



A WAY FORWARD... THUS FAR

A Status Report from the Commission on a Way Forward

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AN INVITATION TO PRAYER

Please Join Us in Prayer and Reflection: Read John 15:1-17 and Pray Together

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SPIRITUAL PRACTICES: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

BEING LED TO A WAY FORWARD

- ◆ **PRAYER:** We pray together during the days we meet and covenant to pray for each other when apart.
- ◆ **STUDY:** We study the Bible together.
- ◆ **LISTEN:** We hear each other's testimonies.
- ◆ **WORSHIP:** We have spent time in worship.
- ◆ **HOLY CONFERENCING:** We engage in Christian conversation throughout our meetings.
- ◆ **COVENANT:** We have a covenant that creates a Spirit-led structure for mutual accountability in love.

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FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS

OUR CHARGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS



MISSION

"Exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional, and central conference actions"



VISION

"Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible"



SCOPE

"Be open to new ways of embodying unity that moves us beyond where we are in the present impasse and cycle of action and reaction around ministry and human sexuality... Give consideration to greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present connectionality"

[Click here for the full document](#)

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The Principles of a Way Forward



- Fruitfulness in Mission is First
- Multiplying Wesleyan Witness
- Operating out of a “Heart of Peace”
- Allow for Contextualization of Structure
- Creating “Space”
- Simplicity of Proposal
- Resolution of Impasse
- Working with the Council of Bishops to prepare for General Conference

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Preparing for a Way Forward: Study *The Anatomy of Peace*



Download a sample chapter of the new, 2nd edition of #AnatomyOfPeace by @arbinger! <http://bit.ly/AOPmicro>



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What Connects Us Now: Our Common Core

Jesus is the Vine; We are the Branches

The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds

Disciplined Engagement with Scripture

Articles of Religion/Confession of Faith

Works of Piety, Mercy and Justice

The General Rules

Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

The Wesley Hymns

Small Group Accountability and Support
(Class and Band Meetings)



A Connectional Way of Life that includes Superintendency, Itineracy, and Conferencing



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SKETCHING VS. PAINTING A FULL PICTURE

HOW WE'RE DOING OUR WORK

A sketch is a rough, unfinished drawing in pencil to assist an artist in preparing a more finalized picture. Artists draw sketches with pencil in one hand and an eraser in the other, constantly correcting, improving, and redrawing. The artist gradually elaborates on the sketch with more details, and eventually adds color and texture until the painting is ready for display and critique.

At this point, the Commission is sketching models with a pencil in one hand and an eraser in the other, improving and correcting until we have something more detailed and complete to share with the Council of Bishops and the church for feedback.

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WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

GOALS FOR THE FINAL REPORT

- ◆ Driven by values of unity and mission
- ◆ Common theological center
- ◆ A new church will not look like the current church
- ◆ Dynamic, flexible and contextual connectionalism
- ◆ It may mean a way for groups to be in ministry separately while sharing some common ministry
- ◆ Enable people with contradictory convictions to flourish
- ◆ It may mean multiple versions of the Book of Discipline
- ◆ Jesus' call to unity may look like associations or affiliated churches
- ◆ Maintain global connection in loosely configured structure
- ◆ Allowance for those who don't adopt a revised structure

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WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

LEARNINGS ABOUT CONTEXTUALIZATION

- ◆ The way forward cannot be an extension of our path of conflict
- ◆ We need to escape our own assumptions about structure and polity
- ◆ When you give people freedom, you get incredible creativity



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WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

LEARNED VALUES

- ◆ We value pushing the pendulum toward looser on structure and contextualization and tighter on naming the essentials of theology and doctrine.
- ◆ We wish to honor differences in practices and non-essentials for the sake of contextual mission.
- ◆ We value simpler structure and processes and a thinner Book of Discipline.
- ◆ We value remaining connected in mission.
- ◆ We support the freedom to contextualize.
- ◆ We are exploring many creative ways of living together including “branches,” “umbrella plans,” “affiliated connections,” “federated relationships,” and more.

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WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

OUR GLOBAL CONTEXT

- ◆ Concerns and goals related to human sexuality vary widely across the globe.
- ◆ The landscape in our Central Conferences is very different from the U.S. landscape.
- ◆ Conferences are not of one mind on ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons.
- ◆ The global context is complex due to cultural, civic, and legal restrictions and freedoms that differ.
- ◆ Some changes within the U.S. church may pose a potential threat to the vital mission of our Central Conferences.
- ◆ Understanding and honoring the nuances of each central conference is critical.

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THE ESSENTIALS: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM *WONDER, LOVE AND PRAISE*

A DOCUMENT PRODUCED BY UMC'S COMMITTEE OF FAITH AND ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE THE CHURCH

- ◆ The saving love of God is meant for all people
- ◆ The saving love of God is transformative
- ◆ The saving love of God creates community
- ◆ It is a dynamic, relational unity, not a monolithic uniformity
- ◆ We must differ in order to relate to context and realize particular gifts
- ◆ We need forms of polity that are consistent with our core convictions
 - ◆ Honors scope of grace
 - ◆ Recognizes transformative nature of grace
 - ◆ Manifests the Love of Christ
 - ◆ Forms that serve the growth of community

[Click here to learn more about Wonder, Love and Praise](#)

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: The Colloquy at Emory University

Our History

- ◆ Division, separation, mergers and branching out are part of our denominational history

Our Reality

- ◆ The United Methodist Church is increasingly fragmented
- ◆ Many believe some sort of separation is inevitable

We Don't Agree

- ◆ Is the church's position on marriage and ordination an essential doctrine?

