

**Special, Called Session of the Annual Conference  
Desert Southwest Conference  
September 14, 2019**

**Summary of Legislation**

- I. Resolution: Adoption of Desert Southwest Conference Theological Statement with Supporting Documentation**
  - adopt the attached theological statement of the Desert Southwest Conference Way Forward
  - adopt the attached Executive Summary
  - commit to a theological foundation that all persons are welcomed
  
- II. Resolution: Integrity of Faithfulness\*\***
  - ensure the rights of all people to follow their hearts and live from a place of integrity of faith
  - encourage the Bishop and Annual Conference leaders to investigate conditions that would support the ability of people to live by an integrity of faith
  
- III. Resolution: Respecting Cultural Differences\***
  - work with the Western Jurisdiction to allow the General Discipline to be changed and adapted as conditions may require
  - afford the Western Jurisdiction powers that Central Conferences have to change and adapt the General Discipline
  - allow the Western Jurisdiction to live into a new way of being
  
- IV. Resolution: Preserve Our Connectionalism\*\***
  - seek to remain together
  - take whatever steps necessary including a special Western Jurisdiction Conference to preserve unity
  - designate delegates elected to 2020 Western Jurisdiction Conference to serve as representatives to any specially called conference
  
- V. Resolution: Renouncing Divisive and Destructive Strategies with Supporting Documentation\*\***
  - affirm future actions to further divide or eliminate The United Methodist Church or its successor denominations
  - contact the Confessing Movement, the Good News Movement, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association and other renewal organizations
  - contact Church and Society to urge focus on efforts of unity

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### **VI. Resolution: Dialogue with Central Conference Leaders**

- encourage Bishop Hoshibata and the Council of Bishops to dialogue with leaders of the Central Conference
- encourage the U.S. delegates to create a structure allowing the U.S. Conference and the Central Conferences to vote separately on social issues while continuing to work together to support mission and ministry

### **VII. Resolution: From the Amicable Separation Team**

- pray for one another
- allow for contextual ministry
- model that all people are of sacred worth
- strengthen our support of LGBTQ persons so they are able to joyfully and safely serve in ministry in the Desert Southwest Conference

### **VIII. Resolution: Negotiating Separation**

- DSC seek and support a pathway of amicable separation

\*delayed from the June 2019 Session of the Annual Conference

\*\*revised from the June 2019 Session of the Annual Conference

**2019 Special Session Legislation**

**I. Resolution: Adoption of Desert Southwest Conference Theological Statement**

*Financial Implications: no*

**Whereas** United Methodists are the people of two books which guide our spiritual and communal lives, The Bible, as our authoritative scriptures, and *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, our Book of the Covenant;

**Whereas** theology consists of two Greek words, *theos* which means God and *logos* which means word or words about God, and our *Book of Discipline* suggests we use the Wesley Quadrilateral as the basis for theologizing (§105);

**Whereas** the Bible calls for radical inclusivity many times over, including when Peter set aside Jewish law to visit a Gentile’s household when it was revealed to him that he “should not call anyone profane or unclean” (Acts 10); and

**Whereas** the United Methodist, *Book of Discipline*, calls us to a theology of radical inclusivity and defines an inclusive church as “one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world;” (§140) now, therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference

1. Shall adopt the attached Theological Statement of the DSC Way Forward;
2. Shall adopt the attached Executive Summary of the Theological Statement;
3. Encourage all pastors and lay delegates to share these documents with their local church;
4. Commit to a theological foundation that affirms that all persons are welcomed; and
5. In response to the 2019 General Conference affirm that the LGBTQIA+ community have all rights of full membership in our church

Name(s) of Petitioner(s).  
Clayton M. Bowman  
Rev. Nancy Cushman  
Rev. Dr. George Cushman  
Lea Ann Davis  
Pastor Noni Dye  
Sylvia Harris  
Rev. Dr. Evelyn McDonald  
Rev. Dr. Larry Norris

Version: August 1, 2019

*Supporting Documents*

**Theological Statement of the DSC Way Forward**

**The Context of Our Theological Task**

Our journey begins as we rehearse these words from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*:

