

V. Resolution on Renouncing Divisive and Destructive Strategies

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

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

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

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

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

Whereas United Methodists of many perspectives have dismissed or excluded those with different convictions, exacerbating a lack of community that has contributed to the divisiveness currently present in our denomination;

Whereas the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and other “renewal” groups have advocated division in the United Methodist Church, and their influence has played a major role in the move towards schism that has occurred in recent General Conferences; and

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

Resolved, the Desert Southwest Conference (DSC), individual churches and individuals, and new and reforming church movements:

1. Affirm that any future actions by the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and any other “renewal” organizations deemed appropriate to further divide or eliminate the United Methodist Church or its successor denominations are contrary to the will of God, and to the express teachings of Jesus Christ;
2. Contact the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and any other “renewal” organizations deemed appropriate, and express that the DSC finds the content of “Options for the Future *With Some Strategic Implications, Summer 2004*” and other similar plans Inconsistent with foundational biblical principles, denominational history, and the desire of our Conference to love our neighbors as ourselves, and strive for unity in our Conference, the United Methodist Church, and the body of Christ; and
3. Contact the General Board of Church and Society, and strongly urge it to contact the Confessing Movement, Good News, the Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and any other “renewal” organizations it deems appropriate, and strongly urge those organizations to specifically and publicly renounce current or future strategies to further divide or eliminate the United Methodist Church or its successor denominations, and focus their efforts on unity in spite of our differences.

Names of Petitioners:

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