

# Monthly Update

April 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As I had stated in last month's letter, other than a reference to the "Mayflower Compact" the April Update is devoted exclusively to information from the recent special called session of the General Conference (GC2019) in St. Louis. However, I need to correct an error in last month's Update. The Traditional Plan passed with the vote: for: 438/53.28%; against: 384/46.72%; there was a numerical error in our figure.

There has been a great deal of interest in GC2019, not only now that it is over but also in the months leading up to that gathering. You can be assured that we in Concerned Methodists are doing everything that we can to keep our United Methodist Church true to our orthodox Wesleyan heritage and morality. We were active in St. Louis doing all we could to ensure the Traditional Plan was passed while at the same time keeping others across the country informed of what was happening.

We have been busy since we have gotten back informing other churches and individuals about what happened and how we look at the future. A little over a week ago, I met with members of one of our supportive United Methodist churches for a briefing and the questions. After we had talked about GC2019, their understanding, and what they had been told I assured them that we were in the battle to win. I then helped them understand that we are doing all that we can. I stressed to them that we make the most efficient use possible of donations given to our ministry, economizing in all areas to include the fact that all of us are volunteers. I then shared with them as to how they can continue to partner with us in "contending for the faith" – because this is a very real battle in every sense of the word. (This is the church in which their pastor had called for them to be in a time of fasting and praying for the decisions in St. Louis.). Assuredly, we have a lot of work to do in preparation for General Conference 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Here's how you can partner with Concerned Methodists in making things happen: Keep us on your prayer list during 2019. This is God's work, and our deepest desire is to do it His way. Please pray that every day we would rely on His wisdom rather than our own.

May I ask for your continued financial support? Even though we are a "lean" ministry monetarily, our work still costs money, especially in light of what we need to do with some very firm measures for our United Methodist Church. But this challenge requires us to raise six thousand dollars for this purpose in the next four months. If you have not given for a while, now at this time of opportunity in our denomination, would be an ideal time to make a sacrificial, tax-deductible gift. Together we can make a difference!

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

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# April 2019 Update

## **Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church**

Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. ~ Sir Winston Churchill.

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### **The Good Stuff. The introduction to the Mayflower Compact.**

[Note: In this time of uncertainty it is good to have a small reconnection to our national heritage's roots. – AOM]  
“In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, etc. ... Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith...” – Mayflower Compact; November 11, 1620

### **A Way Forward/UM General Conference 2019 (GC2019).**

+ *What Happened at General Conference 2019.* The 2019 special called General Conference is over with the Traditional Plan having passed by a vote of 438-384. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

The Traditional Plan passed, however, in an advisory opinion prior to the legislative vote, the Judicial Council ruled that several provisions remained unconstitutional. At least 8 of the provisions passed at this General Conference are expected to be ruled constitutional at the Judicial Council's April 2019 meeting. Petitions implementing accountability for annual conferences, providing the Traditional Plan's exit path and the Modified Traditional Plan's enhancements were all voted down in committee and were never able to be brought to the floor. Supporters of the Traditional Plan were ready with corrective amendments for consideration by the legislative committee but “filibustering” and delay tactics prevented these amendments from receiving a vote.

What Passed?

- An expanded definition of self-avowed practicing homosexual to include persons living in a same-sex marriage or union or who publicly proclaim themselves to be practicing homosexuals.
- Bishops are prohibited from consecrating a person as a bishop or ordaining clergy who are practicing homosexuals.
- Bishops cannot arbitrarily dismiss complaints against clergy.
- Persons serving on the annual board of ordained ministry must certify they will uphold and enforce the Book of Discipline's standards for ordained clergy.
- District committee and conference board of ministry are prohibited from recommending a candidate for ministry who does not meet the standards. Bishops must declare such candidates as out of order.
- Minimum penalty for performing same-sex weddings is 1 year unpaid leave (first offense) and loss of credentials (second offense).
- Involvement of complainant in all stages of the complaint process and every effort made to have complainant agree with any resolution
- Allowing the church to appeal a verdict of a trial court in cases of errors of church law or administration.
- A local church can disaffiliate from the denomination with their property in exchange for one (extra) year's apportionments and payment of pension liabilities. (Petition #90066)

On March 6, 2019 the Council of Bishops asked the Judicial Council for a declaratory decision as to the constitutionality and the meaning, application, and effect of Petition #90066, which was approved by the Special Session of the General Conference on February 26, 2019. They contend that the petition violates paragraph 33 by omitting the annual conference as the body ratifying a local church vote to change affiliation. – *Pulse*, The Confessing Movement; March 2019.

