

**Minutes of the Spring 2018 Connectional Table Meeting**  
**April 4 – 7, 2018 – Glenview, IL**

**Wednesday, April 4, 2018 – Day 1**

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**2 pm – Opening Worship of the Connectional Table Meeting.** Connectional Table (CT) Chair Bishop Christian Alsted welcomed CT members and guests. Wespath meeting coordinator Anne Green welcomed the group and shared logistical information about the building.

Residential bishop and CT member Sally Dyck offered greetings from the Northern Illinois conference.

The CT's new Chief Connectional Ministries Officer, Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, preached a sermon titled "Seeing at the Threshold" at the opening worship service, highlighting the anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and ministry at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his assassination. (Attachment A)

**3 pm** - The opening worship was followed by a reception for Bigham-Tsai.

**3:30 pm – On Boarding with Claire Bowen**

Claire Bowen, an on boarding/human resources specialist, was invited by the personnel committee to conduct an on boarding process with Bigham-Tsai to assist her as she continues to transition into her role at CCMO. The process involved generating several candid questions in four categories for Bigham-Tsai with her absent. This was followed by dinner and then an opportunity for Bigham-Tsai to address each question asked of her. (Attachment B)

The on boarding session ended at approximately 8 pm.

**Thursday, April 5, 2018 – Day 2**

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8:30am – Worship with communion.

9am – Plenary 1: Bishop Christian Alsted presiding.

Wespath General Secretary and CT member Barbara Boigegrain welcomed the CT to the Wespath building.

Bishop Alsted began with a story about how the innovative engineering of an aqueduct in 110 BC where the narrowed the diameter of the waterway that created pressure to push the water to its destination is a metaphor for how the CT can do its work more effectively by narrowing its focus to its purpose during this meeting. The three sources we will use to do this work include:

- CT mission statement
- Four Areas of Focus
- Paragraph 125 – worldwide covenant and litany

The meeting design also took into account feedback shared at the Oslo meeting during the open space processing time.

**Connectional Table Roll call:**

**Present:**

Pete Aguila, SCJ  
Ole Birch, No. Europe/

Eurasia CC  
Barbara Boigegrain, Wespath  
Brad Brady, SEJ

Kim Cape, GBHEM  
Emmanuel Cleaver III, SCJ  
Amy Coles, SEJ

Fred Day, GCAH  
Josephine Deere, SCJ  
Jerome DeVine, NCJ  
Jacob Dharmaraj, NFAAUM  
Junius Dotson, GBOD  
Bishop Sally Dyck, GBCS  
Cashar Evans, UMCCom  
Bishop Ciraco Francisco,  
STCCCM  
Gary Graves, CoGC  
Gil Hanke, GCUMM  
Dawn Wiggins Hare, GCSRW  
Erin Hawkins, GCORR  
Susan Henry Crowe, GBCS  
Michelle Hettman, SEJ  
Mike Dio Jen, West Africa CC  
Beverly Jones, SCJ

Markus Jung, Germany CC  
Thomas Kemper, GBGM  
Judi Kenaston, NEJ  
Dan Krause, UMCCom (4/5)  
Moses Kumar, GCFA  
Dana Lyles, SEJ  
Bishop Tracy Malone,  
GCSRW  
Bishop William McAlilly, GBHEM  
Bishop Mike McKee, GCFA  
William Meekins, NEJ Brian  
Milford, UMPH Germain  
Mupasa, DMYP Tonya Murphy,  
SEJ Kenneth Nelson, SEJ  
Marianne Niesen, WJ David  
Nuckols, NCJ Oglesby, Dennis,  
BMCR

Harriett Olson, UMW  
Bishop Jeremiah Park, GCAH  
Benedita Penicela Nhambiu,  
Africa CC  
Lyssette Perez, MARCHA  
Robin Scott, SEJ  
Jovito Sermonia, Jr., Philippines  
CC  
Mike Slaughter, NCJ  
Bishop James Swanson,  
GCUMM  
Monalisa Tuitahi, PINCUM  
Bishop Michael Watson,  
OCUIR  
Stefan Zürcher,  
Central/Southern Eur. CC

**Regrets:**

Bishop Earl Bledsoe, GCORR  
Fred Brewington, NEJ  
Venus Mae Gatdula, DMYP  
Kelley Gifford, NCJ

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung,  
GBGM Cynthia Kent, NAIC  
Duncan McMillan, CoGC

Latham Postell, SEJ  
Kitete ka Kemba Prosper, Congo  
CC  
Bishop Mark Webb, GBOD  
Miller Wilbourne, SCJ

It was announced that there were 39 voting members present at the time of roll call. (Some members listed above arrived late.) It was announced that a quorum was established.

**Special guests and new CT members were welcomed:**

Bishop Gary Mueller, Strategic Team; Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball – Commission on a Way Forward; Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, General Church Council and process facilitator; Bishop Tom Bickerton, Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters (STCCCM); Dr. Peniel Kasongo, STCCCM, Rev. Dee Stickley-Miner, STCCCM; Doug Swanney, British Methodist Church; Eric Martin, Adaptive Change Advisors.

**Agenda - Motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Seconded. Approved.**

**Minutes - Motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 13, 2017 online CT meeting. Seconded. Minutes approved.**

**A Report from Ken Nelson, new chair of Leadership Discernment and Community Life (LDCL):**

**Action:** Ken Nelson presented a recommendation from the LDCL committee for the approval of two additional persons to join the executive committee: Bishop Tracy Smith Malone and Germain Mupasa. The desire is to bring greater diversity and representation to the body. **Approved.**

Nelson also reported the addition of new CT members and their working group assignments.

- Jerry DeVine, a District Superintendent from the Michigan Conference was named to replace Kennetha Bigham-Tsai on the CT. He is serving on the Worldwide Nature Working Group.

- Venus Mae Gatdula from the Division on Ministries with Young People (DMYP) was named to replace Miracle Osman, and is serving on the Vital Congregations-Four Areas of Focus working group.

Bigham-Tsai stated that the Missional Trends advisory group had difficulty finding focus for their work and agreed that they did not need to continue as a group. Staff and other UM resources can help if we have research needs. Re-assignments to other advisory groups are as follows:

- Bishop Hee-Soo Jung – General Church Council advisory group
- Miller Wilbourn – Chapter 5 advisory group
- Gil Hanke, Brian Milford, Jerry DeVine – US Structure advisory group
- Venus Mae Gatdula – Agency Evaluation advisory group
- Kelley Gifford, Mike Slaughter – Connectional Assessment advisory group
- Junius Dotson – Connectional Assessment advisory group (move from GCC at member’s request)

**Additional LDCL Updates included:**

- An update to the CT personnel policy guidelines to be in alignment with the GCFA/CPPP policy guidelines.
- Ken Nelson is now serving as chair of LDCL, Amy Coles as new vice chair of LDCL and Josephine Deere is serving as secretary.
- Lyssette Perez was named chair of internal evaluation, serving as co-chair with Dave Nuckols on the committee of Internal Finance and Evaluation.

**9:30 am – Plenary: Adaptation in Times of Uncertainty and Change**

Bigham-Tsai introduced Eric Martin of Adaptive Change Advisors for a brief introduction to his role with the CT as a consultant on adaptive leadership. Martin explained that this leadership approach is not a model but a pedagogy, asking, “How do we live it?” He addressed the differences between leadership and authority and stated that they are often confused.

**Authority vs. Leadership**

Martin talked about how authority provides D.O.P.E.: Direction, Order, Protection, Expertise. Leadership, however, is accepting responsibility for shared purpose under conditions of uncertainty. It begins with asking, “Who are my people? What does the problem or challenge look like from their perspective?” The CT is a good example of the value of representation being honored. This value also comes into conflict with another value of being effective. How do we transform the resources we have to the power we need to achieve shared purpose? MLK understood that people had the resources of their hearts, minds and feet. Resources and power are different. We give people the power and then we think they are the resource. Why do we do this? Some possibilities:

- Easier
- Keeps us from taking responsibility
- People resist the loss that happens with change. Can we fall in love with loss?
- Systems perpetuate themselves by being difficult to understand. The challenge is to build capacity to do the leadership work.
- Seldom do we see people in authority exercise leadership. It’s risky. The “Saddam Hussein” effect: *if we topple this guy and put in another guy, it will be better*. It’s not a problem of getting more power, more legislation, etc. What is your choice here?

There are 3 different groups/perspectives –

1. **The pacers:** Those who will help us pace the change. One excited by leadership and willing to deal with loss. Advice: Listen hard. And listen until it hurts.
2. **The providers:** Those who are desperate for clarity and authority, order, and sense of role. Alignment is a value. Their desperation comes from a place of wanting to hold onto and hospice their people through

this change. Question: In searching for authority, are we giving away our power? At what point do we give over our power?

3. **The protectors:** Those who care about this conversation to the extent that it represents a threat or opportunity to their people and to themselves. Martin's guess is that they have not experienced the services of authority from the CT. Advice: "Let us feel your pain and let us into your world. Perhaps we can provide the services." People on cell phones are "de-authorizing" the group.

Martin concluded that if we can work with others here to build capacity, we can do it outside this room. He shared a quote from Hillel the Elder: "If I'm not for myself, who will be for me? If I'm only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"

### **Break – 10 minutes**

#### **Plenary 2: Vision for a Worldwide Church: Historical Context – Fred Day**

General secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History Rev. Fred Day gave an historical overview of the formation of The UMC at the April 1968 Uniting Conference 50 years ago. He set the context with a video that highlighted the cultural changes taking place in 1968 in the U.S. and worldwide. He also used Rev. Albert Outler's sermon from the Uniting Conference and lifted up its relevance for the church today. Day presented a brief history of Methodism, then focused on the contemporary cultural cross currents during the time of the merger, currents that we are still living out today.

Day lifted up characteristics for the UMC from Outler's sermon that he asserts are still relevant for the church to embody today: Truly Catholic; Truly Evangelical; Truly Reforming. He closed with a word of hope that times of chaos, as in 1968, can be time for new order and creativity. (Attachment C part 1: Fred Day presentation / Attachment C part 2: Fred Day manuscript)

#### **Process Time with Junius Dotson:**

General secretary of Discipleship Ministries Rev. Junius Dotson led an hour-long process time following Day's presentation. He asked them to reflect on three questions:

- 1) What are the similarities in conditions that existed at the time of our uniting in 1968 with what is happening in our church and world today?
- 2) What does it mean to be --"truly catholic, truly evangelical and truly reforming"-- for the next 50 years?
- 3) What does this mean for the work of the CT?

Dotson reminded the CT that they have the resources of their heads, hearts and feet, as noted by Eric Martin. He asked them to write down any new ideas or feelings that are emerging or action steps that the CT could take going forward. They wrote these on Post-it notes and placed on easel sheets around the room. (Attachment D – Contributions from CT members)

#### **Greetings from the British Methodist Church**

Doug Swanney brought greetings from the British Methodist Church and noted that the Concordat was signed in 1968 between the British Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church, and that Bishop Alsted chairs the European Methodist Council, ensuring that the Methodist voice in Europe speaks with one voice. He thanked the CT for enabling him to be part of the conversations, sharing that the BMC is talking about similar issues: the lack of trust in the life of the church and the need for clarity on vision and leadership.

#### **Plenary 3: The Possibility of United Methodism: Living into Our Global Nature, Dr. Henk Pieterse**

Dr. Pieterse presented on the theological foundations of Paragraph 125 of the BOD. The UMC is on a threshold because our limits have been made known to us. There is the possibility of promise in the threshold experience. He raised several paradoxical themes related to our current reality in terms of: Possibility and Crisis; Connection and Covenant; Freedom and Unity; Connection and Center/Periphery; Connection and Conflict; Our Current Conflict: An Excursus; Connection as Vocation; Connection as Threshold.

(Attachment E: Pieterse presentation)

He posed questions to the CT to stimulate thinking such as:

- What if we think of Christianity as a mindset that shapes the imagination?
- What would it mean to make global Christianity a lifestyle?
- What are the virtues that we need to adhere to?

