



June 6, 2017

TO: Commission On a Way Forward

FROM: The Confessing Movement within The United Methodist Church

The Confessing Movement wishes to express deep appreciation to the Commission On a Way Forward for requesting our comments regarding the future of our beloved church. We respect and commend each of you who have accepted this enormous challenge. You are in our thoughts and prayers. If The Confessing Movement can be of any further assistance, please contact us.

Our comments are as follows:

#### CONFESSING MOVEMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION ON A WAY FORWARD

Our preferred future for our denomination is the future we have been working for since we came together as a group primarily committed to doctrinal/theological renewal. We believe The United Methodist Church has defined her identity and mission, faithful to our history and in harmony with the universal church. This has not been a casual or hasty enterprise, nor has it been without ongoing responsible reexamination.

The constituency of The Confessing Movement is practicing orthodox Wesleyans who happily claim, with United Methodism's self-definition, the centrality and authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We have never sought to be anything other than what our Church says we are to be.

It is obvious that who we have said we are as a denomination is not the preferred future of a segment of the church. While that segment is a minority, it is demanding the attention and energy of the church, and the church is paralyzed as a Kingdom Movement and is unable to focus on our mission of "making disciples for the transformation of the world."

The Commission must free itself of thinking of unity in terms of the denomination if it is to accomplish its purpose to "move us beyond the impasse over the nature, conditions, and extent of the inclusion of LGBTQ people within the church." Some sort of separation in which one part of the division would guarantee LGBTQ people ordination and same-sex marriage is required.

We recognize that LGBTQ persons are as conscience bound in their demanding ordination and same sex marriage as we are in opposition. We should honor that. We must also honor the conscience of us (who we believe are a large majority of the church) who in our faithfulness to

Scripture and the 2000-year tradition of the universal Christian church cannot be a part of a denomination that accepts the “practice” of homosexuality, affirms a redefinition of marriage and breaks with the church universal in practices related to human sexuality.

We pray that the Commission would stay aware of the fact that we are not the cause of schism. We are faithful to who we say we are as a denomination and we are in continuity with the apostolic teaching of the Christian church for 2000 years. Schism has already occurred, fostered by leaders and judicatories publicly calling for and openly violating the *Discipline*; schism is now corporately expressed in the election of a bishop in a same sex marriage. This extreme action is a deliberate act of disobedience declaring that they cannot live in a denomination with the commitments we presently have on the issues of human sexuality.

Our position on the issue is at the center of our larger orthodox understanding and commitment. In creation humans are purposefully sexed and complementary. This is a dimension of creation which is at the center of Jesus’ understanding of marriage; also, upon which the social order is founded. To disavow sexual otherness obscures the image of the Church as the Bride of Christ.

It is presumptuous and disrespectful to ask us to think that Jesus was misled in his description of creation and marriage. The extremity of the LGBTQ community’s insistence that we disregard our convictions and 2000 years of witness of the church and to repent of 2000 years of Biblical teaching is untenable and unacceptable.

We recognize the depth of our division as a denomination and deeply desire to honor all sides of the conversation.

If we affirm Scripture and tradition on the issues that divide us, we may live in communion but not under common governance.

Let’s accept that and start the process that will eventuate in enabling them to live in an autonomous body, where they can exercise their calling and live freely in accord with their convictions. Our constituency cannot live in a denomination where that distinction is not clearly made and ordered accordingly.