

Covenant to Build BeLoved Community

United Methodism is at a crucial inflection point – facing the challenges of a global pandemic, racial injustice, impacts of climate change, denominational decline, and intradenominational strife. More than ever, we need to lean into the call of Hebrews 10:22-25 (CEB): “Therefore, let’s draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water. Let’s hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near. As the North Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church (NCJ), we covenant to Build the Beloved Community.

Baptism is the foundation of the BeLoved Community, as through it we are called into a covenantal relationship with God, with each other, and with all of God’s creation. It is in the spirit of this covenantal relationship that we affirm our baptismal vows ...

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of your sin?

We do. We confess our need for God’s grace as we struggle to renounce and reject the spiritual forces and evil powers of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. We apologize for the ways the NCJ has and continues to harm people who live in other parts of the world, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), people who live in poverty, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Now is the moment to repent of these sins and turn toward the future to which God is calling the NCJ.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?

We do. We pray for God’s freedom and power to resist colonialism and racism in all the forms they present themselves.

We stand in solidarity with ongoing efforts of many, who have worked tirelessly to end racism. We recognize this is a journey; that the work of ending racism is ongoing because it is a way of being - as the body of Christ. All of our work as a Church should be done in an anti-racist manner.

We request the NCJ Bishops of Color convene all BIPOC delegates to discuss how to begin to address the trauma in communities of color.

We request that the Mission Council, in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops, develop an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in a conversation during the next session of the NCJ that seeks to understand the impact of white supremacy and Christian nationalism/white nationalism within The United Methodist Church.

We request the Mission Council evaluate their budget and demonstrate at the next jurisdictional conference how the budget incorporates antiracism work and healing institutional trauma.

The Mission Council must designate sufficient NCJ funds for the purpose of convening Conference Commissions on Religion and Race and Annual Conference antiracism task force representatives in 2022 to operationalize and share a report at the next jurisdictional conference:

- A racial analysis of: local church's total budgets, clergy salaries, new church starts/revitalizations, church closures, Conference staff, board, task force and committee members, and delegates to GC/JC.
- Alignment of Annual Conference budget with antiracism work, creation of whistleblower policies, on-going training and support for cross racial/cross cultural appointments, prioritization of new church starts and congregational revitalization in communities of color, resources to support the recruitment and development for leaders of color (lay and clergy), and developing programs for youth/young adults of color.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?

We do. We also affirm Christ has opened the Church to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. All people are of sacred worth.

LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity are a gift to the Church. We implore all in the NCJ to do no harm and to create a culture in which abundance and diversity can be celebrated and lived. Therefore, we urge all members of the NCJ to avoid pursuing charges for LGBTQIA+ clergy and allies, and request our episcopal leaders dismiss charges related to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same gender weddings. Because we are all beloved children of God, we, in the NCJ, implore all our conference leaders, boards and agencies, to bring no harm to LGBTQIA+ people. We will not restrict God's calling based solely on a candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity. We commit to doing good by pursuing healing and reconciliation with all who have experienced harm and exclusion related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

We request the Mission Council in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops develop an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in conversation to understand the impact of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism within United Methodist Churches during the next meeting of the jurisdiction.

According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

We will. We who will remain and continue to be faithful members of The United Methodist Church, commit to leading the NCJ through this difficult moment. We remain committed to our continuing call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and by sharing and living the Gospel.

We value episcopal leadership and commit to electing bishops as soon as possible. If and only if the 2020 General Conference, currently scheduled for August 29-September 6, 2022, is postponed or canceled, and the regular session of the jurisdictional conference is subsequently proposed to be postponed or canceled, this special session of the NCJ Conference authorizes the duly elected heads of the conference delegations and the NCJ College of Bishops to work together to call a special session of the jurisdictional conference for November 2-5, 2022, the time currently scheduled for the regular session of the jurisdictional conference, for the

purpose of the election of bishops, acting on nominations for jurisdictional committees and general agencies, budgeting and other necessary matters.

We encourage conferences and local churches to strive for reconciliation and understanding. However, some congregations and clergy may feel called to a different future in the faith. We respect our siblings who depart and desire to do no harm as we anticipate cooperative ecumenical efforts in the future. We grieve each separation. NCJ annual conferences should use existing disciplinary and conference provisions to accommodate local congregations and clergy seeking disaffiliation.

We stand in solidarity with United Methodists around the world who long for a world-wide contextual and regional denominational structure.

We call on the NCJ College of Bishops and Mission Council to immediately begin working with other Jurisdictions, Central Conferences, and the Connectional Table to make regional equity and contextualization a reality. We fully support polity changes, such as the Christmas Covenant or Connectional Table's US Regional Conference proposals, that will lead to regional equity and contextualization.

We recommend Annual Conferences engage in conversations about regional equity and contextualization.

Covenanting to Build the BeLoved Community, we look to 2024 with promise. We pledge ourselves to God's call upon our lives, to each other, and to the future of The United Methodist Church.

***With God's help we will proclaim the good news
and live according to the example of Christ.
We will surround each other
with a community of love and forgiveness,
that we may grow in our trust of God,
and be found faithful in our service to others.
We will pray for each other,
that we may be true disciples
who walk in the way that leads to life.***