Pieterse recommended a blog site called UM and Global, curated by Dr. David Scott, a missiologist at Global Ministries: [www.umglobal.org](http://www.umglobal.org).

### **Process Time: Bishop Hope Morgan Ward**

Bishop Ward asked CT members to discuss Dr. Pieterse's presentation in dyads and small groups, and to lift up the gift of the presentation for the church at this time. They were invited to share ideas from their table conversations with the full group:

What is the gift? Reports from CT members:

- Connectionalism as a vocation, a way of life, Christian identity. That is a course changing reality that we have yet to live into.
- Crisis as gift. It's a "gag gift" in that none of us want to receive it. We romanticize the 50s and 60s. We think we were not with crisis at that time. The church has always been in crisis, which is a gift.
- As we move into our full potential as a global church, contextualization as gift.
- God speaks best in the vernacular.
- Many paradoxes – God's mission is not about one or the other, it's about both/and. So much bigger than what we can think and do. To think about it from God's eyes.
- Living in the liminal space and that God beckons us. What we need to do in liminal space is learn from one another.
- Center-periphery notion. In theological thinking, God is the center and we are all on the periphery.
- Missio Dei, being reminded that God is the God of the church. We are not the mission, the church is God's mission. God initiates, participates, and we are instruments. Sometimes we get that twisted. It is not God saying "Go do this for me," but bidding us to come and join in where the spirit is already at work.
- Paradox in a culture with a desire for easy answers. Lifted up in Our Theological Task and many other places.
- It is not something that can be solved or fixed. To be able to name it and have the language. There are no easy answers. We live lives of timelines and deadlines, to remember that this is not what this is. This CT member shared that the lack of a set timeline gives her hope. There will be a church, God will continue to call the church, and there will be God. This is the gift we can give each other as we go back to our conflicts.
- Relief from figuring out who is at the center may mean that we can appreciate the diversity around the center and we don't have to manage it in any way instead of allowing it to flower.
- All renewals come out of crisis. We see that we have great theology but our methodology is broken. This crisis will create a simpler, newer wineskin. We can't continue as we are.
- Unity is not uniformity. Diversity does not cause conflict.

- Conflict is misconstrued as a negative. No society will grow without conflict. Conflict is a source of growth for the UMC.

Bishop Ward then asked CT members to discuss at tables the “air in the room,” the tone, the sense of the meeting and how it might inform the work of the CT.

Comments shared from CT members:

- One of consensus, conferencing, not how it felt at GC 2016, which was more polarized.
- A spirit and willingness to learn, deep listening and looking at new perspectives. In learning anew, the outcome will be thinking anew and being renewed, out of which something new might be birthed.
- We have many Christianities as well, in central conferences and in the Global South. The church is made up of many cultures.
- The church is the one that serves as witness in the local community. The church is not the kingdom of God, the community is.
- We experienced exhaustion and tiredness and questioned the intent of the presentations and how things build on each other. Why were the speakers chosen in the order they were chosen – to what end?
- Weariness in the spirit of the air when we raise the conversation. We felt that we have these kinds of conversations all the time. We’re not the only ones feeling that.
- One CT member shared he felt it was hopeful and lifted up a comment of Russ Richey that we should do theologically-grounded things. The COWF got weary doing practical, but became energized theologizing.
- One CT member felt weariness but the presentation sounded the voice of “fear not”. There is a normalizing of crisis not to be feared but leading to the next new possibility.

**Plenary 4: Narratives of Possibility with Erin Hawkins** (Attachment F: Hawkins presentation)

General secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race Erin Hawkins facilitated a session with CT members on articulating adaptive possibilities rather than problem solving. She recapped concepts from Eric Martin about leadership vs. authority, as well as provided brief highlights from the presentations of Fred Day and Henk Pieterse.

Hawkins framed two scenarios for the CT: the “stuck” community or the “transformational” community. She asked: What will help the CT choose possibility over problem solving? She led the CT in an exercise that engaged each essential function of the CT, and asked members to approach the work as “possibility” rather than “problem” and to articulate the narratives that emerge from the exercise, creating a new range of options and helping the CT to focus on our purpose.

CT members used an appreciative inquiry approach to name words related to the essential function their table was given. They lifted up three words that are important for each function and could guide the CT moving forward.

They were asked to select words that describe the three key conditions of success for the function they were assigned. The words selected were as follows:

Function #1:	Trust, focus, collaboration. (Big question: to what end?)
Function #2:	- Personal, repetition, listening. - Consistency, group buy in, staff support.
Function #3:	- Healing, patience, mutual understanding. - Contextual, connectional, core to our identity.
Function #4:	- Intentionality, openness and transparency. - Listening to understand, looking for impact, ending up with a story for the local church and the entity being reviewed.
Function #5:	Adaptive, theological, excitement.
Function #6:	Intentionality, focus, courage.
Function #7:	Courage, generosity, input.

Hawkins led a discussion about these conditions and identified emerging themes of focus and courage.

Comments raised:

- Questions lack the WHY? They weren't driving toward a goal that could be identified. We raised up some aspirational, vague words.
- The wording of the functions did not clearly include a goal. There is vagueness that could be a barrier.

The CT then engaged in an exercise to challenge CT members in thinking about how the work of the CT might adapt in different circumstances. They were asked to create scenarios by plotting the words on an X and Y axis and imagining the narrative of possibility in each quadrant. Even when there are deficits of the positive conditions needed for success, there are possibilities to adapt to that context toward the positive conditions. Results of the exercise were debriefed as a group. (Attachment G: Flip chart notes)

CT members offered one word to describe the conversations at the tables: crazy-making, confusing, revealing, hard work, radical reimagining, limitations.

### **Friday, April 6, 2018 – Day 3**

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#### **8:30 am – Morning Worship and Announcements**

Following brief announcements, CT members participated in morning worship by engaging the prayer stations inspired by ¶ 125 and sharing in communion. Music was provided by UNUM, a musical a Capella singing group in Chicago.

#### **8:53 am – Plenary 5: Commission on a Way Forward with Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball**

Bishop Alsted introduced Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, one of the conveners of the Commission on a Way Forward (COWF), a commission formed by the Council of Bishops to develop proposals for the COB to address the church's impasse stemming from conflicting views on human sexuality.

Steiner Ball distributed her printed PowerPoint presentation (Attachment H). She gave an overview of the work of the 32-member Commission and named some specific ways the CT could play a supporting role for the church during this process, offering her view that the CT's role is not to correct things, but to use all of our resources wisely to help things go well for the church.

Key priorities for the COWF include:

- Approaching General Conference differently than we have approached previous GCs. Guiding question: How do we change our mindset about how we approach GC? She offered this key question, adding that things can go well by reframing questions and being willing to explore new possibilities.
- The covenant was an important part of their work. She called on the CT as stewards of the vision to help the church approach GC covenantally, as people who seek to be in relationship with one another and see our common interests more than our differences.  
Attachment I: Covenant
- The COWF used the Peacemaking/Influence Pyramid from *The Anatomy of Peace* to show the value of relationship that they have

Update on the work of the Commission:

- They have three task forces working on three sketches.
- The COB will receive their final report.
- Their work is guided by their stated vision, mission and scope.
- They engaged in spiritual practices regularly to listen for God in the midst of their work.
- They worked with a set of principles. (in Attachment H)

Steiner Ball recommended that CT read *The Anatomy of Peace* by The Arbinger Institute. She shared a story that demonstrated an approach they are using to understand one's interest in a situation rather than making a judgment about the position another has taken.

Steiner Ball presented three sketches of possibilities in-process and stated that the church has become more centralized and institutional in its operations.

Steiner Ball stated that the church's global context has been a difficult challenge. She acknowledged that this is the work of the CT and asked "What does a global church look like?"

Summary of sketches:

1. One church model – traditional. Keeps language the same and tightens up accountability. No change to central conference relationships.
2. One church model – change. Takes out current language about LGBTQ persons. It puts in a statement that acknowledges that we are not of all one mind. This is the most de-centralized. It puts decision making closer to the ground. There is no change to central conference operations. They would still be able to adapt their BODs as they can now.
3. One church – multi-branch model. Gives a common core that connects and unites us. Only upon which we can all agree. GC would be more inspirational and less legislative. There would still be a COB, but responsibility would be in the branches. Connectional conferences, still wrestling with whether they are US or global. Do away with jurisdictional conferences and organized along theological beliefs and stances. There is conversation about these branches from a global perspective. CCs would have to align with whatever structure would be in that global branch.

Other key points and considerations:

- If there are only US branches, the CCs could continue as they are, adapting the BOD. It would include support from the US connectional conferences.
- There are financial implications in all the sketches. Wespath has been working with the COB on these scenarios.
- How do the sketches effect the agencies?
- Not a clear vision of what it means to be a global church and what the church needs to function.



Steiner Ball concluded her presentation by calling on the CT to listen “underneath” the words and go back to the pyramid. She urged the CT to not dissect the report from the COB, but rather to read the report and find things with which we resonate, to develop relationships, and help our delegations and general church to take the next faithful step. It may be taking steps to tell a new story of how God is working through the UMC to make disciples.

### **Process Time on the Commission on a Way Forward with Bishop Tracy Malone**

Bishop Malone opened with an invitation to silent reflection on the question: What did we hear that was meaningful, insightful, transformative about the work of the COWF?

She then asked CT members to engage what they found most helpful, insightful and transformative focusing on the established principles, common core essentials and sketches.

Malone posed three questions for table conversation:

1. When we think of our mission and vision for a worldwide church, what are the concerns and fears that we have?
2. When we think about multiplying our witness in the world, what are our fears?
3. What are the possibilities that these models can open up for us?

CT member comments and responses to the questions:

- Found the work hopeful and the idea of differentiation from position and interest was helpful to move us forward.
- We want to go quickly and need to slow down. It may be that the fruit is not mature yet. We think that maybe the only solution is to take the language out of the BOD. It might be too much change too quickly if we do much more than that.
- Fears and concerns: desire for the cultural change is desired by so many but the status quo is hard to move and also desired by many. Change is needed and doing nothing is a fear.
- This is a theological challenge that we face. It is a theological response that will carry the church through amidst change.
- We agree with the theological foundations. Concern centered on implications that may not be considered as we move forward. What could be the implications for the different models being proposed? In terms of all the ways the church is interconnected across the world and the legal issues that we might face.
- Found hope at looking at possibilities. The decentralized model recognizes where the churches are going anyway. Local churches don't care much about the General Conference. Local churches are building direct relationships with local churches in other countries.

Malone asked the body:

- In light of our conversations, as the CT, what do we need to be thinking about?
- What conversations do we need to have?
- What do we need to be attentive to in order to respond to whatever comes out of GC 2019 “to help things go well”: Now, during or after the special session?

### **Responses:**

- Focus on what we need to do as the church moving forward.
- Affirmation of Steiner Ball challenging us not to tear apart the proposals when they come out. How do we see God in the work and help the church move forward rather than tear it apart?

- Start asking the question: what would the leadership role of the CT be in each of the scenarios?
- The conversation has just started to broaden for 2019. We should be thinking of starting the discussion of the way forward of the church.

Malone concluded the process time suggesting that through our relationships and influences, we prepare to go the GC2019 with a different spirit and attitude and pray for the COWF and our work together.

### **11:15 am - Plenary 6: Adaptation in Times of Change with Eric Martin**

Bigham-Tsai introduced Eric Martin's session of how we will address our own leadership as adaptive leaders.

Martin began by identifying this moment for the church as one needing both leadership and authority. He used the acronym DOPE for the characteristics of authority: Direction, Order, Protection and Expertise. He noted the following:

- Direction:** There will still be a church  
**Order:** Hard to tell people specifics about their role. Pastoral role is a skill set needed to walk with people through this change.  
**Protection:** Emotional safety, security. We are the resources for this.  
**Expertise:** Need to learn the skill sets to hold people through the change and transformation.

Martin explained that authority as noted above will be needed during this change. He reminded the CT of what he said the previous day: people often give away their resources for power. He continued that inaction in this moment would be giving away your resources - and in a subtler way - going back to your context and doing what you do without changing is a way to give away your resources.