*“Theology is our best effort to reflect upon God's gracious action in our lives. In response to the love of Christ, we desire to be drawn into a deeper relationship with 'faith's pioneer and perfecter.' Our theological explorations seek to give expression to the mysterious reality of God's presence, peace, and power in the world. By so doing, we attempt to articulate more clearly our understanding of the divine-human encounter and are thereby more fully prepared to participate in God's work in the world . . . 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. Theology serves the Church by interpreting the world's needs and challenges to the Church and by interpreting the gospel to the world” (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, and also affirm what the *Discipline* says about the nature of theological reflection. This inquiry is both critical and constructive, individual and communal, and contextual and incarnational (Paragraph 105, p. 81-82). The very nature of this task compels us to think broadly, deeply, and creatively about how God's grace and love works in our world to bring about transformation, discipleship, and witness. The DSC takes serious 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. These expressions have always been present, to a greater or lesser degree, but the tenor of the times has bought increased dissension and outright conflict over many issues. The perspectives in the prevailing culture are pitched to heightened levels of dialogue and frustration, fueled by the continued growth of diverse secular attitudes; the voices of groups that have long-felt marginalized by society; a strong ethic of individualism in contrast to communal ways of living; the recognition of science and technology as persuasive aspects of our lives; and changing feelings that deemphasize as well as challenge the role of religion and the institutional church. 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.

**The Wesleyan Quadrilateral**

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 as helpful in integrating our points of view as United Methodists. Based on the distinctive theological orientation of John Wesley as it emerged from both his pietistic experiences with the Moravians as well as his classical theological training at Oxford, Wesley built a theology of personal holiness and social justice, seeking and living God's will in our personal and social

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

lives. Wesley never used the phrase, "Quadrilateral," but Outler, in catching the nuances of Wesley's thinking, has given expression to it with these terms: Scripture, Experience, Tradition, and Reason.

**Scripture:** We affirm that the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian New Testament disclose the love of God for humanity and for all creation. It is "the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine" (Paragraph 105, p.83). It is one of many witnesses to God in the world, but for Christians, it becomes the primary standard by which we judge faith and practice. For John Wesley, Scripture was foundational, both timely and timeless, and he always recognized that it must be relevant to the church and in the lives of believers. Scripture may be approached from different perspectives and examined with different lenses. However, the best tools and skills of biblical interpretation are needed to do contextual study so as to draw out the most accurate meaning that a writer intended. Sound interpretation must always prevail over any approach that compromises an accurate understanding of Scripture. There is always the danger of a reader imposing his or her presuppositions, agendas, or biases into the interpretation of a biblical text.

**Experience:** We all bring our collective and individual experiences to the understanding of theology. We have all been shaped in the caldron of our environment. We are a product of biological, social, historical, and location factors. Our core values, norms, mores, beliefs, taboos, and fears (real and perceived) have all been influenced by dynamics in our families of origin (including genetics), educational opportunities (positive and negative), political exposure, socio-economic circumstance, geographical environment (e.g., urban, suburban, rural), and religious practices. Our personalities, each unique and precious, have not been created in a vacuum. We are each unique persons of the world that has molded us. Thus, we recognize our differences that originate from many sources as we engage our free will with situations thrust upon us.

**Tradition:** The legacy of our faith embraces a four-thousand-year history. The traditions of Christianity and Judaism bring long and complex histories. In the awareness of rich and gifted contributions of laity, rabbis, clergy, and social and spiritual movements, we nonetheless acknowledge that, at times, our traditions have been driven, and even complicit, in promoting prejudice, discrimination, alienation, and physical and cultural genocide. The United Methodist Church is passionate about facing and changing inequities of all kinds. Traditions are worth preserving but must never be used to defend or maintain injustice.

**Reason:** *The Book of Discipline* recognizes that any adequate theological statement addresses the importance of reason. We believe that all truth is from God and that, through reason, we interpret Scripture, clarify our Christian witness, articulate and ask questions as we seek God's will, and check the internal coherence of our witness with Scripture, our experiences, and our traditions. Reason helps us to discern a holistic view of reality that joins together "knowledge, experience, and service" (paragraph 105, p. 88, *Discipline*). Further, we affirm the importance of reason to discriminate "the connections between revelation and reason, faith and science, [and] grace and nature" (paragraph 105, p. 88, *Discipline*).

