistent with the principles and terms of the Protocol and the implementing legislation. They may support other efforts to the extent that all signatories to this Protocol agree that such efforts are consistent with the Protocol.
5. The undersigned agree that each of the provisions of this Protocol is integrated with and integral to the whole and shall not be severable from the remainder of the Protocol. Further, should any provisions of the Protocol be deemed illegal by either the United Methodist Judicial Council or by civil courts, the entirety of this Protocol shall be considered null and void.
6. The undersigned agree that they will bring no claims for, nor will they support any claims for, additional assets of the post-separation United Methodist Church or any of the denominations that will arise from this Protocol and will not be parties to such litigation.

**ARTICLE II: Definitions of Terms**

1. **LGBTQ** shall mean the community that includes several subsets of persons who share similar discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. The letters of the acronym stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (a non-binary, self-identifier).
2. **Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol** shall mean all Methodist denominations created through this Protocol and The United Methodist Church.
3. **Post-separation United Methodist Church** shall mean The United Methodist Church after the formation of new denominations under this Protocol.

4. **Protocol** shall mean this agreement by which the parties hereto agree to support the development and implementation of the legislation necessary to implement the terms of the Protocol.

### **ARTICLE III: Process and Timeline for Implementation of the Protocol**

1. To implement this Protocol, The United Methodist Church and its members will adopt the following process and timeline for accomplishing restructuring:
  - a. Registration with the Secretary of the Council of Bishops of intent to form a new Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol must occur not later than May 15, 2021.
  - b. Central Conferences may choose with a two-thirds vote to affiliate with a Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol other than the post-separation United Methodist Church. If a Central Conference does not vote, it remains a part of the post-separation United Methodist Church. Such an affiliation vote shall be taken no later than December 31, 2021.
  - c. Annual Conferences, whether in the Central or Jurisdictional Conferences, may choose to vote on whether to affiliate with one of the Methodist denominations pursuant to this Protocol. If an Annual Conference does not vote, it shall remain a part of the post-separation United Methodist Church. In order for an Annual Conference to consider affiliation with a denomination pursuant to this protocol other than the post-separation United Methodist Church, a motion may be made on the floor of an Annual Conference session to conduct such an affiliation vote. If supported by 20% of those voting at the Annual Conference session, an affiliation vote must be conducted before July 1, 2021. In order to affiliate with a Methodist denomination created under this Protocol other than the post-separation UMC, the vote to affiliate must be supported by 57% of those voting.
  - d. Any local church desiring a different affiliation than the Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol selected by its Annual Conference may conduct an affiliation vote. If a local church does not vote, it remains part of the Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol selected by its Annual Conference. If such a vote occurs, the church council shall determine a voting threshold of either a simple majority or two-thirds of those present and voting at a duly called church conference in order for the motion opting for a different affiliation to be adopted. A vote on a motion to opt for a different affiliation shall occur in a church conference held not more than 60 days after the request for such a vote is made by the church council. Such church conferences must be held in consultation with the District Superintendent who shall authorize such church conferences to be conducted. Decisions about affiliation by a local church pursuant to this Protocol must be made by December 31, 2024.

**ARTICLE IV: Financial Agreement Terms of this Protocol**

1. To foster this restructuring process, the following steps will be taken with respect to the finances of The United Methodist Church:

**a. Local Church Property, Assets, and Liabilities**

- i A local church that affiliates with a Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol other than the post-separation United Methodist Church retains its assets and liabilities. The Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church to which the local church belongs at the time of separation will not exercise its trust clause and shall release such local church from the provisions of any and all trust clauses. The local church, prior to its separation, shall be expected to maintain its connectional responsibilities through the date of separation. At separation, such a local church shall not be required to pay any sums to the Annual Conference other than previously documented loans from the Annual Conference which shall be repaid according to the terms of such loans.
- ii In the event such local church (or its successor) subsequently chooses to close, or a Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol with which they affiliate ceases to exist, the property of such local church will be subject to a lien in favor of Wespath on its assets in the amount of that local church's then proportionate share of future unfunded pension liabilities.
- iii Should a local church disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church and not become part of a Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol, it must comply with paragraph 2553 of The United Methodist Book of Discipline.