Martin led the CT in an exercise to identify values and counter-values. He explained how our behavior may undermine our named values. He noted a book he uses entitled *Immunity to Change* about adult learning processes.

CT members got in pairs to engage in dialogue about the following question:

- 1. What things would help me move action forward if they happen more or less often? What are some actions or commitments that you or others could do? If this happened less often, I would have more time to take action.**

Examples:

- If we come to clarity to what we need to do, then find a way forward and take action.
- Continued conversation about concerns, anxieties and needs.
- Less time on information overload. More opportunities to build community. We come in with an agenda about which way we need to go rather than trust the participants.

They were then asked to identify values and commitments using the sentence below:

- 2. I am committed to the value (or importance) of \_\_\_\_\_.**

Responses shared from CT members:

- Relationship
- Connectionalism
- Open minds, doors and hearts
- Trust

- Creativity
- Working together
- Cooperation
- Bridge building

He then asked CT members to examine their own behaviors and name the things that they do that are not aligned with their values by responding to the question: *What am I doing or not doing that get in the way of my Q2 values?* He explained that these are the competing values which are less noble.

Examples:

- Not engaging honestly but coming to a meeting armored and defensive.
- Multitasking gets in the way of active listening. Answering email, texting.
- Looking at everyone with suspicion, gossip.

They were asked to discuss with their partner responses to the following sentence:

**3. *I might also be committed to \_\_\_\_\_.***

He led a brief discussion of the exercise and then asked them to reflect on the question: What could I try to experiment with behaving differently?

He encouraged CT members to send an email to their discussion partners in three weeks to share how they have lived out their responses to the following sentence: **In the next 3 weeks I will do \_\_\_\_\_ to test or learn more about my Q3 values.**

**12:30 – 1:30pm – LUNCH**

**1:45 pm - Plenary 7: Shaping Mission and Ministry in a Worldwide Church with Junius Dotson and Bishop Gary Mueller**

General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries Junius Dotson and convener of the COB leadership team on Congregational Vitality Bishop Gary Mueller led the CT in discussion and updates about the work in the Four Areas of Focus from the perspective of the CT/COB Four Areas of Focus Strategic Team. (Attachment J: Mueller & Dotson presentation )

They explained that the purpose of the session was to engage the CT on how we can implement the 4AF together in a worldwide church and to name the kind of leadership the CT needs to provide to encourage collaborative partnerships. The presentation began with a video that rehearsed the history of the Areas of Focus as it came to being in 2008. Dotson noted key words from the video. The areas were identified to help the whole church be more collaborative, driven and focused.

CT members engaged in discussion to analyze the Four Areas of Focus by answering the questions: What is working well? What are we learning? Responses:

- The 4AF is more of a general church movement than a local church movement.
- Concern for health and new paradigms for working *with* the poor, leadership development and new church starts are things that local churches are already doing.
- It gives us a way of naming what God is already doing in the world and what local churches are already doing and together we can be doing more. Saw it as coming from the ground up – not a program.

- As an expression of what is already taking place across our denomination in order to create what should be happening across our church.

Bishop Mueller shared his reflections on the lack of clarity of current goals and lack of investment by the COB. However, the hope is to use an adaptive approach with the 4AF. Some questions they are asking include:

- How does a church bring focus with specificity and be a ground swell?
- How much commitment is there to dealing with 4AF in ACs?
- What does our current approach to the 4AF say about our commitment to them?
- Are we clear about how to measure how to get there?
- How do we start understanding them differently and operating differently with the Four Areas of Focus?

Dotson reported that the Strategic Team met in January with Lisa Greenwood of Texas Methodist Foundation who assisted them in refining their purpose as a team:

*The purpose of the Vital Congregations through 4 Areas of Focus Strategic Team is to develop strategy, advance, engage, inspire, align and equip the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table around the work of the four areas of focus with the purpose of increasing the number of vibrant congregations.*

The team also focused on clarifying new messaging. The team agreed that the 4AF are expressive of our mission statement. Dotson asked how the CT can play a role in shifting from a top down approach to one that reaches the local church. Dotson reported that the UCom is helping to revise the language so it will be more relevant to local churches and can help people connect around the 4AF missionally.

#### **Discussion questions:**

If we don't utilize the heavy hand of enforcement how do we thrive in the 4AF? How do we inspire all aspects of the connection to participate? What outcomes are we looking for and how will we measure them?

Responses:

- Can CT partner with the general agencies and give GCFA the task of agency evaluation?
- How can we help the agencies uncover the layers of language in the BOD?
- Tell stories of where God is at work in local communities
- Make connection and engagement with DCMs and communicators
- The 4AF is mainly a narrative strategy for a way to tell our stories. It gives us a framework for telling our stories and reflecting who we are as Methodists.
- Goals – encourage a conversation about them. No one has ever adopted them and we have not discussed them and agreed that these are the goals we want.

**Question:** What kind of specific strategy does the CT need to provide to enable a collaborative partnership between the CT, general agencies, residential bishops, annual conferences and congregations?

The CT engaged in dialogue and shared ideas in response to this question including:

- Use the 4AF as a framework for setting goals and to develop strategies to see where the areas intersect.
- The 4AF is a framework that expresses our identity as United Methodists. Difficult to imagine a UM church that does not do ministry in those 4AF.
- We need to connect the general church structure with the movement at the grassroots level. We need to bridge the structure with the movement of the national plans and growth in communities of color.

Dotson and Mueller engaged CT members in talking about why it is important for the CT to recommend the continuation of the 4AF in the coming quadrennium. The question posed was: How will it do so in a way that reflects the adaptive realities of the UMC?

Dotson invited Eric Martin to debrief the conversation with the CT. Martin talked of the importance of constructing a narrative of where we are, because we are disoriented and not sure what are next step is. Narrative is important in moving people through change.

- **Day one** – On boarding new CCMO. Kennetha is here. The church will still be here after February 2019. Honest questions are important, even without having the answers. Gave direction to KBT and the CT.
- **Day two** – Historical context: Celebrating 50 years of being UMC. UMC was male-dominated. Church able to unite during times of great turmoil. Outler sermon - Catholic, evangelical and reformed. God's not through with us yet. Even in the celebration, some of us are still not a part of the story (ethnic churches and others left out of the narrative). The metanarrative today is inclusivity.
- **Day three** - empowering the grassroots to act and not wait. There is a sense of waiting in the room.

### **Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters – Bishop Tom Bickerton**

As Bishop Bickerton was welcomed, Rev. Dee Stickley-Miner and Dr. Peniel Kasongo were also introduced as members of the Standing Committee joining the CT meeting. Bishop Bickerton serves as the chair of the sub-committee (Team 2) working on the revision of Chapter 5 of the BOD with consultation by the Committee on Faith and Order and the CT.

He presented an update of the work on Chapter 5, including that the team wrote a “theology of agency” statement to answer “why,” which led to a deeper conversation of what they are trying to accomplish. They realized they could not just sort through Chapter 5 and identify what is adaptable and what is non-adaptable as was done in the other sections. Highlights of the direction and learnings of their work include:

- Envisioning Chapter 5 to only include globally relevant essentials and move most of the current Chapter 5 to Part 7 – the adaptable section.
- Chapter 5 is US created and US driven, so recommend it for Part 7. Spoke of this new approach as a major paradigm shift.
- A 6-member writing team was formed and they waited until this meeting to talk with CT and GSs. They have a deadline of December 31, 2018.
- The setback has been the magnitude. One standard approach is not possible.

### **Questions/Comments/Discussion:**

- Need to identify what agency sections of the BOD can be put into agency by-laws and taken out of the BOD.
- Need to clarify the essential components of each agency that need to be addressed anywhere around the world. This is very different than the “cut and paste” process that the STCCCM did earlier.
- We often try to legislate relationship and theology. Bickerton suggested that we approach ministry from a theological perspective. Then say to the regions – Asia, Africa, Europe and the US – how will you find expression for this?
- Q: For the past two days that it became clear that the church will be church but the structure will be different. What is the rush to do it before the special session?
  - A: There are deadlines that the committees have to meet for the 2020 central conference. They meet in March in the Philippines so they can bring it to the meeting.
- Q: Are there any constitutional amendments coming from this overhaul?
  - A: When there is a US structure proposed, constitutional amendments will likely be needed. There is a void in not having a place for the US to adapt the material in a future Part 7.
- Q: Will implementing a new Book of Discipline require a constitutional amendment?
  - A: That depends on the scope of the work. The possibility exists. He said he thought that the current mandate does not seem to require an amendment.

The update on the STCCCM work concluded at 3:30pm followed by a break. CT members proceeded to working group meetings at 3:45pm until dinner at 5:45pm. General secretaries were invited to meet with the STCCCM Writing Team over dinner from 6pm – 8pm.

## **Saturday, April 7, 2018 – Day 4**

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### **8:30am - Worship with UNUM Music Group – prayer stations.**

#### **9:05am – Plenary**

Bishop Alsted opened the plenary session thanking LDCL and Adrienne for planning worship and reflected on God's presence in our conferencing and that our work during this meeting has been a means of grace. He noted that our work is measured by the quality and the impact of the work that we are doing and hopes that the CT is able to bring a gift to the church that can impact the church and the church's future. He suggested it might be that we send out statements from the CT that will bring hope and direction and points toward vision, such as a statement based on the mission, the 4AF and the worldwide covenant. He said that God is only beginning to narrow the water pipe to increase the flow of water to get over the obstacles we have before us.

Alsted reported that there was no Budget Advisory Team report and that there was a statement drafted the previous night that was distributed. He gave CT members several minutes to review the statement at their tables. After much discussion about whether or not to make the statement, the CT members agreed to make a statement. They continued to edit the language and asked UCom to help with the final version before it was sent out. They also agreed to translate the statement in the languages of the General Conference.

**A motion was made to allow the executive committee to finalize the statement taking into account all of the comments. Moved and seconded. Approved.**

A clarifying question was asked about the new language for the Four Areas of Focus that was presented by the Strategic Team. Bigham-Tsai reported that it will go before the Council of Bishops in May and the CT will also weigh in on affirming the new language.

#### **Committee Reports:**

##### **Leadership Discernment and Community Life – Ken Nelson**

- The work of LDCL is to discern the gifts of the members to use for CT. We need all of the gifts in the room.
- He reminded CT members to stay in prayer with their prayer partners. The list is on On Board.
- Update on new evaluation consultants: we have entered into contracts with Brian Cesario and Mark McCormack to assist with the evaluation and assessment work. This was in response to concerns voiced in Oslo about staff capacity.
- Lyssette Perez was named as co-chair of the Internal Finance and Evaluation.

**The report was received by the body.**

##### **Internal Finance and Evaluation Committee – Dave Nuckols and Lyssette Perez**

The financial statements were in the material sent in advance. Nuckols led a brief review of the internal financial statements (Attachment K). There were no questions.

Lyssette Perez reported on the work of CT Internal evaluation:

- Evaluations will be sent out following the meeting.

- Because we are in a leadership transition, we will take the questions and see how we will evaluate our work under new leadership.
- We heard suggestions during the process time, and we will review those comments and see how we will evaluate our work as a CT.
- Please contact Lysette with concerns and ideas that will help us improve how we do our work.

**The report from the team was received.**

#### **Worldwide Nature Working Group – Benedita Nhambiu, chair**

Benedita Nhambiu reported on the work of the three advisory groups that make up the working group: Chapter 5, US Structure, and General Church Council.

- **Chapter 5:** She reported that the writing team of Chapter 5 consulted with GSs on the previous evening.
- **US Structure:** US does not have an opportunity to adapt the BOD, so when a new General BOD comes out, they will look at the impact of a structural change for the US and reach out to lay leaders along with the other groups they are engaging. They are examining constitutional amendments that might be needed. This work is tied to the General BOD and the work on Part 7 – the adaptable work. They are working in alignment with the STCCCM. They would like their name changed to US Contextual Ministries. **Motion to affirm the advisory group name change to: US Contextual Ministries. Approved.**
- **General Church Council** – Nhambiu reviewed the purpose of this group which is formed as a collaboration group with the COB. The advisory group issued a report and is developing a proposal for the CT toward creating a Global Forum in the 2012-2024 quadrennium that will engage the worldwide church in a discernment process for a leadership body for the future. (Attachment L)

It was suggested that the GCC advisory group be in conversation with the internal evaluation group to reflect on visioning into the future.