+ *General Conference 2019 Postmortem...*

[Note: We would offer another perspective. Dr. Riley Case offers an incisive, well-reasoned commentary. – AOM]

The statement has been made by many of us that the average UMC church member in the pew in the US holds fairly traditional Christian beliefs. Of course this does not go unchallenged. One response stated: “If that’s true, why did 2/3 of the US delegates vote for the One Church Plan...as usual logic escapes them.” The assumption behind statements like that is that the real United Methodism is progressive in outlook and belief but was somehow hijacked by a minority to thwart the will of the many at the GC2019.

If there is to be honest conversation in the church in the coming months as to a Way Forward (wasn’t that the purpose of GC 2019, to lead us to the Way Forward?) the question of understanding the person in the pew demands some attention. Who really are the United Methodists? What really do they believe? And, what is the difference (the Gap) between church leaders and this “person in the pew?”

I was a delegate to the General Conference (GC) of 1984 in Baltimore. This was the last GC before electronic voting, meaning that delegates stood to have their votes counted. As with every GC since 1972 there was a concerted effort to liberalize the Disciplinary statements regarding the practice of homosexuality and, as with other GCs, there was a series of votes taken. Our delegation from North Indiana was divided on the votes but in the delegation next to ours, with 24 delegates, the votes were almost always 23-1 (except on several occasions 22-2) in favor of liberalizing. At a break I mentioned to the person who was the (“1”) that his delegation was pretty much united on this issue. His response: “Would you believe that our last annual conference a resolution passed indicating that our conference supports upholding the Discipline as it now is?” Yes, I could believe. I had seen this before, though perhaps not quite as dramatic. The annual conference passes a resolution to express the will of the conference, but the delegation almost unanimously votes the exact opposite. And they never vote the opposite in a more conservative way, but always in a more liberal way.

In those days the point was being made that the persons sent to GC from the annual conferences were “delegates,” not “representatives.” They did not go to GC to “represent” the conference but to vote their own consciences on what they believed was in the best interests of that annual conference. We had had these discussions in our own conference. There was no obligation to vote the way the annual conference believed or passed resolutions for or against. I did not argue with that but I did state that those seeking to be elected to GC should be open about what their convictions were. In those days it was not always apparent because it was in a day when conference old-timers and institutional leaders were frequently elected and they seemed to believe that GC was like a reward for years of faithful service. They deserved to go (the good ole boys club) and what they believed and how they voted was not anybody else’s business.

We were in those days not too far removed from the times when almost everyone who was elected as a delegate to GC was an older white male, institutionally loyal, liberal. In one way it worked. They were the people with experience and expertise. We would have little reform and renewal, but we would have stability.

Then--to follow to the next step--the GC delegates would be the ones to be elected to the general boards and agencies of the church. From this pool episcopal candidates were drawn. I have sat through eight jurisdictional conferences and I don’t remember a single instance in which an episcopal candidate did not have experience with a general board or agency.

One year a friend who was progressive in outlook and I designed and sent a questionnaire to those who were expected to receive votes in the annual conference for GC. We did it together so no one could accuse the questionnaire of being slanted. We said we would share the responses. Most of those receiving the questionnaire were friends and colleagues but nevertheless, the questionnaire was not received gladly by everyone. Aspiring candidates did not seem to object. Old-timers, though, at least several, resented that we were questioning them. They had been faithful and loyal. Was that not enough? The answer was, “No, it was not enough because we have no idea what you believe or how you are voting and it matters to us.”

