

## **Statement regarding “UMC Plan B” by Neil M. Alexander and Bishop Gregory V. Palmer**

The Call to Action is more far reaching than any of the legislative proposals which are merely catalysts for the sweeping change of heart and culture needed in the UMC.

The laity, pastors and bishops working on the Call to Action have remained steadfast: the focus is to dedicate attention and resources to increase the number of vital congregations which are essential for inviting, forming and sending disciples of Jesus Christ.

The theological and ecclesiological imperative for the Call to Action work is found in paragraphs 120-122 of The Book of Discipline where our mission statement, deeply rooted in our doctrinal standards, is succinctly proclaimed. We welcome efforts to perfect the language that describes how Scripture, tradition and the guidance of the Spirit compel and propel us. We agree that there are multiple ways to organize and clarify leadership roles and other details.

But we learned through objective research that there are knowable and practical ways to develop and support leaders and deliver resources that increase congregational effectiveness. We need go to work on them in a serious and sustained fashion.

We also learned about the need for assuring increased relevancy in our ministries, the importance of recovering from a pervasive lack of trust, the challenges of the impending economic crunch due to our aging membership and the distracting absence of genuine coordination and sufficient effectiveness in our Connectional system.

The Call to Action is about taking steps in a 10 year commitment to create more vital congregations, requiring a no-nonsense increase in collaboration and learning to use metrics as we not only pursue the dreams God gives us but also measure our progress in reaching them. After all of the "yes, but" talk and debate of counter proposals -- what we need most is for the UMC to stay intently focused for at least a decade on creating more vital congregations, assure genuine and sustained alignment in that effort from all parts of the Connection and provide for greater accountability for both lay and ordained leaders.

*Alexander is president and publisher of the United Methodist Publishing House. Palmer oversee the Illinois Episcopal Area. Both are leaders of the Interim Operations Team.*