#### **VC-4AF working group - Beverly Jones, chair**

Jones began with an overview of the working group, which include Connectional Assessment and Agency Evaluation. She highlighted the importance of relationship as the heart of our work.

**Agency Evaluation** - Dana Lyles, co-convener with Brad Brady, gave a progress report, noting that building relationships is a core value of the process and that the group has completed phase one of process.

- Agencies submitted evaluation statements.
- Adjustments were made to ensure inclusion of agency work outside the 4AF.
- Logic models were submitted to CT and reviewed by the evaluation consultants.
- Phase 2 planning is under way to set dates for the learning dialogues.

General secretary of GCSRW and member of the advisory group Dawn Wiggins Hare affirmed the work of the advisory group noting that they are striving to provide equity among the smallest and the largest of the agencies. She expressed appreciation for honoring work that does not fit neatly into the Four Areas of Focus.

**Connectional Assessment** - Convener Josephine Deere reported that the group is working in a beta-phase of the annual conference assessment portion of the tool. She also explained that the CT is partnering with Global Ministries to gather data in the episcopal areas in central conferences.

Meredith Hoxie Schol, CT staff person assigned to the Connectional Assessment work, reported on the positive experience of facilitating conversations with annual conferences, including: Northern Illinois, South Carolina, Arkansas, Cal-Pac and is looking forward to the future conversation with Upper New York. Jeff Campbell, a staff member from Discipleship Ministries along with other staff from GBHEM, Global Ministries and GBCS, have been designing the process together. They are learning what aspects of the tool and process add value to the annual conference as well as for the agencies and CT. Some learnings to date:

- Conversational approach to the tool is of great value. It is not just a survey.
- The current language of the Four Areas of Focus is used by some but not all conferences to organize their work.
- There is value learning about and then connecting conferences to resource each other.
- Holistic listening.
- There is value in asking the questions. The questions help an annual conference identify their own gaps. It can lay the groundwork for a collaborative approach by general agencies to address the gaps.
- CT is in conversation with Global Ministries about formalizing a partnership to gather data in all episcopal areas.

One idea shared in the advisory group is to model it after the 8-year clergy assessment so that a cycle of assessing the annual conferences is complete each 8 years.

Bigham-Tsai provided a few additional updates:

- CT is forming a Communication Strategy Team that will include CT members, UCom, COB communicator, and an AC communicator.
- Information about upcoming meetings:
  - **NEW CT MEETING DATE:** August 14, 9am Central Time online meeting.
  - Oct 31 – Nov 2 – Atlanta, GA at Global Ministries

## **BREAK**

11:00 am – The Intersections of Our Work with Kennetha Bigham-Tsai

Bigham-Tsai provided an overview of what we accomplished at the CT meeting, including:

- On boarded new CCMO
- Discerned our purpose
- Affirmed Four Areas of Focus
- Began building community, getting people engaged, empowering people.

She continued by sharing the multiple ways we engaged in our work together.

As a CT, we:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary</li> <li>• Celebrated the life and witness of MLK</li> <li>• Explored adaptive leadership</li> <li>• Reflected theologically and historically on UMC</li> <li>• Created narratives of possibility</li> <li>• Explored the implications of all we were learning on our work with Ward, Dotson, Mueller, Malone, Hawkins.</li> <li>• Heard from STCCCM and explored ways of working with them. STCCCM members and Chapter 5 advisory group and met with GSs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heard from COWF – how we can help things go well?</li> <li>• Affirmed the 4AF.</li> <li>• Raised issues of transparency, authenticity and trust.</li> <li>• Asked for clarity and direction.</li> <li>• Asked for better communications.</li> <li>• Discovered what might be emerging.</li> <li>• Exhausted you – we will look at that in the future.</li> <li>• Had wonderful worship, prayer and help at Wespath.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Bigham-Tsai summarized the future work of the CT that emerged from this meeting.

## **Next Steps:**



- Continue to focus on our purpose to discern and articulate vision and to steward the mission, ministries and mission.
- Develop a communications plan and utilize a communications strategy team for internal and external communications. We have asked communications from AC to join our team. This will help us get communications to the local church level.
- Continue to engage CT members more fully in evaluation of this meeting as we plan for future meetings.
- Begin to frame and address emerging uses that can provide the clarity we need.

She highlighted the Spirit-led work that is emerging for CT, such as:

- Trust – what are we going to do, how will we be as a CT and have some degree of trust? How can we come more open to each other? More ownership of our common mission and vision. Trust is built on common purpose. How will we create?
- Four Areas of Focus (Strategic Team) – an affirmation of the 4AF, with an acknowledgment of work related to how we message it (including the details).
- COWF – Helping things go well with the COWF. As leaders of the UMC we care about the connection. The CT has a role in tilling the soil and preparing the ground so that things will go well.
- STCCCM – working with the STCCCM writing team. We will continue to work on strengthening these relationships.
- WWN work and the intersections, raising awareness about the need for a place for US contextual ministry.

**Comments/Questions:**

Bishop Alsted responded to a comment about the uncertainty that the CT affirmed the Four Areas of Focus. While we did not formally reaffirm them at this meeting, there was a general sense in the room that this is not the time to make changes in direction previously affirmed by the CT. He suggested we wait until fall to allow the strategic team to discuss this further.

**Conclusion:** Alsted thanked Bigham-Tsai for taking on a challenging task in the life of the church and that she had captured what has been said and how it connects. Ken Nelson led a prayer in a ritual laying on of hands for Bigham-Tsai as the new CT executive.

The business meeting of the CT concluded at 11:30 am followed by closing worship with Rev. Emmanuel Cleaver III preaching and music led by Leslie Michele of Urban Village Church in Chicago.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cynthia Dopke, CT staff

# Open Space Discussion Notes

## Note #1: #2

- 1- Lay aside/table mandates for CT
  
- 2- Ask: who are we?  
What shall we teach?  
What shall we do?
  
- 3- Understandle[sic] message  
easy to remember  
underscores- connectionalism
  
- 4- Connectionalism means different things to different people

## Note #2:

### Assumptions and Presuppositions

Come as a table, think about it as a family setting. – We would be our authentic selves.

- Reality sometimes swept under the carpet
- Too many power struggles

When you work with information “all the time,” you take for granted that we are all at the same place. – Even when putting the agenda together, when we arrive we are not all the same place.

How you communicate helps to bring me up to speed. Trust me enough to help in this process.

Direction pushing w/ underlying assumptions:

- What if there was no center? There was no pre-work. No sense of what we are.
- Operating in parts but should see it as a whole
- Process of getting there, we have been robbed of them.
- Evaluation – Processes that are open and transparent. Lots of presuppositions not spoken.
- Timelines
- Of ALL meetings attended one member said this is the most stressful!

- You say you want to hear stories of impact but you don't allow space to hear our stories

E.g. referendas[?] from Gen Conf should go to the plenary, let group decide.

E.g. Were there timelines?

Who gave us the issue?

When do we have to report? (Assumptions that we don't own as a group.)

Let group decide realistic [1-2 things we can achieve] for a qual.

Take-Aways

Integrity in the Process

Agenda –group not exercising right to decide what we want to do.

Referendas[?] – We don't have to do everything! This is not achievable. Too many emotional pushes.

**Note #3:** Table 6 talk

What is the[?] confidence level of 4AF to express the hearts and minds of United Methodist and to lead[?] the UMC in ministry.

It expresses hearts and minds of people in the perm[?] but probably more intuitively than explicitly.

Some Gaps[?]: We don't have information on how Bishops Annual Conferences Local churches are engaging (buying-in) on 4AF <in addition to the CT and agencies>

There is not clarity about if the "Strategies Team" is meeting and what they are/can contribute to the implementation or expressions of 4AF in the CT.

Recommend reconsideration and re-set of CT's work related to 4AF.

**Note #4:**

The Local Church Group

We need for the CT to be intentional about keeping the ministry of the local church and extension ministry settings at the forefront of its work.

**Note #5:**

## Dave Nuckols Email

### Notes from OpenSpace table: CT's role/stake in Commission on a Way Forward

- Need for more information about COWF to be shared with all CT members
- Concern that COWF's issue set causes much to be "up in the air" for CT so (a) how can we make progress as CT on issues that will be affected by GC2019, and (b) what can we focus on fruitfully
- It's time for church to respond to changes in society (as it did in case of racial segregation)
- Greatest concern for UMC to remain united
- Struggle to enforce church rules that are not widely accepted by an area's members. (especially in areas where same sex marriage is legal and considered a right)
- Disobedience causes stress
- Challenge to individual conscience also causes stress
- Note this uncertainty is an obstacle for clergy candidates
- Anxiety being felt at all levels of UMC
- Concern that CT is doing too much
- Need for prayer

### **Seeing at the Threshold**

(Isaiah 43: 16-21, Luke 24: 13-24)

Connectional Table Meeting, April 4-7, 2018

Wespath, Chicago, IL

There is a word used in the study of religion and culture. The word is “*liminality*.” It comes from the Latin word “*limen*,” which means “*threshold*.” It refers to the disorientation that can happen in a religious ritual, when a person is in the midst of the transition between what and who they were before the ritual - and what and who they will become after it - is complete.

Liminality is being in the *in-between*—at the threshold between what is old and what is emerging—between what was before and what will come. It is indeed like being between sleep and wakefulness. You are beginning to see the hints of dawn, but you are still lost in the murkiness and uncertainty of the dream.

We are at this threshold place in our church and in our world. The world has become flat—technology and communication and changing patterns of global migration have brought dramatic changes to societies.<sup>1</sup> Many are feeling disoriented by that change. And we know that disorientation can breed fear, and fear can sometimes bring out the worst in people. I imagine it like a great upheaval. Out of the heaving of our foundations, some of our worst instincts are rising up.

You know what I mean--violence, racism, nationalism, antisemitism, and authoritarian regimes on the rise. In some parts of the world, a growing viciousness in national dialogue and a falling away of ethical norms. Why is this happening? Because when we are disoriented and afraid, we are vulnerable to the worst instincts from within and from without.

This reality of our current time represents a particular challenge for the church. The church must be an effective witness and pastoral presence in the midst of this upheaval, even

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York: 2005.

as the church faces its own challenges. And we know that the church is challenged, because it is not just the world that is at a threshold. It is also the church.

We are increasingly in a post-Christian era (*especially in the West*) that is at once more secular and more religiously pluralistic. Christianity is no longer at the center. People are becoming less attached to institutions of all kinds, including the church. The old structures are falling away.

And for us, as United Methodists, we stand at a particularly significant threshold in the life of our church. The date looms large in our heads. What will happen in St. Louis in February of 2019? What will we become? Will our connection hold?

Even as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our United Methodist Church—even as we remember the Uniting General Conference held in Dallas in April of 1968—even as we remember that great time when two denominations became one--when we affirmed full clergy rights for women--when we ended the shame of the race-based Central Jurisdiction—even as we remember that great time of coming together, we find ourselves at this threshold, wondering if we will remain united or if we will come apart.

We are at this threshold, and we are disoriented and afraid. Indeed, if the typical reaction to fear is *fight or flight*—ours I think is to freeze. Anticipating great change ahead, but not knowing the nature of that change, some of us are in a type of fear-induced paralysis.

Maybe, friends, what can help us see our way through that fear are the affirmations of hope that we find in Scripture. You heard these words read earlier, from that well-known passage in Isaiah chapter 43:

***Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?***<sup>2</sup>

These words were spoken to the people of Israel who were likewise at a threshold in

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 43: 18-19, NRSV

their life as a community. They were in a time of exile. They had been driven from the land they held sacred. Their temple had been destroyed. Isaiah was preaching to a dispersed and despairing people who were caught between what had been and what was to come. And he sought to bring them a message of hope. **“Forget the former things,”** he said, **“God is doing a new thing on Israel’s behalf.”**

The God who had redeemed Israel—the faithful God who had led Israel out of slavery in Egypt—this God was doing a new thing. The God who had guided the Israelites through 40 years of wilderness—the God who had given them water from a rock and manna from heaven—this God of the Exodus would do a new thing in the life of Israel. Isaiah was asking them to imagine that even in the passing away of former things, God was doing something new. Could they not perceive it?