### The Challenge of Preserving Unity in Diversity

We are currently in a struggle that will determine the preservation or fragmentation of The United Methodist Church. Our disagreements are not over the fundamental doctrinal and theological foundations of our denomination nor are they over the distinctive Wesleyan emphases. We articulate our personal interpretations but we generally affirm the great doctrines of the orthodox church. Also, we affirm Wesley's teachings about justification and assurance;

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

sanctification and perfection; faith and good works; mission and service; and the nature and mission of the church. These beliefs found roots in German Moravian pietism and later were also found in the Evangelical United Brethren tradition as articulated in the theology of Phillip William Otterbein, who came from a Reformed background. As United Methodists, we share in the Reformed tradition and, as some would say, we are reformed and are always reforming! In all these traditions, God's grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is the dynamic that gives substance and vitality to Christian life. Wesley never drew back from the communal form of expression that he believed built the community of faith in worship, prayer, witness, and social justice. This thinking was instrumental in forming what would later become the "connectional mentality" of the Methodist Church.

What is crucial to understand is that, in spite of what divides us today in The United Methodist Church around sensitive and important issues, there is much that all United Methodists hold in common and celebrate. Although we have differences in how we interpret Scripture and apply it to a rapidly changing world, this has always been the case. We have always struggled yet affirmed and rejoiced in the gift of diversity and inclusion. We have believed that we could all live together under "One Tent," honoring our diversity and believing that made us stronger as the Body of Christ.

### **The Passion for Inclusiveness**

The DSC Way Forward continues to maintain, without apology, its position and support not only of embracing diversity but also of achieving the goal of full inclusion. Full inclusion as the goal of The United Methodist Church has always been a priority. *The Discipline* (Paragraph 140, p. 101, "Called to Inclusiveness") states:

*"We recognize that God made all creation and saw it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the church and in society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the church, the community, and the world; therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship at every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons. The mark of an inclusive society is one in which all persons are open, welcoming, fully accepting, and supporting of all other persons, enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world. A further mark of inclusiveness is the setting of church activities in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities."*

The voice of inclusion within The United Methodist Church has been an integral part of its history and theology. The past decisions of our denomination demonstrate that it has changed its collective mind from one of exclusion to inclusion in many cases, usually through a slow and painful process. It has occurred with respect to individuals, groups, and/or classes of people who were judged as inferior, defective, or inadequate because of some social, cultural, or physical characteristic or feature. There has always been a gap between the ideal and reality. Full inclusion is rooted in the radical hospitality of God's grace and forgiveness. We all come to the Lord's table needing the Lord's grace and forgiveness. We are each a work in progress and so is the Church. Thus, we recognize the inequality that has existed and continues to exist along lines of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, and national origin. We also believe that

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

addressing policies, procedures, guidelines, and behaviors that continue to bring physical, psychological, and social wounds to persons need to be boldly confronted and changed.

### The Task Ahead

We believe that, in addressing these contradictions, we are giving expression to our confirmation and reception vows of membership into the Church (Paragraph 217, p. 157). These vows, in part, state we are to "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of [our] sin." We are also to "accept the freedom and power God gives [us] to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves." Anything that diminishes or denies the full humanity of an individual is evil and may lead to inconceivable injustice. It denies the creative work of God who "knit me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13 NRSV). It is hard to go on and have a full life when one has been judged as defective or inadequate by society or by the church for reasons that are arbitrary and subjective. We believe that full inclusion is the outgrowth of the unconditional love of God. That love is the root of justice. We seek full inclusion for all persons whose voices need to be heard. All are children of God.

In particular, this means addressing those statements in *The Book of Discipline* that articulate those Social Principles of The United Methodist Church (paragraph 161, pp. 105-144) that are in conflict with its own theology of full inclusion. However, in stating this position, we also recognize the nature of variant cultures in which The United Methodist Church is implanted. Full inclusion may be understood in different ways given a cultural and social context. In a diverse denomination, one that holds the hearts and souls of over twelve million believers, let us remember the words of John Wesley: "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences."