Now the question. How much do these GC delegates who then became board and agency board members and then are elected to the episcopacy, reflect the ordinary UM persons in the pew?

The answer: Often not very much. I reference several studies.

In 1990 the General Council on Ministries of the UM Church did a major study “An Analysis of Major Issues Addressed by the 1988 General Conference and a Comparison with Beliefs and Attitudes of Local Church Members.” Unlike other studies this one involved people in the pews. While the percentages would change if the same questions were asked today, the basic percentages would be similar. In 1990 75% of lay male UM non-delegates and 65% of lay female non-delegates indicated they were conservative or very conservative. 55% of male clergy non-delegates and 28% of female clergy non-delegates described their orientation as conservative or very conservative. Of the delegates 65% of the male lay delegates and 35% of the female lay delegates polled conservative. However, among clergy only 41% male and 19% of females indicated they were conservative. Among jurisdictions 66% of the SE non-delegate clergy polled conservative while the western jurisdiction polled 19%.

In a question even more revealing “The Bible is the literal Word of God” -- 62% of UM non-delegate laity said yes compared with 26% of the lay delegates. Among clergy 25% of clergy non-delegates said yes. Only 11% of clergy delegates said yes. (It should be stated that the word “literal” is not a word evangelicals favor in testing attitudes toward the Bible.) So, compare 62% of the laity who believe the Bible literally compared to 11% of the clergy GC delegates. The hymnal was an issue that year. To the question: “Hymns should be included that refer to God as Mother and having feminine characteristics...” 55% of the clergy delegates said yes compared with only 16% of the lay non-delegates.

So, if the question is asked, “What do UMs believe?” do we reference people in the pew or only bishops or clergy delegates to GC. Or, we might want to answer, “what the General Conference legislates.”

Some conclusions from the 1990 study: clergy were consistently more liberal than lay respondents; non-delegates were consistently more conservative than GC delegates. Clergy were more highly educated than lay (99% of clergy delegates had advanced academic degrees compared with 54% of lay delegates). Only 13% of non-delegate laity had advanced degrees. 99% of the clergy had served on an annual conference committee and 44% had served on a national board or agency. Among laity only 3% had served on an annual conference committee and 0% served on a general church agency. Clergy delegates were more often from large urban churches while the great percentage of non-delegate laity was from rural areas or towns with fewer than 25,000 persons.

Out of this and other studies we would offer some interpretative statements:

1. The average UMC church member in the U.S. holds fairly traditional beliefs. This is not to challenge the survey that indicates that about 2/3 of US delegates to GC in 2019 favored the One Church Plan; it is to say that the persons elected to GC are not nearly as conservative in their beliefs as the people who are in the pews. The recent study conducted by UM Communications reporting that 44% of UMs self-identify as conservative/traditional in religious beliefs, compared with 28% who are moderate/centrist, and 20% who are liberal (8% did not respond), should be fairly accurate. In politics according to a Pew poll in 2014 54% of American UMs lean Republican compared with 35% who lean Democrat. When one realizes that bishops and persons related to seminaries and boards and agencies identify overwhelmingly as Democrats, the conclusion should be made that we have serious disconnect/gap problems in the UM Church.

2. We have not been served well by our leaders and, particularly, by our bishops who seemingly operate with a different view of unity, a different view of Wesleyan doctrine, a different view of Biblical authority, and a different view of personal morality from a great part of the church. The leader responses from bishops and others following GC2019 have not been healing or helpful to the majority of UMs who seem to be under attack by their own leaders. These public statements have been overwhelmingly critical of GC actions and have sometimes been downright hostile. As a result persons who seek to serve Christ in their daily lives, who seek to be faithful to their local churches, who wear the UM label proudly, wonder why all of the sudden ads appear in secular newspapers by church leaders condemning their own church. They wonder why they and other UMs are now branded as judgmental, hateful, racist, homophobic, bigots, literalists, and exclusionary, by persons hitherto respected as spiritual leaders. All of this when what the GC basically did was to reaffirm the position of the church on human sexuality that has been part of the church’s Discipline for nearly 50 years. At the moment it is not only the LGBTQ community in pain but also numbers of faithful UMs who are feeling betrayed by their own leaders.