Could it be, friends, that this perceiving—this seeing – is what God is calling us to do at this time in the life of our connection?

Religious historian Diana Butler Bass posits in her book *Christianity After Religion* that what looks like the end of Christendom may be the beginning of another Great Awakening. This is what she writes:

***Awakenings begin when old systems break down, in ‘periods of cultural distortion and grave personal stress, when we lose faith in the legitimacy of our norms, the viability of our institutions and the authority of our leaders in church and state.’ A “critical disjunction” in how we perceive ourselves, God, and the world arises from the stress. The end of the old opens the way for the new.***<sup>3</sup>

In this place of disorientation and fear, where old systems have broken down and where we are questioning the legitimacy of our norms and the viability of our institutions—in

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<sup>3</sup> Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening*, HarperCollins, New York: 2012, p. 29. She is quoting William McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 2)

this in-between place where Christendom, as we have known it, seems to be falling away, could it be that God might just be birthing something new?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once talked of the new things God was doing. As many of you know, today is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his assassination. King was standing on a balcony of a motel in Memphis, Tennessee on the eve of April 4, 1968. He was preparing to lead a march with sanitation workers when he was struck down by an assassin's bullet. We remember that day with sadness. I invite us also to remember his life and witness as inspiration.

King preached his last Sunday sermon just four days before his assassination. He preached on March 31, 1968 at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In that sermon, King highlighted the many changes that were taking place in the world. Using a text from Revelations, King said,

***Yes, we do live in a period where changes are taking place and there is still the voice crying through the vista of time saying, "Behold, I make all things new, former things are passed away."<sup>4</sup>***

What King saw God making new was a worldwide expression of beloved community. This is what he said.

***First, we are challenged to develop a world perspective. No individual can live alone, no nation can live alone, and anyone who feels that he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The challenge that we face today is to make it one in terms of brotherhood....We must all learn to live together as brothers [and sisters]. Or we will all perish together as fools.<sup>5</sup>***

These are prophetic words. Especially in a time of backlash against the other—of fear of the other. Especially in a time of growing divisiveness and hate. These are prophetic words

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," in *A Testament of Hope: the Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington, HarperCollins, New York: 1986, p. 269

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 269.



calling us to world community - to a beloved community that embraces the world.

Could it be, friends of the CT, that even as we stand at this threshold—at this in-between place in the life of our denomination, not knowing what will come—could it be that God is doing a new thing in the church, and we are being called to see it and to help our church to see it? Could it be that we are being called newly to our purpose to discern and articulate a vision for a worldwide *United Methodist Church*—a vision for a worldwide church that is steeped in a Gospel of love—a vision for a church grounded in a theology of grace—a worldwide church that is true to our Wesleyan DNA—a DNA that calls us beyond ourselves—into prisons and hospitals, into neighborhoods and schoolrooms--into the world that John Wesley called our parish.

This vision for a worldwide church is connected to our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, because discipleship, friends, is lived out most authentically with our arms open to the world. Discipleship is expressed at its best when we are in ministry with partners around the world--not in paternalistic or colonial ways--but as equal partners, each bringing gifts and resources and wisdom to the living out of God's call to be disciples. Our vision for a worldwide church is connected to our mission of making disciples and being disciples who bring hospitality and healing to the world—hospitality and healing that cannot and should not be dictated by borders.

Our vision for a worldwide church is expressed eloquently in paragraph 125 of our Book of Discipline—our worldwide covenant. This covenant envisions us,

***Integrally holding connective unity and local freedom [seeking] to proclaim and embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining “a vital web of interactive relationships.”<sup>6</sup>***

Friends, there is a tension that comes from the rubbing together of these values of connective unity and local freedom. This tension is not just a problem to be solved, it is potentially the spark that can ignite something new. We don't have to choose between either/or. Something new can come out of the tension between both/and--*between the uniqueness of our local context and the unity of our global connection.*

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<sup>6</sup> The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, ¶125, p. 95.

Our covenant and our vision tell us that,

***“For our connectionalism to become a living practice, we need to carry the worldwide nature of The United Methodist Church deep into the life and mission of our local congregations.”<sup>7</sup>***

Could it be that we are being called to articulate a vision for what God intends The United Methodist Church to be, as a worldwide church, and to carry that vision into our local congregations—whether they be in Baton Rouge or Kinshasa, Copenhagen or Manila? Could it be that our task is to embrace the worldwide nature of our connection and to equip United Methodists to let our worldwide identity, and the possibilities it entails, seep deep down into our denominational bones?

Throughout this meeting and through the rest of the quadrennium, we will be highlighting the overall purpose of the Connectional Table—to discern and articulate the vision, to be stewards of the mission, ministry and resources for a worldwide church. We will talk about ways to frame our work in terms of vision for a worldwide church seeking to carry out God’s mission in the world. And we will explore how we will need to lead in order to do our work more creatively and more effectively to make this vision real.

Why do this now, in light of what might happen in 2019 and 2020? I believe we must do this now out of the firm conviction that as important as those General Conference sessions will be, after they are over, there will still be a United Methodist Church. We don’t know what it will look like, but we can be sure that there will still be a United Methodist Church, and God will still be calling our church to be in mission in the world.

That means that no matter what happens in our internal struggles, God is still calling our church to be in ministry with poor communities that will be disproportionately impacted by the ravages of climate change. No matter what we decide about legislative proposals, God is still calling our church to address the killer diseases of poverty—whether that be malaria in Africa or childhood obesity in the United States.

No matter what, God is still calling us to radical hospitality—to living out our discipleship by welcoming more people, younger people, more diverse people—and yes, all

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

people. No matter what, God is still calling The United Methodist Church to be a place for grace and transformation and healing and hope for the world.

God is indeed doing a new thing. God intends to keep doing new things. Can we not perceive it? Are we so focused on ourselves that we cannot see the possibility of the new thing that God is doing? Maybe we are just like those disciples, described in our passage in Luke, who did not at first recognize the resurrected Christ. You heard that, didn't you? ***"Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him"*** (Luke 24:15b-16).

The disciples were, like us, at a threshold, at an in-between place. They were between what had been when their savior was alive and what would come after his death. They were disoriented and afraid--bereft at the loss of their savior--despairing at the loss of what they had expected life would be. And in their disorientation and despair and fear, they could not see the new thing God was doing—they could not initially see that they were walking along that road to Emmaus with the resurrected Christ in their midst.

In this Easter season—in this season of resurrection--might we discern and see and vision what new things God might be doing in our midst? I want to close by sharing with you a poem. It is called *"The Vision,"* by Wendell Berry.

### **THE VISION<sup>8</sup>**

*By: Wendell Berry*

If we will have the wisdom to survive,  
to stand like slow-growing trees  
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it,  
if we will make our seasons welcome here,  
asking not too much of earth and heaven,  
then a long time after we are dead  
the lives our lives prepare will live here,  
their houses strongly placed  
upon the valley sides,  
fields and gardens rich in the windows.

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<sup>8</sup> "672. A Vision – Wendell Berry." *Inward Bound Poetry*. 5 June 2008. Web. 1 March 2018.  
<<http://inwardboundpoetry.blogspot.com/2008/06/672-vision-wendell-berry.html>>.

Kennetha Bigham-Tsai  
April 4, 2018 CT Worship

The river will run clear, as we will never know it,  
and over it, birdsong like a canopy.  
On the levels of the hills will be  
green meadows, stock bells in noon shade.  
On the steps where greed and ignorance cut down the old forest,  
an old forest will stand,  
its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.  
The veins of forgotten springs will have opened.  
Families will be singing in the fields.  
In their voices they will hear a music  
risen out of the ground.  
They will take nothing from the ground they will not return,  
whatever the grief at parting.  
Memory, native to this valley, will spread over it like a grove,  
and memory will grow into legend,  
legend into song, song into sacrament.  
The abundance of this place,  
the songs of its people and its birds,  
will be health and wisdom and indwelling light.  
This is no paradisaal dream.  
Its hardship is its possibility.

Its hardship is its possibility. The hard work is seeing the possibility—seeing the possibility of what God is doing new—the possibility of the newness of resurrection--of an unexpected breath of new life. The hard work is seeing the possibility that the resurrected Christ is walking in full sight among us.

The CT's purpose—our very reason for being--is to do the hard work of seeing, and then to call our denomination beyond fear and paralysis to see with us. The seeing is the hard work, because to see, we must lift our eyes from ourselves and be open to the vision of God and the needs of the world. To see, we must lift our eyes from fear and despair and from our own disorientation and be open to God's vision of resurrection and hope.

Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.  
God is about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, can we not perceive it?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 43: 18-19, NRSV

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)

### **1. What do we want to know about Kennetha?**

- How long will you be with us – will you be an episcopal candidate?
- Given your investment in the CT last quad, why did you choose this ministry?
- How would you rate your cultural competency?
- How will you move us from complexity to clarity?
- Will you move to Chicago? Why or why not?
- Can you separate your personal biases from GC decision?
- Where do you see the limitations of the present CT?
- What is your vision for the church and the CT?
- Are you really interested in new position?

### **2. What are our deepest longings for the CT?**

- We can get to place where we can fulfill our purpose (without getting hung up on other stuff)
- All members of CT get clearer on mandate of CT and our work together reflects the reality and demography of our worldwide church
- To become a truly worldwide council between GC sessions to give vision and hope
- CT to become courageous, visionary voice
- How can we have a common, compelling narrative – an articulation of vision?
- CT will lead us to an inclusive and global church where we model trust and relationships
- CT embody positive hopeful leadership, focus on assets rather than deficits
- CT clear about vision but productive in its work toward local churches where disciples are made
- CT allows space for Spirit to do its work

### **3. What needs to change with the CT for greater organizational health?**

- Need more power and authority to implement mandate of vision
- Clarity of desired results and what process to get us there
- Need more conversation about WHY and SO WHAT?
- Better at intercultural communication and trust building
- Willingness to leave politics and who we represent outside the room
- Hear more from grassroots reps in the room
- Clearer and more narrow focus

#### **4. What do we want from Kennetha's leadership?**

- Hear varied voices that represent our church context, geography, theology, experience
- Authenticity and honesty in leadership. Strengthened communication.
- Inspiration and direction setting
- Integrity, ability to connect people inside CT. Openness.
- Prepare CT to handle "loose ends" that will happen in 2019
- Willing to ask questions whether or how CT should exist going forward
- Help more UMs know what CT is and what it does
- What CT is supposed to do with clarity

#### **5. How can we help? What can we offer?**

- Be ambassadors of CT in our conferences
- Offer moral and financial support when needed if able
- Understand members' roles and live up to it (because small staff = more volunteer help)
- Be honest, proactive, authentic in that role
- Willingness to speak "to" rather than "about" her
- Better serving as bridge builders w/other leadership groups
- Honest feedback and ask questions
- Ask the questions that help her take CT to the next level of achieving outcomes

*Celebrating*

**50**



**YEARS**

*transforming*

**THE WORLD**

1968-2018

**In 1968...**



**April 23, 1968**



**April 23, 1968**



**April 23, 1968**

**Lord of the Church, we are united in  
Thee, and in thy Church and now in  
the United Methodist Church.**



# The UNITED Methodist Church at 50: A Quick Refresher

- The Methodist Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Association/Church
- The Church of the United Brethren
- The Evangelical United Brethren
- African American Methodists
- Summary

# **What happened at the Uniting Conference in 1968?**

**Watch the video here:**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxXTpK9\\_IFA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxXTpK9_IFA)**