We are many voices, but 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.

### **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 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, Paragraph 105).* 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 Book of 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 of The United Methodist Church* that articulate those Social Principles of The United Methodist Church (paragraph 161 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.

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### 1 **II. Resolution: Integrity of Faithfulness**

2

3 *Financial Implications: no*

4

5 **Whereas** our faith is the expression of our intimate relationship with God influencing our  
6 deepest values and mores;

7

8 **Whereas** it is essential that all people be able to live from the integrity of their core beliefs about  
9 God and God's call to discipleship; and

10

11 **Whereas** any legislation that denies this expression of faith is to deny a person the opportunity to  
12 live God's calling and direction; now, therefore, be it

13

14 **Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference:

15

16 1. Encourages all churches to follow a path that ensures the rights of all people to follow their  
17 hearts and live from the integrity of their faith and

18

19 2. Encourages our Bishop and Annual Conference leaders to be in dialogue with other  
20 Conferences and Jurisdictions of like mind to investigate coalitions that would support the  
21 ability of people to live by the integrity of their faith.

22

23 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).

24 Rev. Dr. George Cushman

25 Billie Fidlin

26 Rev. Stephen Govett

27 Rev. Tom Jelinek

28 Kent Olson

29 Rev. Michael Patzloff

30 Rev. Elizabeth Rambikur

31

32 Version: August 1, 2019

1 **III. Resolution: Respecting Cultural Differences**

2  
3 *Financial Implications: No*

4  
5 **Whereas** we of the Desert Southwest Conference acknowledge and respect the cultural  
6 differences that exist within our international denomination, and view it as a strength;

7  
8 **Whereas** the *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* allows for such differences  
9 outside of the United States in the designation of Central Conferences, which have the power  
10 to change and adapt the General Discipline as the conditions in their respective areas may  
11 require (§ 31 Article IV section 5);

12  
13 **Whereas** the *Book of Discipline* contains 109 references in which the language “Jurisdiction or  
14 Central Conference” is used, which indicates that the Discipline views Jurisdictional and  
15 Central Conferences as similar in structure and organization; and

16  
17 **Whereas** Jurisdictional Conferences cannot change or adapt the General Discipline as the  
18 cultures in their respective areas may require; now, therefore, be it

19  
20 **Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference:

- 21  
22 1. Work with the Western Jurisdiction to allow the General Discipline to be changed and  
23 adapted as conditions in the Western Jurisdiction may require; and  
24  
25 2. Acknowledge that this change can come in several forms:  
26 a. afford the Western Jurisdiction the powers that Central Conferences have to change and  
27 adapt the General Discipline; or  
28 b. allow the Western Jurisdiction to live into a new way of being which enables it to do  
29 effective ministry within its cultural context.

30  
31 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).  
32 Rev. Dr. George Cushman  
33 Billie Fidlin  
34 Rev. Stephen Govett  
35 Rev. Tom Jelinek  
36 Kent Olson  
37 Rev. Michael Patzloff  
38 Rev. Elizabeth Rambikur

39  
40 Version: June 13, 2019

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### 1 **IV. Resolution: Preserve Our Connectionalism**

2  
3 *Financial Implications: no*

4  
5 **Whereas** we have a heritage of 35 years of ministry together as the Desert Southwest  
6 Conference;

7  
8 **Whereas** we have achieved significant milestones in building God's kingdom together in the  
9 southwest;

10  
11 **Whereas** we have done great works, even with our theological diversity; and

12  
13 **Whereas** we have created many special relationships and bonds, individually and as churches;  
14 now, therefore, be it

15  
16 **Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference:

- 17  
18 1. Seek to remain together, united in our Wesleyan heritage,  
19  
20 2. Grants authority to our Bishop and Conference leadership to take whatever steps necessary,  
21 including participation in a special session of Jurisdictional Conference, to preserve our  
22 unity; and  
23  
24 3. Designates the delegates elected to the 2020 Jurisdictional Conference to serve as our  
25 representatives to any specially called conferences.  
26

27 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).