3. Something different needs to happen before the General Conference of 2020. The church cannot afford a rerun of 2019. Would bishops be open to conversation with evangelicals? Could the matter of amicable separation be placed on the table for discussion? – By Riley Case, “Happenings Around the Church 3.19.19”; The Confessing Movement; March 19, 2019.

+ **GC2019 – Reporting – from start to finish in St. Louis. – Allen O. Morris.**

Opening worship for the General Conference (GC2019) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) here in St Louis, Missouri. I would ask that you all pray for what is decided here. It will be important to not only our United Methodist Church but also to our country and to our world: our decision on the issue of homosexuality will affect what happens in all three areas. It is my earnest hope and prayer that we in the UMC will continue to stand firm on the truth found in God's Word - that sex is reserved only for husband and wife within marriage. So far I have interacted with delegates not only from different parts of the United States but also from Congo, Uganda, Liberia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

There is quite a bit of coverage of this General Conference.

Just some of the responses to our call for prayer – and the results afterwards.

\* *It has been my experience with God when things go all wrong, God steps up and works a miracle. I am so tired of Christians saying we are living in the last days so let's just tolerate this. More you tolerate more you have to tolerate. Why not stand on the principal of God.* – From Scarlett in Fayetteville, NC

\* *America is now the missionary field for African Christians...irony.* – From pastor John in Georgia

\* *Allen Morris we just prayed at our church for the situation.* – From pastor Jon in Arkansas

\* Languages spoken at General Conference: French, Portuguese, Kiswahili, Russian, Spanish, and English.

\* Rally for the one church plan. People who supported the One Church Plan held a rally the first night. I was there at 6:45 and wanted to attend their briefing for the delegates since I am a member of the press (*The Christian Methodist Newsletter*), but was told that I would not be permitted until 7:15. I repeated my request since I wanted to report on what went on, but again was told that I could come at the later time when it was open to the public. When I did get in I heard the testimonies of several people: One pastor from the Western North Carolina Conference testified that “Molly and Chelsea”, both in his conference, are going to have a covenant relationship later in the summer. They cannot marry in the United Methodist Church – so that is why the pastor supports the One Church Plan. Neil Alexander introduced the mother of a bisexual child who told about the “difficulties” experienced. Recognition was given to Tom Berlin who formulated the “sugar pack deal” of distributing Ziploc bags with Hershey kisses in them. Berlin said that in looking back over his life, he wished he had said more about racism and sexism, especially now that he has four daughters. He also looks at the church’s inclusion of the LGBT community [equating race with sexual practice]. He said to himself, that “as a ‘straight white guy’ you need to think about it.” Then he gave his support to the One Church Plan. Stan Copeland, a pastor in the Texas Conference, said, “Our children see things differently.” Lonnie Brownson, past treasurer of the West Ohio Conference, discussed their 21-year history with the West Katanga Conference, and his being able to talk with their delegation. – Allen Morris

\* [Note: Tammi Maureen is the headmaster of Fayetteville Christian School]

“Tammi Maureen, thank you for posting your devotion. It was so on-target for me today. I’m going to reprint the part that is applicable: “Thought I would share my devotions today. “Pray for and love those who don’t deserve it. Those who are rude, ungrateful, and mean-spirited. Those who seek to malign you or others while to your face act like your friend.” Unfortunately this passage isn’t just talking about non-Christians. It’s talking about us—those who claim to follow Christ. Even as adults we can find ourselves being gossips, back-biters, 2-faced & rude to our brothers & sisters in Christ. As we model Christ-like character to our kids—they must first see it in us.”