**b. Annual, Jurisdictional, and Central Conference Property, Assets, and Liabilities**

- i The property, assets, and liabilities of Annual, Jurisdictional, and Central Conferences shall be retained by those entities regardless of the affiliation decision with a Methodist denomination pursuant to this Protocol that each makes under this Protocol.

**c. Financial Agreements**

- i. A total sum of \$25M shall be paid by the General Council on Finance and Administration over the ensuing quadrennium to the traditionalist Methodist denomination established pursuant to this Protocol after it is formed and incorporated.
- ii. A total sum of \$2M shall be escrowed by the General Council on Finance and Administration for payment to potential additional Methodist

denominations established pursuant to this Protocol after they are formed and incorporated over the ensuing quadrennium.

- iii. As an acknowledgment of the historical role of the Methodist movement in systems of systematic racial violence, exploitation and discrimination, and as a fair and just step in addressing the impact of such harms, a sum of \$39M shall be allocated by the General Council on Finance and Administration in their budget recommendations over the next two quadrennia to support communities historically marginalized by the sin of racism. The goal of these earmarked funds shall be to strengthen ministries by and for Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander Communities, encourage the full participation of historically marginalized communities in the governance and decision-making of the church, and ensure that the vital work of training the next generation of leaders by Africa University will be maintained. The Connectional Table in consultation with the National Plans, the Program Agencies of the Church, and the Council of Bishops shall be responsible for determining and evaluating programmatic priorities in relation to these earmarked funds. \$13M of this sum represents a contribution from the post-separation Traditional Methodist Denomination, made possible by their decision to forgo receiving these funds and instead contribute them to this fund. This \$13M sum shall remain in the possession of and be administered by the post-separation United Methodist Church for this purpose. In addition, the post-separation United Methodist Church will contribute \$26M for a total of \$39M over 8 years for this purpose. Churches which align with the traditional Methodist denomination under this Protocol shall have the option to participate in programs and grants which serve their respective ethnic groups if they otherwise meet the requirements for such participation through this 8-year period.
- iv. The pension plans of The United Methodist Church will remain in place for all current clergy and lay employees affiliated with The United Methodist Church, regardless of the Methodist denomination under this Protocol with which they affiliate. The undersigned support the existing and proposed legislation submitted by Wespath that addresses assumption of unfunded pension liabilities by Methodist denominations under this Protocol, and the ability of the clergy who are associated with Methodist denominations under this Protocol to continue to participate in pension plans administered by Wespath. All other property, assets, or liabilities of The United Methodist Church, including its general boards and agencies, shall remain with the post-separation United Methodist Church and other Methodist denominations under this Protocol shall have no claim or entitlement to such property, assets, or liabilities.

- v. The Council of Bishops of the post-separation United Methodist Church shall offer to enter into ecumenical agreements with Methodist denominations formed under this Protocol. Such ecumenical agreements may include participation in Boards and Agencies, continuation of various mission activities, or any other matters within the scope of ecumenical agreements.

#### **ARTICLE V: Moratorium**

1. As one expression of reconciliation and grace through separation, the undersigned agree that all administrative or judicial processes addressing restrictions in the *Book of Discipline* related to self-avowed practicing homosexuals or same-sex weddings shall be held in abeyance beginning January 1, 2020 through the adjournment of the first conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church. Clergy shall continue to remain in good standing while such complaints are held in abeyance.
2. The undersigned agree that if there are churches proposed for closure, the church and annual conference shall delay final actions on closure of churches until after the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, except in those situations where there are exigent circumstances and/or a congregation has voluntarily discerned it is necessary to close a church due to a lack of participation or financial insolvency.