How Can the Past Inform the Future

- ◆ Is there a historical or theological analogy to the current conflict?

Theological Diversity

- ◆ Different lenses of liberation vs oppression and orthodoxy vs heresy
- ◆ Many advocated more geographical and cultural space between parts of the church

Identified Need

- ◆ Identified the need to recover mission and passion of the church as a movement

From: *The Colloquy on Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality at Emory University* sponsored by GBHEM

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WHAT WE'VE HEARD: Listening and Feedback from the church*

Communion



The reality that we may live in communion but not under common governance

Context



Some envision a returning to a pre-1972 approach that allows for contextual ministry

Mission



Schism would be a tragic weakening of our mission while the current reality is also harming our mission

Heartfelt Convictions



Heartfelt differences between those who want a removal of current language and others who affirm current language

Unity



What kind of unity can we provide so that we can live together?

Structure and Finances



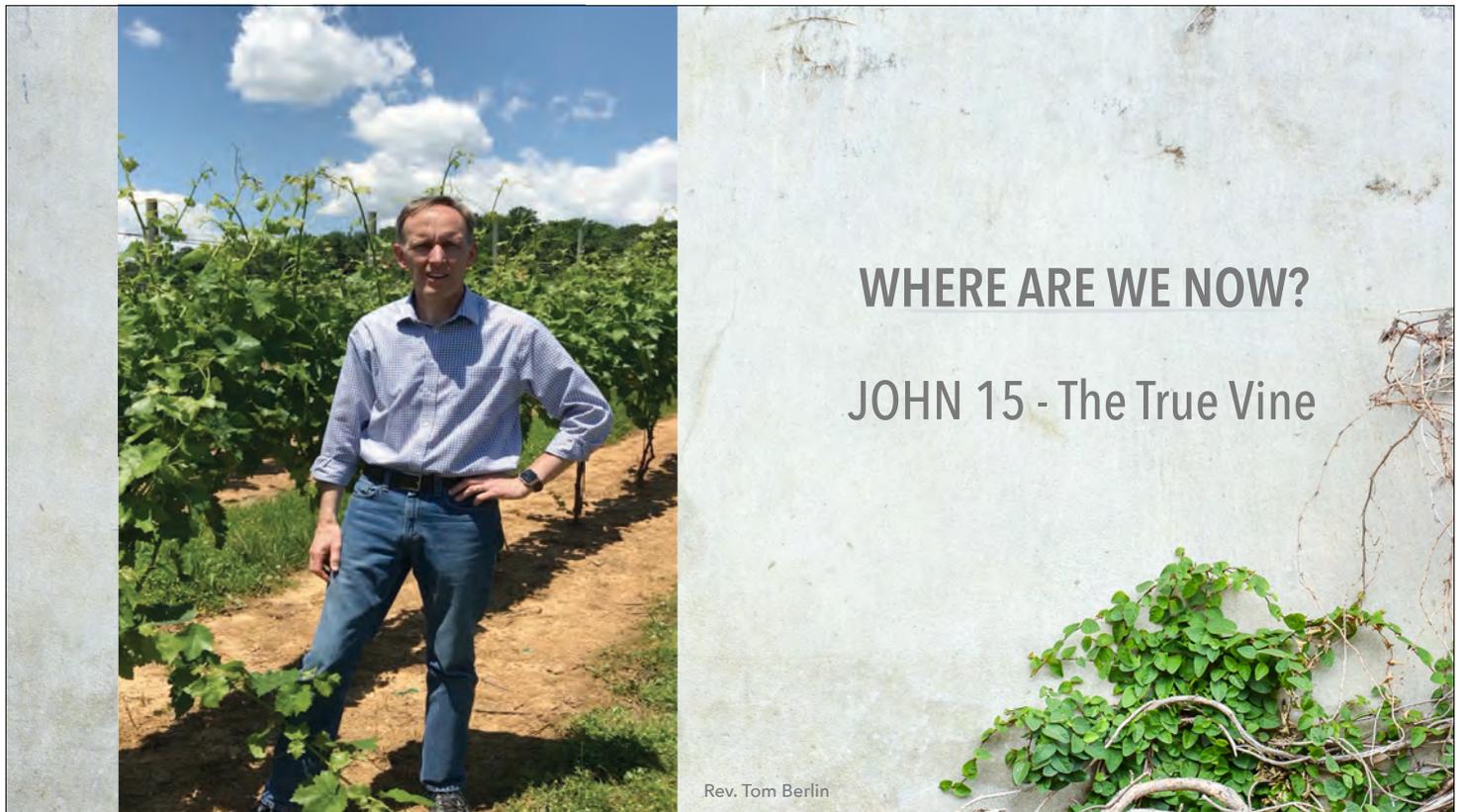
We need enough structural freedom so that no one has to compromise their deeply held beliefs



Financial implications:

- pension liability
- support of Central Conferences
- support of hospitals, colleges, universities, etc.

* the church refers to feedback sent to the commission by individuals, churches, caucus groups, boards and agencies, laity, candidates for ministry, clergy, etc.





WE INVITE YOU TO PRAY AS WE CONTINUE THE WORK!

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CONNECT WITH THE COMMISSION



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