28 Rev. Dr. George Cushman

29 Billie Fidlin

30 Rev. Stephen Govett

31 Rev. Tom Jelinek

32 Kent Olson

33 Rev. Michael Patzloff

34 Rev. Elizabeth Rambikur

35  
36 Version: August 1, 2019

1 **V. Resolution: Renouncing Divisive and Destructive Strategies**

2  
3 *Financial Implications: no*

4  
5 **Whereas** in the Gospel of John, Jesus told his disciples, “I give you a new commandment, that  
6 you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this  
7 everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John  
8 13:34-35);

9  
10 **Whereas** in First Corinthians, Paul wrote, “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the  
11 name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions  
12 among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” (1 Corinthians  
13 1:10);

14  
15 **Whereas** John Wesley, in a 1786 sermon, decried schism, and advocated for unity in the Body  
16 of Christ (John Wesley, “On Schism,” 1786);

17  
18 **Whereas** the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the precursor  
19 denominations of The United Methodist Church, both encountered significant controversies  
20 over the ordination of women and minorities, and over social change brought about by the  
21 civil rights movement, but neither denomination divided over those issues;

22  
23 **Whereas** issues surrounding human sexuality have been a subject of controversy in The United  
24 Methodist Church since 1972, but were not considered a basis for possible division of the  
25 denomination for the vast majority of that time;

26  
27 **Whereas** the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the  
28 Wesleyan Covenant Association, and other “renewal” groups have all actively pursued  
29 division in The United Methodist Church, and their influence has played a major role in the  
30 move towards schism that has occurred in recent General Conferences; and

31  
32 **Whereas** a document titled “Options for the Future, with some Strategic Implications” produced  
33 for and studied by the Good News Board of Directors by current and former board members  
34 and staff, outlined a plan in which “The United Methodist Church would cease to exist”, and  
35 in describing another plan, stated that it would be a “disadvantage” that “It also leaves the  
36 United Methodist denomination somewhat intact, with the accumulation of resources to  
37 potentially continue for decades...” (“Options for the Future with some Strategic  
38 Implications;” Summer 2004, pp. 5, 7, 8); now, therefore, be it

39  
40 **Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference:

- 41  
42 1. Contact the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy,  
43 the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and any other “renewal” organizations deemed  
44 appropriate, and express that the DSC finds the content of “Options for the Future...” and  
45 other similar plans Inconsistent with foundational biblical principles, denominational history,

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

46 and the desire of our Conference to love our neighbors as ourselves, and strive for unity in  
47 our Conference, The United Methodist Church, and the body of Christ; and  
48

49 2. Contact the General Board of Church and Society, and strongly urge it to contact the  
50 Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan  
51 Covenant Association, and any other “renewal” organizations it deems appropriate, and  
52 strongly urge those organizations to specifically and publicly renounce current or future  
53 strategies to further divide or eliminate The United Methodist Church or its successor  
54 denominations, and state that any future actions to further divide or eliminate The United  
55 Methodist Church or its successor denominations will be considered harassment.  
56

57 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).

58 Rev. George Cushman

59 Billie Fidlin

60 Rev. Stephen Govett

61 Rev. Tom Jelinek

62 Kent Olson

63 Rev. Michael Patzloff

64 Rev. Elizabeth Rambikur

65

66 Version: August 1, 2019

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### *Supporting Document*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We live in a time when it is difficult to be the church. In our present era, a multitude of challenges encroach upon us. There are struggles in our local congregations and communities, and deep divisions in our nation. And in recent months, division has also come to our United Methodist denominational connection in an unprecedented way.

For some time now, our Denomination has been struggling with issues how faithful Christians respond to issues of human sexuality. The debates have been going on for several decades. Most recently, decisions made by the 2019 General Conference, and rulings by our United Methodist Judicial Council have brought these differences to the point where some are now talking about the division of our United Methodist family.

We bring this resolution to conference out of a concern that we did not get to this point on our own. The current divisive atmosphere in our connection is due, at least in part, to the influence of groups and organizations which have their origins, and large amounts of funding, from sources outside of our United Methodist denomination. These “renewal” groups have used tactics that exploit disagreements over human sexuality and other issues, and used them as a political “wedge” to divide our denomination. The documents that outline their core strategies are political action plans; the theological categories of faith in Christ, grace, hope, and love for others are absent. They have imported the worst features of political manipulation and polarization into the church, and our conversations.