# A Dream of and vision of UNION in divided, dividing times....



*NEGRO AND WHITE METHODIST bishops ordain a minister in what are believed to be the first such integrated service ever held in The Methodist Church. In the ordination Gary D. Harms of Great Bend, Kan., is one of the 15 Negro and white candidates ordained by Bishop Eugene Slater (second from left) of the Central Kansas Conference and Bishop Matthew Clair (third from left) of the Central West Conference of Negro congregations.*

# Cultural Cross Currents:

- The Current of Liberation
- The Current of Inclusion
- The Current of Autonomy/Self-Determination
- The Current of Participation/Hand—on Involvement
- The Current of Globalization
- The Current of Global Migration, Refugee Crisis, and Human Trafficking
- The Current of a Political Conservatism/Neo-Nationalism

# Markers for the UMC: Then and Now

- Frontiersman for tomorrow, dynamically adaptive to the new world as our foremothers/fathers were in theirs.
- Truly Catholic
- Truly Evangelical
- Truly Reforming



## I'm with Albert Outler

- United to be Uniting
- Repentant to be Redemptive
- Cruciform in order to manifest God's triumphant agony for humankind



# Closing Prayer:

Spirit of the living God, visit us as on the day of Pentecost.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With rushing wind that sweeps away all barriers,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With tongues of fire to set our hearts aflame,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With speech that unites the Babel of our tongues,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With love that overleaps the boundaries of race and nation,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With power from above to make our weakness strong,  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

That we may be a Church united to be Uniting,  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

That we may be a Church repentant to be redemptive,  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

That we may be a Church cruciform  
in order to make plain God's triumphant agony  
for everyone, everywhere.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)

*Celebrating*

**50**



**YEARS**

*transforming*

**THE WORLD**

1968-2018

**Presentation for Connectional Table – Rev. Fred Day** 60 Minutes  
**April 5, 2018 - Wespath, Glenview Ill.**

**1. Happy Birthday /Anniversary (*Happy Birthday* - The Beatles)** 12 Minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsnsRS0kckY>

- a. The year was 1968...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2Pcwq6m-9s>

- b. April 23, 1968 – EUBC Bishop Reuben H. Mueller and Methodist Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke clasped hands over a table with symbolic documents Bible, hymnals, books of *Discipline* and *Worship* and a 307 page Plan of Union and together with 1,300 delegates, and 10,000 visitors gathered in Dallas Texas. The United Methodist Church was proclaimed into being. The 10 million member Methodist Church and the 750,000 member EUB Church has become the second largest and most truly Protestant denomination with distribution of members throughout the US and flags of 53 countries represented the global reach of the new denomination’s work. Albert Outler, the Methodist Church’s most distinguished theologian of the day, preaching a sermon for the occasion called “Dreams and Visions,” with his usual wit, likened the union to Pentecost but apologizing for any lack of tongues of fire and glossalia. Together, the uniting conference said the words: “Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, and in thy Church and now in the United Methodist Church.”
- c. We are the progeny of these words. 50 years later, we are these words come to life. ALL REPEAT THE WORDS. 50 yrs later, we are the life of Dr. Outler’s “Dreams and Visions.” Who came together in 1968? Who and what put the “United” in our name.

**2. The UNITED Methodist Church at 50: A Quick Refresher** 15 Minutes

**The Methodist Episcopal Church** Methodism is deeply rooted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century evangelical revival in England and in the ministry of John Wesley (1703-91) and Charles Wesley (1708-1788). Born and raised in Epworth, England, to an Anglican cleric father and devout mother Susanna, the brothers were classically educated at Oxford, ordained into priesthood in the Church of England, together were short term missionaries in the American colony of Georgia and had transforming spiritual awakenings in 1738. Thousands came to be influenced by their gospel preaching and systematic methodology for connecting Methodist members. Their pattern of discipleship organized adherents into societies of which were composed smaller groups for worship, early church like koinonia, nurture and ministry. At its beginning, the Wesleyan way a renewal movement within the Church of England, not a church. The major emphasis of the Wesley’s understanding of the Christian faith placed on the transforming grace of God and the free human response to it in a holiness of heart and life – loving God with all one has and loving neighbor, which included everyone, as oneself. This holiness was proclaimed in word and song, nurtured in Bible study, prayer, Love Feast and

frequent Eucharist. Holy-living, the result of a transformed life, endowed and sustained by God's grace, was personal and social. Methodism came to America in the 1760s via immigrants from Ireland and England. The movement took hold and John Wesley dispatched missionary preachers to supervise its growth (e.g. Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke). In 1784, Wesley assented to the request of the Americans to form a church which they organized in 1784, Baltimore, Md.

The Evangelical United Brethren Church came from two streams of German pietism touched by Wesleyan spirituality and practices as experienced in American Methodism.

**Evangelical Association / Church:** Jacob Albright, from Pennsylvania, was raised in a German Lutheran home. As a young adult he experienced conversion under Philip William Otterbein. Albright then joined a Methodist class. Albright began traveling through the central Pennsylvania area preaching and around 1803 organized the "Newly-formed Methodist Conference" for German-speaking groups. In 1807 Albright was elected bishop of this group and translated most of the Methodist Discipline into German. Following Albright's death in 1808, George Miller published a complete Discipline for the new group and in 1816 the movement took the name Evangelische Gemeinschaft or Evangelical Association. The church spread westward across Pennsylvania and into the Ohio Valley. The denomination became involved in missions in Japan and China. There was a split in the denomination between 1894 and 1922.

**The Church of the United Brethren in Christ:** Philip William Otterbein was clergy at a Reformed Church in Lancaster, PA. He was a pietist as well. Under his leadership the region had a spiritual awakening. Around 1767 he heard Martin Boehm preaching at Long's Barn in Lancaster County. Boehm was a German Mennonite who had also been touched by the Pietist tradition. Otterbein upon hearing Boehm preaching realized that they were kindred spirits - even though back in Germany they would have been hesitant to be near each other. Otterbein rushed forward at the end of the sermon and embraced Boehm with the exclamation, "We are brothers!" This response would be woven into the character of the denomination over time; one which expressed a strong relational aspect to the Christian faith. (Because of this coming together, Martin Boehm was excommunicated from the Mennonite Church. Mennonites had a long and very bitter, even violent relationship with the German Reformed Church and would not stand for Boehm's association with the likes of German Reformed and Methodist people.)

Boehm and Otterbein worked to extend the influence of their preaching. In 1800 the work was formalized as the two were elected bishops and the name "Church of the United Brethren in Christ" was selected. They had also been touched by the Methodist experience - Otterbein had participated in the ordination of Francis Asbury - and based their Discipline on large parts of the Methodist Discipline. The church expanded westward in Pennsylvania and the Ohio Valley. They established a school in Ohio and mission work in Africa, Japan, China and the Philippines.

**The Evangelical United Brethren Church:** The two groups merged into the EUB in 1946. The new church continued the traditions started by the two original bodies. Mission work

continued, which emphasized the development and growth of local leadership without the reliance on non-local expertise. In short they focused on growing new churches. The body also focused on ways to include the laity of the local church in the management and leadership of the church through such tools as the PPR and the church council. This was all seen as a way to encourage growth in relationships, responsibility and discipleship.

On April 23, 1968, The United Methodist Church was created when Bishop Reuben H. Mueller, representing The Evangelical United Brethren Church, and Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke of The Methodist Church joined hands at the constituting General Conference in Dallas, Texas. With the words, "Lord of the Church, we are united in Thee, in Thy Church and now in The United Methodist Church," the new denomination was given birth by two churches that had distinguished histories and influential ministries in various parts of the world.

Theological traditions steeped in the Protestant Reformation and Wesleyanism, similar ecclesiastical structures, and relationships that dated back almost two hundred years facilitated the union. In the Evangelical United Brethren heritage, for example, Philip William Otterbein, the principal founder of the United Brethren in Christ, assisted in the ordination of Francis Asbury to the superintendency of American Methodist work. Jacob Albright, through whose religious experience and leadership the Evangelical Association was begun, was nurtured in in a Methodist class meeting following his conversion.

**African American Methodists:** For as long as Methodists have been meeting in America there have been black members to the movement's classes, societies and churches. While black presence with the Methodist fold has been primal it has also been problematic. Though Methodism's egalitarian theology of free grace to be experienced by ALL was open and welcoming, its practice has been a history of, at best, mixed signals, even inhospitable, ungracious behaviors. From inviting involvement to segregated seating, from services specially designated for early morning hours to limited ordination because of assumed inferior intellectual ability, from separate congregations, churches, charges and conferences yet overseen by whites to the eventual Central Jurisdiction and its alleged part of a reunited Methodist Church in 1939, what this church will do with black people is one of the lingering and historic questions dealt with again in the 1968 merger and still to this day. Sadly, the answer to this question has been disillusioning and fraught with uncertain answers. To be sure, one of the merging streams coming to confluence in formation of United Methodist Church is the ending of the institutionalized segregation of Central Jurisdiction. This critical and life-giving tributary to United Methodism must not only be remembered but experience continuing reconciliation.

**Global United Methodism:** Much if not all of the worldwide UMC we know and experience today is a result these historic strands either reaching-back into their countries of origin or reaching-out in new missionary ventures across the globe.

**Summary:** From the beginning, Methodists, Evangelicals and United Brethren people felt a disconnect with the established church of their lives and times. There was Christianity but not an experiential one, not a religious faith or experience that touched or changed the way they lived their lives or related to their communities and the world around them. They were

every day people yearning for a connection to God and the scripture, to experience God's love in Jesus Christ, and lead lives that evidenced the life and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Beginning as differently as their language, race, or culture, their passion to experience God's love in Jesus Christ and bear the fruits of God's Spirit relationally and in community would ultimately bring them together.

3. **What Happened at the Uniting Conference in 1968?**

25 Minutes

a. **Play TRAFICO VIDEO**

<https://vimeo.com/250196677>

- b. **A dream of and vision for UNION in divided, dividing times:** The General Conferences of the two churches had approved a Plan of Union two years before with finalizing left to a joint union committee headed up by Methodist and EUB leaders (Charles Parlin and Paul Washburn). The Uniting Conference morphed into the new denomination's first General Conference which could not complete all the work there was to be done and so authorized a five day special session in 1970, to be held in St. Louis, to deal with structural matters. To guide the efforts toward full unity quadrennial study commissions on structure, social principles and doctrine were created, along with a Program Council and Commission on Religion and Race to deal with the dismantling of the Methodist Church's Central Jurisdiction. Also a *Book of Resolutions* was authorized to exhibit the church's pronouncements.

The high moments of exultation at the birthing and baptizing of the UMC would be followed by difficult and divisive issues in the church and across wider national international society more complex and divisive than drafters of the Plan of Union could have imagined. Externally there was civil rights and racial unrest, the women's movement, heightening ethnic consciousness, affirmative action and inclusion, the Vietnam War, poverty, urban decay, deindustrialization, a continuing Cold War, new coalitions of political conservatives and a rising tide of evangelicals. Inside the church trying to live into union is a rising commitment to pluralism, diversity, with structural change all around, affirmation of a new doctrinal hermeneutic — the quadrilateral — and liberalizations in teaching about divorce and remarriage, homosexuality and inclusive language. This led to the emergence of a conservative Methodism with the latter two issues as the most expressed concerns but matters of war, race, gender, doctrine and scriptural authority were not far from the surface as well.

How truly *united* would the new UMC be? The earlier merger in our history, 1939, bought unity at the price of racial segregation and regionalized jurisdictions. The 1946 merger that brought the EC and UB together was a setback for the ordination of women (ordained in the UB since the late 1880s but never in the EC) moving forward in the EUB. How would the new UMC honor the witness of the smaller, more regionalized EUBC. Living into diversity often expressed in and complicated by the alphabet soup (e.g. BMCR, MARCHA, NAIC, NFAAUM) of authorized and unauthorized caucus groups would be the new church's first and continuing challenge.