Talk about rude and mean spirited – [some] guys were standing right across the street from the convention center; with their harsh words, they reminded me of the people from Westborough Baptist Church I had confronted at the

General Conference in Cleveland, Ohio [and in Washington, DC]. You can read the signs that they were holding up; the guy on the loudspeaker was using words like pervert, sodomite, and other really harsh language. I managed to talk to one guy named Zack, a pastor. I gave him some of the information that we [in Concerned Methodists] had on homosexuality to include my book *Misguided Shepherds* and showed him another one that I had authored on this practice that was dedicated to my adoptive sister who lives as a lesbian. Then I read to him the part in the Bible where Paul was preaching to the Athenians using as his intro the statue to the unknown God. I then tried to tell him that what they were doing is not helpful but is making the situation worse; it was like talking to a brick wall. An Evangelical pastor friend of mine who also tried to reason with them called them “fanatical fundamentalists”; I would agree.

As I turned around to walk across the street back to the convention center, one of the other members called me some harsh names – names I had never been called before in my entire life to include my time in the Army. When I walked into the Convention Center, a lot of the people there witnessed what had happened to include four who were wearing the rainbow scarves. I talked to them for a few minutes giving them my witness. The Lord gives us opportunities in unexpected ways.

\* [On the first day of legislation] The Traditional Plan is the only plan remaining that was passed out of the Committee-of-the-Whole. It is to be considered during the plenary session tomorrow. The only other one remaining, the Simple Plan, would have removed from the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church the passages stating that “sexual practice is affirmed only between husband wife within the context of marriage” – and similar provisions. The Simple Plan was the last plan to be debated today – and was defeated by a vote of 494 to 323, by 60.47% to 39.53%. There was a lot of discussion about the plan. Several people from across the United States and one from Germany spoke in favor of the plan. The man from Germany used the “I have a dream” format and made a speech in support. Among other things that were said by those who supported the Simple Plan, Jennifer Ihlo from the Baltimore Washington conference first took issue with some of the things that Felipe Lara from Mexico had said in his speech, then added, “I’m queer... We are, also my queer brothers and sisters, loyal to the United Methodist Church.” The Reverend Rebecca Girrell from the New England Conference introduced herself as a “queer clergy person”. Among the things that she said was, “I know I am a child of God. I also know that my gifts and the gifts of the LGBTQIA...” She went on to regret the “harm” done by our church for the “sins of sexism, homophobia, and transphobia and the harm the church has done to queer people around the world.”

Some of the people who spoke against the plan were from Mexico and Russia (the foreign delegates spoke in their own languages). Felipe Ruiz Lara spoke passionately; in the part I understood (Spanish is my second language), he spoke about how Jesus Christ transforms lives and the Bible is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Yulia Starodubets spoke about the part of Russia where she lives, how she became a Christian, influences from Islam, and how homosexuality is viewed there.

With the defeat of the “Simple Plan” the only plan that remains that would be presented (along with other legislation) to the plenary session tomorrow is the Traditional Plan that, among other things, reaffirms the stand of the United Methodist Church – that the practice of sex is condoned only between husband and wife within the context of marriage.

\* Tuesday, February 26, I was interviewed by Janet Mefferd on American Family Radio, a nationwide Christian network.

\* On Monday, Feb 25: “I would earnestly covet your prayers for the last day of our General Conference of the United Methodist Church here in St Louis, Missouri. At the close of business yesterday, the Traditional Plan was the only one that had been reported out of the Committee of the Whole. However, a minority report was registered that introduced the One Church Plan back onto the floor to be considered. In today’s proceedings, both of these plans along with other items of legislation will be debated. A message written in chalk on the sidewalk supported the LGBTQIA movement.

\* On Tuesday, Feb 26: The One church plan was defeated against: 55%, for 45%. After a day of parliamentary maneuvering, disruptions, and stalling tactics, the Traditional Plan passed late in the day: for: 438/53.28%; against: 384/46.72%.

This has been the most turbulent conference I have ever seen or attended. I have seen more “Points of Order” (many unnecessary and superfluous) brought out than I have all of the other meetings and conferences I have attended in my lifetime. It was disappointing that we would have seen this type of activity in any “civilized” meeting – much less a church conference. Afterward the vote, a pro-LGBTQIA group occupied the stage area (as happened in past General Conferences), and a large group stood in the audience + on the floor and sang in an apparent attempt to disrupt the proceedings.