This resolution is not a pushback, or “revenge” for General Conference or Judicial Council decisions, a rejection of United Methodists who affirm the views of “renewal” groups, or an attempt to eliminate them from the conversation. We disagree with the positions of those groups, but affirm every United Methodist’s the God-given ability to use the tools of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience to come to their own conclusions on issues of Christian faith and practice. All our sisters and brothers are beloved children of God, and a valued part of the body of Christ.

Rather, if division should occur, we are asking that each part of the former UMC should be allowed to practice their faith as God has led them to do, without the disruption of groups whose statements, outlining long-range strategies, have identified further division and / or elimination of remaining parts of The United Methodist Church as a goal. If we cannot live in one denominational unity, let us live in peace as different communities that share the same origin, in mutual respect and love.

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### VI. Resolution: Dialogue with Central Conference Leaders

*Financial Implications: no*

**Whereas** the General Conference of The United Methodist Church is composed of delegates from around the world;

**Whereas** these delegates have an equal voice in the forming the policies, procedures, rules, theological statements, and polity of The United Methodist Church;

**Whereas** at the 2020 General Conference, 52% of the voting members will represent The United States, and 48% will represent the Central Conferences;

**Whereas** it is estimated that 70% of United States delegates do not support the Traditional Plan, and almost 100% of the delegates from the Central Conferences support it;

**Whereas** Central Conferences have the ability to vote on General Conference legislation individually, effectively ignoring legislation that produces cultural difficulties in their local context, and United States Conferences do not have that option;

**Whereas** the Wesleyan Covenant Association has successfully lobbied Central Conference delegates to support the Traditional Plan, promoting a very conservative agenda for The United Methodist Church that does not reflect the theology of the majority of congregations in the United States;

**Whereas** United States Conferences that support the agenda of the Wesley Covenant Association are the least supportive financially of Central Conference Churches, while those who are more centrist to progressive contribute the greatest financial support;

**Whereas** a minority of the United States delegates have the ability to prevail with the votes of the Central Conference delegates, making a mass exodus of members from Unites States likely; and

**Whereas** by the 2024 General Conference, Central Conference delegates may be the majority voting block, enabling them to dictate policy that United States Conferences must follow, while the Central Conferences may exempt themselves from following those policies; now, therefore, be it

**Resolved**, that the Desert Southwest Conference

1. Encourages our Bishop, Robert Hoshibata, to be in dialogue with Central Conference leaders, sharing information with them regarding the sources of their support;
2. Encourages members of the Council of Bishops to be in dialogue with Central Conference delegates, also informing them of the sources of their support; and

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

47 3. Encourages United States delegates to create a structure where United States Conferences  
48 and Central Conferences will vote separately on social issues, while continuing to work  
49 together to support mission and ministry around the world.

50

51 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).

52 Rev. Dr. George Cushman

53 Billie Fidlin

54 Rev. Stephen Govett

55 Rev. Tom Jelinek

56 Kent Olson

57 Rev. Michael Patzloff

58 Rev. Elizabeth Rambikur

59

60 Version: August 1, 2019

1 **VII. Resolution: From the Amicable Separation Team**

2  
3 *Financial Implications: no*

4  
5 **Whereas** the One Church Plan provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and  
6 pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context without disbanding the  
7 connectional nature of The United Methodist Church;

8  
9 **Whereas** in the One Church Plan, no annual conferences, bishops, congregations, or pastors are  
10 compelled to act contrary to their convictions;

11  
12 **Whereas** the One Church Plan grants space for traditionalists to continue to offer ministry as  
13 they have in the past; space for progressives to exercise freely a more complete ministry with  
14 LGBTQ persons; and space for all United Methodists to continue to coexist without  
15 disrupting their ministries;

