

Executive Summary of the Theological Statement of the DSC Way Forward

"Theology is our best effort to reflect upon God's gracious action in our lives. . . As United Methodists, we are called to identify the needs both of individuals and of society and to address those needs out of the resources of Christian faith in a way that is clear, convincing, and effective" (*The Discipline of The United Methodist Church, Paragraph 105, p. 80*). As we think about the theological position of the Desert Southwest Conference (DSC) and, in particular, the DSC Way Forward, we affirm that our theological directive is set within this broad mandate. The DSC takes seriously its mission statement that we are to be "A Courageous Church loving like Jesus, acting for justice, and united in hope." Our contemporary culture is a remarkable cacophony of voices that come from social, cultural, political, economic, and religious diversity. In the midst of a great diversity of voices within the American United Methodist Church, we must also acknowledge the total spectrum of voices within United Methodism imbedded in the cultures of Africa, Asia, and Europe.

We not only claim a solid theological foundation as stated in *The Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, but also recognize the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as articulated by Albert Outler. In catching the nuances of Wesley's thinking, Outler has given expression to the theological task through the lenses of Scripture, Experience, Tradition, and Reason.

We are currently in a struggle that will determine the preservation or fragmentation of The United Methodist Church. In spite of what divides us today in The United Methodist Church around sensitive and important issues, there is much more that all United Methodists hold in common. We have always struggled yet affirmed and rejoiced in the gift of diversity and inclusion. The DSC Way Forward continues to maintain its position and support not only of embracing diversity but also of achieving the goal of full inclusion. We recognize the inequality that has existed and continues to exist along the lines of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, and national origin. We also believe that addressing policies, procedures, guidelines, and behaviors that continue to bring physical, psychological, and social wounds to persons need to be boldly confronted and changed.

Anything that diminishes or denies the full humanity of an individual is evil and may lead to inconceivable injustice. There is a need to address those statements in *The Book of Discipline* that articulate those Social Principles of The United Methodist Church (pp. 105-144) that are in conflict with its own theology of full inclusion. Full inclusion may be understood in different ways given a cultural and social context. Although we are many voices, we must be one spirit as we bring together our statements of faith, our theology, our social principles, and our witness to a world that desperately needs to know the love of God in Jesus Christ. In this quest, we seek unity, not uniformity.

Please see the Theological Statement of the DSC Way Forward for our complete statement.