After all of the legislation was concluded, a vote was taken to refer everything to the Judicial Council (only 20% is required to pass), which is the Supreme Court of the United Methodist Church.

As I had stated in the March letter, when I walked out of the convention center, I saw the police vehicles surrounding the building. I guess they had taken seriously the threats to shut down the conference – and responded appropriately.

First of all, from the bottom of my heart I want to thank each one of you who have prayed for the 2019 General Conference of the United Methodist Church that was held in St Louis, Missouri. Your prayers were so very, very important.

Final thanks from Brenda in North Carolina, *“Sharing. Thank for being a delegate to International convention . Also, thanks for keeping me and other United Methodist's informed. I appreciate you.”*

My reply: *Brenda Queen-Page, thank you for your very kind words, but if I may I wanted to offer a correction. I was not on the Delegation team this time around, but was there “contending for the faith” for Concerned Methodists and as a press representative for our publication, The Christian Methodist Newsletter. Again, thank you for your very kind words.*

Her response: *“Thought you were a delegate this time. The important thing.... getting the REAL news i.e. The FACTS to us.”*

From Bev in Kansas: *Thank you so much! I was hanging on every word and sharing with prayer warriors at home.*

*Thank you so much Allen Morris for giving us such good coverage of the convention!*

From Linda in Maryland: *We are praying here.*

\* On Wednesday, Feb 27: As some associates and I were waiting for the train to take us from downtown St. Louis to Lambert Field so we could catch our planes back home, I noticed this sign across the tracks from us: one person washing the foot of another person. In the lower left hand corner, I noticed the Cross and Flame symbol of the United Methodist Church.

Let us pray that those of us who are called United Methodists will serve our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in a way that is faithful to Him and our Orthodox Christian teachings.

– Allen O. Morris

#### + **Dissension and rebellion are rampant across our United Methodist Connection.**

[Note: It is interesting to review the actions and perspectives of those supportive of homosexual normalization. – AOM]

An assortment of protests, “prayer vigils” and statements have occurred across our United Methodist in the United States. Since St. Louis, many U.S. churches and pastors have protested the outcome in varying ways, and the Commission on General Conference has organized a task force to investigate allegations of voting irregularities. The Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court, will meet next month to consider the constitutionality of much of the Traditional Plan.

\* The New York and Greater New Jersey conferences each had a special called meeting March 16 to reflect on and respond to the 2019 General Conference in St. Louis. Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton noted that legislation does not convert the heart. “Just because the vote went a certain way, we cannot expect conformity to follow.” He said he

had “lost faith” in the church’s ability to deal with differences through legislation. “It has broken my heart to see and experience the church I love create such hurt among people,” Bickerton said. Bishop John Schol of the Greater New Jersey Conference addressed the post-General Conference tensions, but also called for a focus on mission, including fighting discrimination in all forms. “Our concern and conversation about the LGBTQ community should not lessen our commitment to change hearts and minds so that we end prejudice, oppression, sexism, racism and privilege,” he said. Recent positions by the New York Conference and its board of ordained ministry “have stated our clear position on who we see ourselves to be as an inclusive body of Christ,” Bickerton said. “If nothing else happened in St. Louis, the decision of the General Conference has only reinforced those deep convictions with renewed strength.”

A group of New York clergy and lay members also announced that a statement “affirming the lives, ministries, and families of our LGBTQIA+ siblings” and supporting social justice values would be available for signatures.

A majority of bishops supported the One Church Plan, which would have removed from the Book of Discipline the statement that homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and left questions of same-sex marriage up to individual churches and clergy, and ordination of LGBTQ clergy up to conferences.

In the Greater New Jersey Conference, more than 1,000 people, including observers, attended the special session at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft. Schol, in addressing the crowd, acknowledged division in the conference and broader church over homosexuality, but emphasized that Methodists have endured major conflicts before over slavery, segregation, alcohol and women’s ordination. [Note: Equating what is a moral issue with social ills. – AOM]

– Linda Bloom and Sam Hodges, UMNS Daily Digest; Mar 18, 2019.

