



**Office for  
Communications**  
Germany Central Conference

Rev. Klaus U. Ruof  
Press Officer

Dielmannstrasse 26  
60599 Frankfurt am Main  
Germany

Phone +49 69 242521-152  
Cell phone +49 176 83110293  
Fax +49 69 242521-129  
communications@emk.de  
www.emk.de

## Press Release

Frankfurt/Main (Germany), November 26, 2020

For immediate use

### **Germany UMC preserves unity by respectful coexistence as a way forward**

FRANKFURT (Germany) –November 26, 2020 – Last weekend, the Executive Committee of the United Methodist Church (UMC) in Germany agreed to become more open and inclusive on matters relating to human sexuality. The decision was also made to create a new association – a “Community Covenant” – within its structures, aimed at accommodating those members and congregations from a more traditional, conservative perspective. The Committee met by video conference on Friday and Saturday November 20 and 21.

#### **Large degree of consent at the round table and on the Executive Committee**

On the one hand, the decision suspends the few passages of the German version of The Book of Discipline (BOD) containing negative statements on the subject of homosexuality, and the associated prohibitions on ceremonies. On the other hand, a new “Community Covenant” will be incorporated within the structure of the UMC in Germany, which will have an explicitly conservative profile, especially on matters of human sexuality and marriage. Thus it seems possible to stay together as church in the spirit of “convicted humility”.

Over a period of 18 months the 21-person “Round Table” with Bishop Harald Rückert as chair has prepared the proposal for the decisions now adopted at the Executive Committee’s session. Despite very different positions on the controversial questions about homosexuality, the members of the round table submitted their proposals to the Executive Committee “unanimously”. The members of the Executive Committee, who were joined by the delegates of the Central Conference, accepted the proposal of the round table with an

overwhelming majority. The decisions are provisionally valid until the next Germany Central Conference, which is expected to meet in November next year.

### **The goal of generous unity**

In terms of content, the decision now taken by the Executive Committee shows a great proximity to the proposal of the “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation”. The suggestion of a moratorium, which the protocol submits, has opened up a peaceful way forward for the Church in Germany.

It enables the Church to pursue the goal of a generous unity. This gives the conferences, local churches, and pastors in Germany the greatest feasible flexibility to meet the challenges in their environment in the best possible way. At the same time, this flexibility also preserves the connectional nature that is fundamental to The United Methodist Church.

### **Involvement of the “Community Covenant” at all church levels**

This new way forward recognizes the needs on both sides of the debate: On the one hand, the need to suspend the restrictive passages relating to homosexuality. On the other hand, the need to ensure that pastors and churches from the conservative wing of the church are not required to act against their own conscience. Individual church members as well as churches or charges can join the Community Covenant association – a construct that enables them to be true to their conscience on matters relating to human sexuality, whilst at the same time remaining full and active members of their Church, the UMC in Germany. This is illustrated by the fact that the Community Covenant will participate at all levels of the life and ministry of the Church, including in the Executive Committee.

### **Moratorium applies until postponed Central Conference**

All parts of the decision are provisional until the next meeting of the postponed Germany Central Conference. This meeting will take place in November 2021. Meeting two months after the postponed General Conference will help to make the final decisions in accordance with the results of the General Conference. Until then the moratorium will apply.

### **“The plant of trust still has to grow”**

“I can't quite realize yet what has happened now,” said Harald Rückert, chair of the Executive Committee and resident bishop of the Germany Central Conference, after the announcement of the secret ballot. “This is an important stage, but we still need a lot of care and consideration for each other, so that the plant of trust can grow and flourish in our churches.” The further path can

only succeed “if we focus on God and are willing to go the way forward altogether”.

**Bishop Patrick Streiff: “Significance for our worldwide church”**

The resident bishop for the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe Patrick Streiff expressed “high respect for the culture of conversation” that he experienced. He took part in the Executive Committee for a few hours, joining the meeting from his Switzerland office in Zurich. His episcopal area comprises seven Annual Conferences, which cover sixteen countries with wide cultural, theological and social differences.

Because the human sexuality discussions also led to differences in his Central Conference, Streiff was very interested in the result of the German round table discussion and the expected decision of the Germany UMC’s Executive Committee. “If the Germany Central Conference finds a viable way forward on these issues and can stay together, this will also be interesting for other UM conferences,” Streiff added, “a significance for our worldwide church far beyond the Germany Central Conference”.

Photo credits:

- Bishop Harald Rückert: Klaus U. Ruof, UM Communications Germany
- Executive Committee (video conference): Klaus U. Ruof, UM Communications Germany

Klaus Ulrich Ruof  
Head of Communications / Press Officer