



# As We Make Our Way Back Home

## A Progress Report from the Western Jurisdiction



*“A home for all God’s people, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation.”*

In 2000, delegates to the Western Jurisdictional Conference [adopted a statement](#) entitled “2020: *Our Emerging Vision*”, the product of several years of listening and testing. If you take the time to read it, you may find yourself both inspired by the beautiful, aspirational language, and challenged that we have yet to fully realize most of its ambitious goals.

The language of our Western Jurisdiction vision, particularly its promise of offering “a home for all God’s people,” found new resonance as the Rev. Donna Pritchard quoted it in [her statement](#) on behalf of our leadership at the close of General Conference 2019. When it echoed again in [our bishops’ message](#) to the Church, United Methodists from across the connection were asking how they too might find both a symbolic and a literal home in the West.

Over the past week, Western Jurisdiction leaders gathered for a series of meetings at First United Methodist Church in Portland, Oregon. As we spent time listening to one another, new energy and ideas emerged. The deep sadness that many have carried since St. Louis was lightened some by the knowledge that we were once again at home, surrounded by siblings in Christ committed to holding each other accountable in love to the holy work of opening hearts, minds, and doors.

Throughout our meetings last week we sought to identify strategic priorities—emerging responses to this moment in the life of the Church. As work continues on these priorities, we trust those efforts will provide us the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, while holding fast to our shared vision.

Toward the end of a day-long meeting of the Western Jurisdiction Leadership Team on March 14th, 2019, members of that team and other gathered leaders, unanimously affirmed the following statement.

# A Statement by the Western Jurisdiction Leadership Team

*Trusting in the Author of Life*

who understands the blessings of diversity we fail to comprehend,

*Inspired by the nonconforming Christ*

who teaches us to defy oppression in all its forms, and,

*Guided by the Holy Spirit*

who continually leads us by grace into abundant life,

*We, laity and clergy, of the Western Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church,*

as one body, deeply saddened and greatly harmed

by the rending actions of the 2019 General Conference,

Reaffirm our commitment to a radically hospitable church in two converging ways.

## I.

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

We remain committed to the connectional ministry of The United Methodist Church and to working for an open and inclusive Church for all God's people. We understand that the unity God intends for us binds us not by uniformity, but by love, for God is love. Ever obedient to Christ's commandment to such radical love and extravagant hospitality, we cannot comply with the actions of the 2019 General Conference.

Instead, we will celebrate the fullness of God's creation in all its differences. In this moment we especially celebrate the lay and clergy leadership of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual children of God. And we will maintain the rights for our clergy and local churches to serve all people, which includes honoring the covenant of marriage for couples of all identities and orientations.

## 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 remember that injustice anywhere threatens justice everywhere, and seek to deepen our understanding of the intersections of suffering and hope. We strive to center voices from the margins in this new thing that God is doing. We will carefully follow more leaders who are people of color, young people, and our LGBTQIA+ siblings as we pursue God's "way in the wilderness" (Isaiah 43:19).

# Our Response to this moment in the life of our United Methodist Church

The Mission Cabinet of the Western Jurisdiction, composed of the bishops, directors of connectional ministries, and leadership team chairperson, receives and wholeheartedly embraces the statement of the Western Jurisdiction Leadership Team, recognizing in it the shared values of the West, and the longing for the home God calls us to share with all.

Many persons across the theological spectrum are feeling the deep pain of our beloved United Methodist Church. We have found much encouragement and hope in the actions and statements of like-minded United Methodists around the world including progressives, moderates, and conservatives alike, who no longer recognize the church they have long called home.

They are not alone. You are not alone. We are not alone. Inspired by these words and actions, we commit to partnering with others across our global connection in nurturing and developing structures to sustain the new life that is springing forth. Working together, forming diverse coalitions of grace and love, is what it means to be United Methodist.

Continuing our response to the harm of the 2019 General Conference and responding to the shared passion of the leaders gathered in Portland, the Mission Cabinet holds the following statements and commitments in common:

- If found to be constitutional and put into practice, the restrictive, punitive provisions of the legislation passed at General Conference will cause continuing harm to many, especially LGBTQIA+ members of the body. We stand in opposition to this harm because “if one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Corinthians 12: 26) in the body of Christ. Even across theological divides, many faithful United Methodists understand that the legislation is contrary to our Wesleyan tradition of practicing God’s extravagant love and grace. We strive to embody this love and grace and seek to do no more harm.
- We affirm the courage and integrity of our Boards of Ordained Ministry who diligently inquire of our candidates for commissioning or ordination based on their gifts for Christ’s ministry as delineated in ¶1335 of the *2016 Book of Discipline*. We encourage our Boards to continue to base their examination on their understanding of our Triune God and God’s call rather than on sexual or gender identity of candidates for ministry.
- We affirm that Christ calls people who have different understandings of the Bible and Christian tradition to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4: 3). We will strive in this moment to be a church, the body of Christ that holds in tension our theological diversity even as we engage in dynamic, life giving and transformational ministry with and for all persons. As the Church has focused on the cries for full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people, urgent concerns of other parts of the body have not received the same attention. We commit to work to become a place where the voices of all segments of the Church who desire to live respectfully and peaceably together will be heard and honored.
- We are committed to provide a Safe Harbor for clergy in our conferences as well as across the connection who face the threat of complaints and/or the loss of credentials because of their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or ministry with and for our LGBTQIA+ siblings.
- 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.
- We will in our own pastoral ministries to laity and clergy continue to learn and grow in our understanding of the ways in which we have been “reluctant followers of Jesus Christ in his mission to bring all persons into a

community of love” (Preamble to the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church). We commit ourselves to this journey of learning and growing.

- We also affirm that this is a God-inspired *kairos* moment, and that there may come a time when opposing sides determine in the Spirit of Christ, that they cannot remain together. God may call us, in God’s own time, to create a new form of Methodism for the 21st Century and beyond. This new creation must be rooted in our Wesleyan tradition, embodying grace and founded upon God’s revelation in scripture. We are already listening for God’s voice and considering options in this regard.
- Recognizing that the annual conference is the “basic body” of United Methodism (¶133, Article II of the Constitution of The United Methodist Church), we commit as ministry leaders on a jurisdictional level to working in committed partnership with the leaders of the various Annual Conferences of the Western Jurisdiction. As we prayerfully determine the appropriate next steps in our individual and unique contexts, we will carefully and respectfully listen to those with whom we serve, prayerfully acknowledging that although our pace may vary, we will lead our conferences to walk in the same direction.

As we make our way back home to create the Church where all are truly welcome, we invite you to partner with us. If you share our vision and our hopes, we invite you to join in the conversations that will be convened to listen to many voices and explore the possibilities for the future. Every United Methodist who shares our vision for a Church that truly, and finally, opens its hearts, minds, and doors, offering a home for all God’s people, has a responsibility to do what they can from where they are. We are stronger together! If you would like to engage with what we are doing, visit [onechurch4all.org](http://onechurch4all.org) to learn more, send us a message, and stay in touch. At times when we pause to listen intently for God’s word for this moment, we ask for your patience. And as we move in partnership with others and with you, we ask for your prayers, even as we pray without ceasing for you and our beloved Church.

### **The Mission Cabinet of the Western Jurisdiction**

The College of Bishops  
Directors of Connectional Ministries  
Chairperson of the Leadership Team