

## A COVENANT OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Bishops of the church are spiritual leaders who are set apart by the church to lead with hope in our Savior and Redeemer Jesus Christ. The vows which each bishop affirmed at her or his consecration continue to guide and shape our ministry. We as a Council have affirmed this commitment to our vows. The heart of those commitments are found in these statements from the Service of Consecration. We vow and commit ourselves...

- "...to guard the faith, to seek the unity, and to exercise the discipline of the whole Church...."
- "...to preach and teach the truth of the gospel to all God's people..."
- "...to lead the people...in their mission of witness and service in the world...."
- "...to lead and guide all persons entrusted to [our] care...."

(The complete Order for the Consecration of Bishops may be found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, pages 698-710.)

As we prepare for the 2016 General Conference, we join together in a covenant that is rooted in our consecration vows and that outlines how we intend to fulfill those vows and provide spiritual leadership prior to, during, and after General Conference.

By God's grace, we, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, covenant together to...

- Honor God, follow Jesus, and lead relying upon the Holy Spirit in all we say and do.
- Be in prayer for the General Conference, the delegates and visitors.
- Work for the unity of the church.
- Remain in community with one another as each one speaks and follows their Christian conscience in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit and in prayerful discernment with episcopal colleagues and spiritual companions.
- Show respect for all persons "including avoiding any expressions that undermine the residential authority of our colleagues."
- To guard, transmit, teach, and proclaim, corporately and individually, the apostolic faith as it is expressed in Scripture and tradition, and, as they are led and endowed by the Spirit, to interpret that faith evangelically and prophetically. The United Methodist Book of Discipline 2012, paragraph 414.3
- Offer pastoral care to and with anyone.
- Carry out our presidential duties in a manner that enables the work of the General Conference to be conducted in an orderly and non-disruptive manner.
- Be guided by the clear intent of The Book of Discipline as we fulfill our vows to "...guard the faith, order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline of the church." (§403.1)
- "...plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations,

and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.” (¶147)

- Grow as spiritual leaders who offer passion, clarity, hope and imagination to the church as we are fully engaged in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- Order our lives and leadership in the firm conviction as stated by John Wesley: “the best of all is, God is with us.”

We pledge to hold each other accountable for living out this covenant and to seek the support and prayers of the entire church.