#### **ARTICLE VI: General Conference 2020**

In order to enable all parties to transition to their preferred future, the Council of Bishops is asked to work with the Commission on General Conferences and other church agencies to accomplish the following:

1. The Council of Bishops requests a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council regarding the constitutionality of the proposed legislation related to this Protocol to take place prior to the opening session of the 2020 General Conference.
2. The Council of Bishops requests a report from the General Council on Finance and Administration related to the financial impacts of this Protocol to be shared prior to the 2020 General Conference.
3. The Council of Bishops, working with the Commission on the General Conference, identifies an appropriate time on the Agenda of General Conference for the Protocol and any related implementing legislation to be presented.
4. The Council of Bishops will provide meeting space for those interested in creating other expressions of a Methodist denomination pursuant to this protocol at the adjournment of the 2020 General Conference session.
5. The Council of Bishops will call the first session of the General Conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church to organize itself and, if such legislation has not been passed, consider matters pertaining to the Regional Conference plan.

- The Council of Bishops will call the first session of the United States Regional Conference to consider legislation related to changes in the adaptable portions of the Book of Discipline including the repeal of Traditional Plan legislation and all other portions related to LGBTQ persons.

**ARTICLE VII: The Signatories to the Protocol**

The undersigned persons, after voluntarily participating in multiple confidential mediation sessions with mediator Kenneth R. Feinberg, agree to the terms of this Protocol and will collectively and individually work to support adoption of the Protocol, including the development of all legislation necessary to implement it.

December 17, 2019

DocuSigned by:  
*Chris Alsted*  
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Signature: **Bishop Christian Alsted, Nordic-Baltic Episcopal Area**

DocuSigned by:  
*Rev. Thomas Berlin*  
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Signature: **Rev. Thomas Berlin, representing UMCNext, Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists**

DocuSigned by:  
*Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton*  
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Signature: **Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, New York Episcopal Area**

DocuSigned by:  
*Rev. Keith Boyette*  
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Signature: **Rev. Keith Boyette, representing The Confessing Movement, Good News, IRD/UM Action, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association**

DocuSigned by:  
*Bishop Kenneth H. Carter*  
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Signature: **Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Florida Episcopal Area**

DocuSigned by:  
*Rev. Junius Dotson*  
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Signature: **Rev. Junius Dotson, representing UMCNext, Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists**

DocuSigned by:  
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**Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, Washington Episcopal Area**

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**Rev. Egmedio "Jun" Equila, Jr., Philippines Central Conference**

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**Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, Louisiana Episcopal Area**

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**Bishop Rodolfo Rudy Juan, Davao Episcopal Area, Philippines**

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**Janet Lawrence, representing Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Reconciling Ministries Network**

DocuSigned by:  
Signature: *David Meredith*  
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**Rev. David Meredith, representing Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Reconciling Ministries Network, member of UM Queer Clergy Caucus**

DocuSigned by:  
Signature: *Patricia Miller*  
2069928286C641D...  
**Patricia Miller, representing The Confessing Movement, Good News, IRD/UM Action, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association**

DocuSigned by:  
Signature: *Dr. Randall Miller*  
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**Dr. Randall Miller, representing Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Reconciling Ministries Network**

DocuSigned by:  
Signature: *Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer*  
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**Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer, Ohio West Episcopal Area**

DocuSigned by:  
Signature: *Bishop John K. Yambasu*  
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**Bishop John K. Yambasu, Sierra Leone Episcopal Area**

In addition to the above signatories, the following individuals participated in the initial meeting convened by Bishop John Yambasu and other Central Conference Bishops in July 2019 and consulted with the mediation team during the process:

**Rev. Dr. Maxie Dunnam**

**Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli**

**Rev. Adam Hamilton**

**Rev. Dr. Mark Holland**

**Bishop Mande Muyambo, North Katanga Episcopal Area**

**Karen Prudente**

**Rev. Rob Renfroe**

**Rev. Kimberly Scott**

**Rev. Jasmine R. Smothers**

**Mark Tooley**