**\* *Western Jurisdiction team responds to GC2019.***

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Western Jurisdiction leadership team met March 14 to discuss General Conference 2019. The team issued a statement calling on The United Methodist Church to “repent of the exclusionary principles of the Traditional Plan,” which passed at General Conference. A leadership team adopted a statement at its meeting to share with the church. The statement, proposed by PNW Conference layperson Marie Kuch-Stanovsky, calls for United Methodists to, “... resist injustice and insist that the Church repent of the exclusionary principles of the Traditional Plan,” and affirms an intention to look for new ways of being church saying, “Grounded in our Wesleyan heritage, we will foster a...movement to gather the energy of inclusive United Methodists throughout our global connection.” [Note: Wesley was obedient to the Bible. – AOM]

A leadership team...met... by Donna Pritchard, chair of the leadership team. “I look forward to continuing this work in the most open and collaborative way possible as we live out our vision to truly be ‘A home for all God’s children.’” Pritchard led the group through an exploration of ways to move forward and shared several possible work areas. They were: Strengthening our Theological Statement, Coalition Building, Creating Safe Harbor for At-Risk Clergy, Disrupting the Systems of Exclusion, Work for Denominational Structural Change, Examine Relationships and Ministries with Central Conference Leaders, Develop Strategy Regarding Complaint Processes, Funding Inclusive Ministry in the Western Jurisdiction, Branding, Messaging and Communications for An Inclusive Church, Create a Proposal for a New Movement, Future Scenario Projections, and Transform the Council of Bishops for Inclusion.

[Note especially: “Disrupting the Systems of Exclusion.” Will they work to disrupt the UMC? – AOM]

“My expectation was that we would come together with determination to live into our Jurisdictional vision of the church as “a home for all God’s people, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation,” said Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata, president of the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops. “We long for a church that will open doors to our LGBTQIA siblings.” Following the leadership team gathering, the mission cabinet...named the harm of the General Conference actions, affirmed the work of the boards of ordained ministry to seek gifted candidates for ministry, and acknowledged that Christians can hold differing understandings of the Bible and live in peace together. Considering General Conference action, they also committed to offering safe harbor for clergy at risk because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or ministry with and for LGBTQIA+ siblings. They



also offered support for clergy who, after prayerful discernment, choose to conduct same-gender marriages and those congregations who choose to host same-gender weddings.

Reflecting on the week, Hoshibata said, “The hopeful outcomes of the meetings include a galvanization of our desire to work together with groups within and outside of the Western Jurisdiction to transform the church into that place where all of God’s children, in the diversity that God created, will be welcomed.” [Note: They will try to undermine GC2019. – AOM]

They then formulated a “Statement” that said in part:

I. As United Methodists, we must resist injustice and insist that the Church repent of the exclusionary principles of the Traditional Plan.

II. Grounded in our Wesleyan heritage, we will foster a new movement to gather the energy of inclusive United Methodists throughout our global connection. God calls us to recognize that a “new thing” is being born – a new expression of what it means for the Church to be truly inclusive. As we continue to search for ways to serve with integrity within The United Methodist Church, we offer our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness to the emerging movement, seeking to join others in realizing the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons today....

As we begin to develop this new thing, we divest from institutional patterns that perpetuate racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and other structural sins.,,,

We will support those clergy who, after prayerful discernment, choose to conduct same-gender marriages and those congregations who choose to host same-gender weddings....

God may call us, in God’s own time, to create a new form of Methodism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and beyond....

As we make our way back home to create the Church where all are truly welcome, we invite you to partner with us....

The Mission Cabinet of the Western Jurisdiction, The College of Bishops, Directors of Connectional Ministries, Chairperson of the Leadership Team.

– By Greg Nelson; GC2019, News, March 18, 2019.

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If you surround yourself with clowns, don’t be surprised when your life resembles a circus. ~ Steve Maraboli