

DISCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TOGETHER A STATEMENT FROM THE INTER-ETHNIC STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP

As we draw nearer to General Conference 2012, the Inter-Ethnic Strategy and Development Group (IESDG) joins the multitudes of United Methodist Church communities all over the globe in discernment and prayer for the future of The United Methodist Church. Though there is much anxiety about what that future may be, the IESDG is committed to the vision and mandate to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” In that spirit, we are grateful for the prophetic insight and dedication of the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table in preparing the Call to Action resulting, in the Interim Operation Team’s legislation to General Conference 2012. Although we affirm the Call to Action and its charge to mobilize the whole church for vital and effective mission, we hold firm to the convictions that the structure proposed by the Interim Operation Team report and legislation has many theological, ecclesial, and missional failures, and we maintain our earlier stated position of opposing the proposed legislation.

We offer the following thoughts and discernments in a spirit of holy conferencing and discourse.

- We affirm the efforts of General Agencies of the church to respond to the call for a more efficient and nimble structure by voluntarily and unilaterally producing s for the reduction of size of boards and realignments of tasks and functions.
- We affirm the Call to Action’s vigorous *Call for Leadership* but would urge a heightened emphasis on differing dynamics of leadership that will reach a more racially diverse world parish. The massive global migrations of people are impacting our neighborhoods and regions with a dizzying diversity because of worldwide economics and political disparities, as well as social and religious rivalries and armed conflicts. These prevailing and permeating forces call for new leaders making disciples of Jesus Christ who will align themselves with God who is transforming the turbulent world into God’s reign and realm.
- We seek a structure where racial ethnic persons are not invisible. The Call to Action Committee and Interim Operation Team identified several indicators for change: a four-decade decline in membership; an aging and pre-dominantly Anglo constituency; decline in worship attendance, professions of faith and baptisms; and difficulty in attracting younger generations. The U.S. Census 2010 reveal that *overall, racial and ethnic constituencies accounted for 91.7 % of the nation’s population growth over the past 10 years, and that in 4 states and Washington, D.C., racial ethnics are now the majority, and in 6 states, they are approaching the majority.* The great wisdom of General Conference recognized this trend in earlier years, and enabled the work of the National

Plans for racial ethnic ministries, which has resulted in much growth in membership and worship attendance from our racial ethnic constituency and ensuring the presence of a younger generation. In addition, the growth from Central Conferences has been phenomenal. We urge the Connectional Table to celebrate this reality and use it as guiding principle in the challenging work for the transformation of The United Methodist Church.

Respectfully submitted,
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