- c. **Cultural Cross Currents:** During the first 50 years, the UMC has lived with and through the push and pull a number of cultural current flowing throughout its life. Living in the midst of these have created swirls of agreement and disagreement. (Taken from *United Methodism at 40: Looking Back, Looking Forward*, Charles Yrigoyen Jr., John G. McEllhenney and Kenneth E. Rowe, Abingdon, Nashville, 2008 and recent conversations with the authors.)
- **the current of liberation:** Freedom *from* poverty, old and new Jim Crow laws, male domination, restraints in sexual expression, opportunities for women, obedience to government, handed-down theology. Freedom *to* be black *and* beautiful, gay *and* proud, a professional woman *and* a mother, a patriot *and* a resister, a doubter and believer
  - **the current of inclusion:** The new UMC would be vigorous in its efforts to include racial and ethnic minorities at every level, especially modeled from the top. Replacing male gender words as the norm and substituting male gender words when speaking about God led to heated debates.
  - **the current of autonomy / self-determination:** The what floats you boat, do your own thing, my-wayism of the culture tacks against Wesleyan DNA of conferencing and connectionalism. The UMC continues to wrestle with the impact of its constitutional assertion that the annual conference is the basic unit of the denomination while allowing more freedom for local churches to organize for mission in their own ways.
  - **the current of participation / hands-on involvement:** The civil rights marches and activism of the late sixties has morphed into how people decide what is newsworthy and who are the authoritative voices. Now instead of a few there are many – radio shows, podcasts, video of everything, everyone, everywhere. The age when the UMC has grown up is an age when all persons are equal in determining what is important to give attention to.
  - **the current of globalization:** In the last 50 years the world has become increasingly free from limits imposed by national borders. Ever more instantaneous communication, free trade, multinational corporations erode, even obliterate old boundaries. Our *Discipline* says that our theological heritage “is lived out in a global community resulting in understandings of our faith enriched by indigenous experiences and manners of expression.” Would anyone have imagined in 1968 that by the UMC’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, significant numbers, closing in on an equal number of United Methodists living outside the US.
  - **the current of global migration, refugee crisis and human trafficking crisis :** We live in a time when millions of people are fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa creating the highest level of displacement since the end of WW II. The ripples, swirls and even torrents of this



dramatic movement have stirred pressures and changes to the global landscape and balances of power we may not be finished with for another 50 years.

- **the current of a rising political conservatism / neo nationalism:** perhaps in response to the globalization, the migration and refugee crises there is the rise new political movements like BREXIT in Britain, “Make America Great Again,” the Alt. Right, etc. in the US, and neo nationalist movements in France and Germany to name a few. With globalization one of the key currents if not fundamental realities of our time counter forces bent on making devastation and death dealing chaos before giving-up or in.

At the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United Methodist Church, a church born in a time of great social and political upheaval, a Church that boldly asserted UNION in just such times, the “unfinished business” Albert Outler referred to in his Pentecost address to the uniting conference remains just that unfinished. And now the leadership of the United Methodist Church in our hands for marking a well grounded, renewed Pentecost of dreams and visions.

#### 4. **Markers for The United Methodist Church Then and Now**

10 minutes

Albert Outler’s sermon preached at the Uniting Conference, April 23, 1968 is not only one of the seminal documents in all Methodist History, it still speaks an “aura of hope” and offers “a threshold of new horizon” as it did at our birthday.

Think of it: where once there were five different churches, now there is one – diversified as we may be. Differences that once kept people apart--language, race, folkways, piety, personality and differing practices of democracy have been overcome. Separated Christian brothers and sisters rooted in a shared ethos of personal and social holiness joined as family.

The “real work of The United Methodist Church” began that day in April, 1968, Outler said. And it will begin again as 2019 forges a way forward and 2020 will live-us into the next quadrennial reshaping of United Methodist discipline, structure and ministries.

Though fraught with very much the same complexities, doubts, frustrations and failures of the first Pentecost, the 50 year old United Methodist Church will also be filled with new possibilities for reformation and renewal because the joining of what was once separate makes for a better, stronger, more complete, well-equipped church. Times of uncertainty, upheaval and chaos are not only times to reach for old or new order and organization, they are also time for being open to one of the Holy Spirit’s greatest gifts – creativity. However, this will only come to pass if the new church raises-up “frontiersman for tomorrow, dynamically adaptive to the new world as our forefathers were in theirs.”

At its heart, the sermon stakes-out the life of the new United Methodist Church in a tripartite form so true to our beginnings --"truly catholic, truly evangelical and truly reforming,"---not in hierarchy but in careful balance:

*Truly Catholic*-a church "inclusive" (not a buzz word in 1968!), "open" and boundaried by the "bare essentials" of the canons of Christ and Christian discipline derived from our confessions of faith and opening hearts and minds to new and bold ventures in Christian unity.

*Truly Evangelical*-called to mission flowing from the heart of the Gospel that ALL are loved by God with a special love demonstrated by and centered in Jesus Christ's pardoning, healing and reconciling ways which create new possibilities for ALL.

*Truly Reforming*-an eagerness to be renewed again and again, judged by the future as much as the past, "self-examining without self-justification and self-loathing.... creative in discontent and rooted in the conviction that mere good is the enemy of the best."

The eyes of the whole Christian Church are on us at this moment, Outler said that day. "This is also the day the Lord has made, one for United Methodists to rejoice and be glad.... glad for the new chance God now gives us to be a church united, to be uniting, repentant, to be a church redemptive, cruciform in order to manifest God's triumphant agony for mankind."

From Albert's mouth to God's ears. And now from Albert's mouth to The United Methodist Church's inner ear.

I haven't been able to put this sermon down. I've shared it with the Council of Bishops, the Connectional Table, the General Secretaries Table and The Commission on A Way Forward. It will be one of the Heritage Sunday resources we share this year with every congregation across the Connection.

Some will say that was then and this is now. Times have changed, and circumstances and issues with them.

At The UMC's 50th birthday, it feels like the mood of our dear church is anything but jubilation. Jubilees aren't on the agendas, church news or denominational blogs I read. What I sense is more anxiety, edginess, defensiveness, anger, and negative predictions---more "coming-undone" than "coming-together."

I'm with Albert Outler---the eyes of the whole Church are on us.

In that context, my words today to are meant to remember and stoke the hope of our 1968 birthright---boldly choosing unity while the world around seemed set on pulling-apart, embracing the challenging and complex work of unity rather than running from it, trusting the creative work of Holy Spirit and setting our feet to the path of a church that in Albert Outler's words lives and grows by its being

- "united to be uniting,
- repentant to be redemptive
- cruciform in order to manifest God's triumphant agony for mankind."

Moving to and through 2018 and towards 2019 and a special General Conference, God give us a golden anniversary year.

Spirit of the living God, visit us as on the day of Pentecost.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With rushing wind that sweeps away all barriers,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With tongues of fire to set our hearts aflame,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With speech that unites the Babel of our tongues,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With love that overleaps the boundaries of race and nation,

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With power from above to make our weakness strong,

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That we may be a Church united to be Uniting,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

That we may be a Church repentant to be redemptive,

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

That we may be a Church cruciform

in order to make plain God's triumphant agony

for everyone, everywhere.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

HEAD	HEART	FEET
Adult (non-church and other church) and Youth (confirmation): Renewed teaching of catechism as a renewal of commitment and understanding of evangelism, Catholic nature, and the renewing of the grace of God	A heart that ministers to all for the social justice reforms necessary through changing dynamics	Changes: We need to not necessarily think <u>about</u> culture but <u>through</u> culture
Help discuss the issues within the term "truly"	Make sure that our work is worshipful	How might the CT use Outler's categories? -Truly catholic -Truly evangelical -Truly reforming As inspiration for our work? As guide for our work / as evaluative categories for our work?
Focus on our UMC mission ( <u>outward</u> , not inward)	Reflect on how God is changing our heart to reform the church in following/becoming part of the Missio Dei	To be an agent of transformation, figurative as well as literally
Geographic diversity of CT members brings inputs from the whole world	More spiritual	Catholicity: As CT we have to show/reveal the importance of diversity for the unity and to live the diversity visible for the church
Invest resources for the future, emerging generations and the people who are not in/with the church yet	CT work should include emerging and inspiring others to work in unity, and forward in all aspects of our denomination and its agencies, and act/live our faith	How can we become more nimble?
Help the church see the larger picture of the challenges of the world, as well as the church, face with focus and clarity	To make disciples, we must be disciples. How are we holding each other accountable for that?	Support more experiments w/change. Work on common assessment criteria. Where do we see God at work?
Create a more functional denominational structure	The work of the CT is to name where God is doing work in local churches, communities, around the world	Go be the church and be with people (in addition to having conversations about being the church and being with people)
-More biblical in focus -Love for the church -Proactive in our activities	Give expression to church as spiritual community and values (over structural issues) except as they arise out of spiritual	Interpret in "new ways" what is entailed in being a United Methodist

HEAD	HEART	FEET
Open to the world	Actively proclaim hope	The CT must walk the camino together modelling and learning a spiritual life for the church, then serve in a local social project.
Consider how much of our energy is spent maintaining institution rather than empowering a movement of reform, even of ourselves	CT can lead by “letting go” and allow a spiritual revival to come about!	
Recapture an outward focus – The World is my/our Parish. The CT needs to model this to the UMC.	Having more diversity inside the CT	
How do we lead back toward movement?	Be “catholic” enough that we would allow brothers/sisters to pursue faith in many expressions even if it is not our expression. That was what the Wesleys offered.	
We need to <u>understand</u> what it means to be truly catholic, evangelical and to truly reform the CHURCH! Articulate and put into action these 3 principles.	That we need to do internal work to mobilize the resources of the CT. <u>Empowerment.</u>	
CT should feel free to do the work that it is called to do without worrying about if it will continue to be or what its next iteration will be	PRAY for the church denominational leaders; be a voice of hope, not anxiety	
Actively offer conceptual ideas of the future	The foundation of Christianity: Be truly the disciples of Jesus.	
To be truly Catholic is entirely different from the economic adv. Council report that the UMC in the US is decreasing 53K every year. We are becoming regional rather than universal. This is where connectional assessment takes place.	Music of the movement needs to express our theology and love of God for us and the world.	
Maybe we need to really unpack theologically and historically what “catholic”, “evangelical” and “reforming” really means in light of where we are as a church in our global context	Wisdom, inviting vision of reconciliation	

HEAD	HEART	FEET
Get out of our comfort zone when welcoming others – in many ways (race, nationality, economic status). Make this understanding part of all plans and conversations. We are not the same, but we are all beloved children of God.		
Engage and invest fully in this work in whatever capacity or role each individual CT member can		
Focus big picture on what makes us truly catholic, evangelical and reforming. Call others to lift eyes above the cross current.		
Strategy and structure needed to <u>distill</u> current hybrid (US and global) w/new answer for parochially US concepts		
Build structures designed to <u>learn</u> rather than one that expects new ideas/critique to originate in a plethora of caucus groups		
How is the CT encouraging cultural change in the Methodist people as much of what we face now is the same as in '68		
Focus in the word of God and calling		

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)



# The Possibility of United Methodism: Living Into Our Global Nature

Presentation to the Connectional Table  
April 5, 2018

**Hendrik R. Pieterse**

*Associate Professor of Global Christianity and World Religions*  
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary



# Why “Possibility”?

## **Possibility as promise**

- the church we can become

## **Possibility as threshold**

- the juncture for a new beginning as church





# Possibility and Crisis

## What crisis?

- “Strictly speaking, one ought to say that the Church is always in a state of crisis and that its greatest shortcoming is that it is only occasionally aware of it.”<sup>1</sup>
- The church “has always needed apparent failure and suffering in order to become fully alive to its real nature and mission.”<sup>1</sup>

## What possibility?

- Crisis as “danger” and “opportunity (promise)”<sup>2</sup>
- “[C]risis is therefore not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning . . .”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, quoted in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis, 1991), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 3.



# Connection and Covenant

**“United Methodists throughout the world are bound together in a connectional covenant . . .”**

- Connection and partnership
- Covenant and partnership
- Covenant and the mission of God (*missio Dei*)
  - “Our mission has no life of its own: only in the hands of the sending God can it truly be called mission, not least since the missionary initiative comes from God alone.”\*

\*Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 390-91.



