

Leading Now and Into the Future

*“For I know the plans I have for you’, declares the Lord,
‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you a hope and a future.’” — Jeremiah 29:11*



Leading Now and Into the Future – Our Vision

The Iowa Annual Conference Appointive Cabinet and Bishop Laurie Haller, in consultation, conversation, and collaboration with a representative body of Iowa United Methodist traditional, centrist, and progressive compatibilists, the Ezekiel Team, and our Conference Boards of Trustees, Pensions, and Finance and Administration (CFA), offer a new way forward as we live into the future of the Iowa Annual Conference. This way forward is informed by Bishop Laurie’s [“Vision 2032,”](#) where (1) relationships are more important than theological convictions, (2) innovation, creativity, and imagination are more important than stagnation, rigidity, sacred cows, and the status quo, and (3) our primary focus is on the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

Many forces press against United Methodist Congregations including a global pandemic, new iterations of Methodism desiring to move forward, and the repeated delay of General Conference 2020. We boldly offer this vision and plan for how we will live, lead, and do ministry **now** as United Methodists in the Iowa Annual Conference.

This vision provides a home for everyone – whether they consider themselves liberal, evangelical, progressive, traditionalist, middle of the road, conservative, centrist or something else[1] - who wants a home in the remaining Iowa Annual conference of The United Methodist Church. We believe people need Jesus, we need each other, and we need to lead the church we believe God is asking us to be as United Methodists for this time.

As we lead now into the future, we desire to equip local congregations to do the ministry God is calling them to do. No one will be compelled or required to act contrary to their convictions, understanding of scripture, or conscience. Likewise, no one will be prevented from doing the ministry God is calling them to offer. To put it clearly, pastors will be able to choose which weddings they officiate, as long as it is two consenting adults who have been counseled. Likewise, church leadership, in consultation with their pastors, will be able to determine their own policy regarding weddings. Our ministry and witness to the world is stronger due to our connection. We will live into the trust we have in one another knowing our congregations and clergy are deeply engaged and informed by scripture, are convicted by the Holy Spirit, and are being responsible to the mission God has called us to – even when we don’t all agree, or our ministries are different.

This vision is also informed by covenant work emerging from the recent special called North Central Jurisdictional Conference envisioning a church committed to evangelism, caring about each disciple's faith journey, and about both personal piety and social holiness. We heard the voices of many who

were clear about the need to be a church committed to inclusion, connectionalism, antiracism, diversity, climate care, contextually driven ministry, and being hope made real. All of this is a reflection of who we are in Christ and how we live out the call we each have in our baptism.

We realize this vision may go too far for some in the current Iowa Annual Conference and not far enough for others. For many congregations this means that nothing will change regarding the way you operate or do ministry. No vote needs to be taken. Nor do changes need to be made in your local context. Keep doing what God is calling you to do. For some congregations, this means that you will now be free to begin new ministries that God is calling you to do.

As United Methodists, we hold on to our Wesleyan heritage believing “the living core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason”[2] and we continue to be guided by our doctrinal standards, our Baptismal Covenants (I, II, III, BOW), and the Apostles Creed. We are informed by the work set out in “Our Theological Task” and embrace our expressions of theology through everything contained in our *United Methodist Hymnal*, *Book of Worship*, and song books.

If, however, a church feels that they cannot continue to be in ministry in the Iowa Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church with the vision as presented, we have developed a plan with the Board of Trustees, CFA and the Board of Pensions to allow for a gracious exit from the IAUMC. This [disaffiliation plan](#) has been updated to meet the requirements laid out in BOD ¶ 2553 at the Special Called General Conference.

This vision will be effective January 1, 2022. Local congregations who desire to leave the Iowa Annual Conference, will need to 1) present a written statement outlining their desire to leave as their faithful response to this vision of ministry and human sexuality to the Bishop and the Appointive Cabinet, 2) schedule a charge conference with their local District Superintendent, with a two-thirds majority vote in favor of disaffiliation, and 3) must satisfy any remaining apportionment payments and pension liability calculations.

In this delicate time in the Iowa Annual Conference and the United Methodist Church, we are committed to ensuring that both clergy and congregations can flourish in their ministries by continuing their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.