16  
17 **Whereas** the One Church Plan removes the language from *The Book of Discipline* used in the  
18 United States that restricts pastors and churches from conducting same-sex weddings and  
19 annual conferences from ordaining self-avowed practicing homosexual persons. It adds  
20 language that intentionally protects the religious freedom of pastors and churches who  
21 choose not to perform or host same-sex weddings; and Boards of Ordained Ministry and  
22 bishops who choose not to credential or ordain self-avowed practicing homosexual persons;  
23 and

24  
25 **Whereas** our LGBTQ congregants, colleagues, clergy, and candidates are continuing to serve in  
26 our church faithfully and need our leaders to support them like never before in order to make  
27 sure they can continue to answer God’s call on their lives and ministry; now, therefore, be it

28  
29 **Resolved** that as people of the Desert Southwest Conference, we covenant to behave as a One  
30 Church Conference and One Church Congregations in the following ways:.

- 31  
32 1. We will pray for one another;
- 33  
34 2. We will allow for contextual ministry and pastoral care and not impede the work of others in  
35 ministry;
- 36  
37 3. We will seek to find common ground and actively be in ministry with people who are  
38 different from us;
- 39  
40 4. We will not speak ill of one another and we will model that all people are of sacred worth;  
41 and
- 42  
43 5. We will strengthen our support of our LGBTQ congregants, colleagues, clergy, and  
44 candidates and ensure that they are able to joyfully and safely serve in ministry here in the  
45 Desert Southwest Conference and we continue to build a church together that nurtures all  
46 people and embraces our full selves.

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

- 47
- 48 Name(s) of Petitioner(s).
- 49 Andrew Ponder Williams
- 50 Rev. Melissa Rynders
- 51 Billie Fidlin
- 52 Maria Hase
- 53 Rev. Stephen Govett
- 54
- 55 Version: August 1, 2019

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

### VIII. Resolution: Negotiating Separation

#### *Financial Implications: No*

**Whereas** the Desert Southwest Conference has been a Reconciling Conference for 10 years;

**Whereas** within our conference we find deep divides along cultural and theological lines that prevent us from fully engaging with one another in ministry that embraces the full diversity of our community;

**Whereas** the February 2019 General Conference of The United Methodist Church singled out LGBTQ+ persons and their supporters for specific punitive action;

**Whereas** the punishments of the Traditional Plan are set to take effect at 12:01am, January 1, 2020, threatening immediate and destructive action against lives and careers of LGBTQ+ persons and their supporters;

**Whereas** our global church mirrors our conference divide around the reception of the traditional plan;

**Whereas** division of our denomination over the proper regard, role, and status of persons who are LGBTQ+ has now become irreconcilable;

**Whereas** the function of Disaffiliation as set forth by the General Council on Finance and Administration is to separate individual churches from the denomination with no new organization and no way for those churches to retain their relationship with the appointed clergy;

**Whereas** the cost of Disaffiliation for individual churches is repressively expensive;

**Whereas** the delegates and bishops of the Western Jurisdiction have made unified statements as one body working together; and

**Whereas** we are stronger when we are together, even if, a time comes when we can no longer be a part of The United Methodist Church; now, therefore be it

**Resolved,** that the Desert Southwest Conference seek and support a pathway of Amicable Separation, as much in cooperation with our brothers and sisters of the Western Jurisdiction as is possible, within the work of the 2020 General Conference which would permit Jurisdictions, Conferences, and Churches to Separate from the United Methodist Church and form a new denomination with new structure as deemed appropriate by the forming bodies.

Name(s) of Petitioner(s).  
Rev. Jonathan Arnpriester  
Rev. Khalif Smith  
Anita MacFadden

## 2019 Special Session Legislation

- 47 Nancy French
- 48 Rev. Ann Lyter
- 49 Rev. Michael Patzloff
- 50 Rev. Stephen Govett
- 51 Fay Sias
- 52 Rev. Kimberly Scott
- 53 Rev. Tom Jelenik
- 54 Rev. Doug Handlong
- 55 Rev. Dee Dee Azhikakath
- 56 Rev. Dan Hurlbert
- 57 Rev. Antoenette Fernandes
- 58 Rev. David Rennick
- 59 Rev. Melissa Rynders
- 60
- 61 Version: August 1, 2019