# Freedom and Unity

**“Integrally holding connectional unity and local freedom, we seek to proclaim and embody the gospel . . .”**

- “Unity” versus “freedom”? connectional” versus “local”?
- Diversity and Incarnation:
  - “Christian diversity is the necessary product of the Incarnation.”<sup>1</sup>
- Diversity and unity:
  - God is the creative-redemptive ground of the world’s cultures
  - God honors all cultures equally
  - Culture is not scaffolding supporting an edifice of unity

<sup>1</sup>Andrew F. Walls, “The Translation Principle in Christian History,” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Orbis, 1996), 26-27.



# Connection and Center/Periphery

- ▶ If God is the center, then there are no cultural centers and margins.
  - ▶ The fact of Christianity being a translated, and translating, religion places God at the center of the universe of cultures, implying free coequality among cultures and a necessary relativizing of languages vis-à-vis the truth of God. No culture is so advanced and so superior that it can claim exclusive access or advantage to the truth of God, and none so marginal or inferior that it can be excluded.”
- ▶ Mission is "from everywhere to everywhere" (Mexico City, 1962)



# Connection and Conflict

**We “embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining ‘a vital web of interactive relationships.’”**

- Diversity does not cause conflict.
- Diversity is a sign of the success of mission, not its failure.
- Diversity is not an obstacle to unity.
- Contextualization is not a strategy for settling differences.
- Boundaries are not burdens but means of grace.
- Conflict offers opportunities for growth, creativity, and correction.



# Our Current Conflict: An Excursus

## Some reflections:

- We treat conflict as a means to unity.
- We treat context as bargaining tool.
- We equate freedom with the local and the contextual.
- We risk reducing unity to affinity.
- We may consider conflict as the work place (work of?) the Spirit.



# Connection as Vocation

**“For our connectionalism to become a living practice, we need to carry the worldwide nature of The United Methodist Church deep into the life and mission of our local congregations.”**

- Connection as vision (theological imagination)
- Connection as discipleship
- Connection as spirituality
- Connection as virtue
  - Interdependence
  - Patience/forbearance



# Connection as Threshold

**“We enter afresh into a relationship of mutuality, creating a new sense of community . . .”**

- ▶ Threshold as “end”: *Terminus* or *telos*?
- ▶ Threshold as limit: the mystery of *missio Dei*
- ▶ Threshold as promise: global church as school of learning

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)



# Narratives of Possibility

Connectional Table Meeting

April 5, 2018

# The Stuck Community

- The existing community context is one that markets fear, assigns fault and worships self-interest. This context supports the belief that the future will be improved with new laws, more oversight and stronger leadership.
  - We are a community of problems to be solved and those who best articulate problems and solutions dominates.
  - The future is defined by the interplay of self-interests, dependent of the accountability of leaders and controlled the the small number of the most powerful people we commonly refer to as “they”.
  - Community action is aimed at eliminating the source of our fear by trying harder or intensifying efforts on what we are already doing

# The Transformation Community

- Transformation occurs when we focus on the structure of how we gather and the context in which the gatherings take place; when we work hard on getting the questions right; when we choose depth over speed and relatedness over scale. We also believe that problem solving can make things better but cannot change the nature of things.
- Leaders have 3 tasks:
  - To shift the context within which people gather
  - Name the discussion through powerful questions
  - Listen rather than advocate, defend or provide answers

# Possibility

- Moving from the stuck community to the transformational community is a matter of choosing possibility over problem solving.
- “Usually, we think of possibility as options. While this is in some sense true, possibility also exists on a deeper level of abstraction – a level which actually defines which options are permissible. So, to bring forth possibility is to bring forth a domain in which new options become possible. It is not simply finding new options within the same range of options; it actually produces whole new ranges of options. It is actually the bringing forth of possibility itself.

# Our Task

- To create adaptive narratives of possibility that can be developed into whole new ranges of options for fulfilling the purpose of the Connectional Table, *“to discern and articulate the vision of the church and steward the mission, ministries and resources of The UMC.”*

# Appreciative Interviews

1. In pairs - Tell the story of a time when you experienced the function at your table done well/successfully ( by CT or others)
  - a) What happened? What contributed to the success of this effort? Identify 3-6 words that summarize the most important characteristics or actions taken in your story.
  - b) After each partner has shared their story and 3-6 words, then together select 4 words related to your function that you want to move forward into the next round of conversation.
2. In trios – share your 4 words with a brief explanation of how they are essential to your function. Then your trio again selects the 3 words it wants to move forward in conversation.
3. As a table – share the 3 words from each subgroup and why they are essential to the function on your table. Select 2 that you will work with.

# Designing Scenarios

- Plot your 2 words on a x and y axis
- Split into 2 groups
- Describe each quadrant/scenario using an image, a theme, a song/movie title, or a quotation.
- Create a possibility statement for each scenario

“The CT is creating the possibility of \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ .

- Share your scenarios and possibility statements with your table.
- Deepen your statements by asking “when we accomplish that what’s possible then? What else is possible within this scenario?”
- Finalize your scenarios / statements to report out. My
  - 4 scenarios and possibility statements per table total



# Closing

- WHAT – Did you notice? What stood out?
- SO WHAT – What patterns or conclusions?
- NOW WHAT – What might be a helpful way to continue this conversation?

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)

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**Listening**

<p>NO DIRECTION / NO RESULTS: WAITING AROUND TO DIE</p>	<p>OUTCOME: LIFE IS LIKE A MOUNTAIN RAILWAY (Keep your eye upon the throttle and your eyes upon the road)</p> <p>COLLABORATION</p> <p>FOCUS</p>
<p>DROP KICK ME JESUS THROUGH THE GOAL POST OF LIFE DO NOTHING</p>	<p>I DID IT MY WAY (AUTHORITARIAN)</p>

-  
**Resonance/  
Identity**

**+ Resonance/Identity**

**-Listening**

**Function #1:** To provide a forum for the understanding and implementation of the vision, mission, and ministries of the global church as determined in consultation with the Council of Bishops and/or the actions of the General Conference. (BOD Para 905.1)

<p>ON OUR OWN:</p> <p>CT has opportunity to improve information flow</p>	<p>SKY'S THE LIMIT:</p> <p>CT will be able to enable good flow of communication</p>
<p>NO GOOD OUTCOME:</p> <p>But CT SHOULD attempt to get more buy-in from participants and on staff</p>	<p>STAFF SUPPORT</p> <p>EXPERIENTIAL:</p> <p>CT can experiment with several models</p>

**Function #2:** To enable the flow of information and communication among annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, general agencies, and the Council of Bishops. (Para 905.2)

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<p>UNITED METHODISTS:</p> <p>CT is deepening the connection theologically by calling on connectional resources</p>	<p>BELOVED COMMUNITY (ROCK THE WORLD):</p> <p>The CT is casting vision and the vision is catching fire. Stewarding mission, ministries, and resources in abundance.</p> <p>IDENTITY</p>
<p>WALKING DEAD:</p> <p>CT is articulating a theologically based vision, working to deepen the connection spiritually and building relationships.</p>	<p>BAPTIST:</p> <p>CT is creating a source of connection and collaboration.</p>

CONNECTIONALISM

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**Function #3:** Consistent with actions of the General Conference, to coordinate the program life of the church with the mandates of the gospel, the mission of the church, and the needs of the global community by listening to the expression of needs, addressing emerging issues, and determining the most effective, cooperative, and efficient way to provide optimum stewardship of ministries, personnel, and resources. (BOD Para 905.3)

<p>COMPLIANCE: Know what is being done, but lacking the “Why?”</p>	<p>FOCUS: Because priorities are being fulfilled, trust is increased and the church is on board.</p> <p>TRANSPARENCY</p>
<p>CHAOS:</p> <p>Lack direction</p> <p>Lack productivity</p> <p>Miscommunication</p>	<p>AWARENESS:</p> <p>With critique and criticism</p>

Paper attached to poster: 1. To provide a forum for understanding and implementing the vision, mission and ministries of the global church  
Imagine No Malaria – caught fire across the church. 4 areas of focus.

**Function #4:** To review and evaluate the missional effectiveness of general program-related agencies and connectional structures of the church as they collectively seek to aid annual conferences and local churches as they fulfill the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

	<p>The CT is creating the possibility of equipping regional missional effectiveness by creating regional programs and advocacy agencies that will replace the work of general agencies.</p> <p>“Bring it home!”</p> <p>ADAPTIVE</p> <p>THEOLOGICAL</p>
<p>“Only The Strong Survive”</p> <p>The CT is creating the possibility of conserving resources by reducing agency budgets by 15% over a quadrennium</p>	<p>“Shall we gather at the river”</p> <p>Budget allocations will be based exclusively on missional priorities</p>

**Function #5:** To recommend to the General Conference such changes and implementing legislation as may be appropriate to ensure effectiveness of the general agencies.

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<p>IT ITCHES ALL OVER:</p> <p>The CT will provide a tool for leadership in planning and research that appreciates everyone's gifts and graces, challenges and opportunities</p>	<p>SCRATCH WHERE IT ITCHES:</p> <p>The CT will provide leadership in the planning of research that clearly meets relevant needs</p> <p>SIMPLICITY</p>
<p>START FROM SCRATCH:</p> <p>The CT will inspire the church to care about mission based on the DNA of the church</p>	<p>CREATES ITCHING:</p> <p>The CT will provide leadership in planning and research</p> <p>That is simple but may not be relevant</p>

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**Function #6:** To provide leadership in planning and research, assisting all levels of the church to evaluate needs and plan strategies to carry out the mission of the church. (BOD Para 905.6)

<p>STATUS QUO:</p> <p>The CT is creating the possibility of doing excellence in ministry by pruning in it</p>	<p>ALL IN:</p> <p>The CT is creating the possibility of nimbleness by ceasing to exist.</p> <p>-High Trust</p> <p>COURAGE</p>
<p>KILLING ME SOFTLY:</p> <p>The CT is creating the possibility of Resurrection or new life by renewing our commitment to our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world</p>	<p>THE ENFORCER:</p> <p>The CT is creating the possibility of fresh expression of ministry by using all available resources</p>

Paper attached to poster:

Courage – As it relates to finances (money makes us anxious; persons are fearful)

Generosity – Giving out of abundance and scarcity

Input – Asking persons to invest means buy-in

**Function #7:** In order to be accountable, along with the General Council on Finance and Administration, to The United Methodist Church through the General Conference, the Connectional Table shall have the authority and responsibility in the following matters...



## Transformation

+

<p>MISSING THE MARK:</p> <p>CT is extremely excited about the gospel being played out BUT plan doesn't match needs</p>	<p>ALL 8 CYLINDERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Goals are all met and exceeded</li><li>-Budget funds ALL needs</li><li>-Everyone is HAPPY!</li></ul>
<p>VOID:</p> <p>CT meets with poor attendance</p> <p>And</p> <p>Does NOTHING in these vital areas</p>	<p>KNOW MORE / DO NOTHING:</p> <p>We have a quantity of information on all programs</p> <p>but</p> <p>We take no action</p>

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<p>“SINGING TELEGRAM”</p> <p>The CT...w/person present to educate and promote conversation/answer questions</p>	<p>“LIVING TOGETHER”</p> <p>The CT is creating the Possibility of communicating the General Book of Discipline through personal delivery of a concise message to as many vessels as possible</p> <p>REINFORCED</p>
<p>SPAM FILTER</p> <p>The CT...through one time email/webex meeting/online forum</p>	<p>“FULL INBOX”</p> <p>The CT...through multiple “enews” methods</p>

PERSONAL

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## Program Evaluation

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<p>CT to put into place standards and instruments for monitoring and assessment of program-related agencies</p>	<p>More encouragement and effort by program-related agencies to obtain optimum results</p>
<p>CT to overhaul the structures of program-related agencies so as to provide quality services to the conferences</p>	<p>Program-related agencies re-examine their operations and be able to identify their short-comings with the view of changing strategies and focus</p>

MONITORING

ASSESSMENT

-

+

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**+ Listening**

<p><b>BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE</b></p> <p>Possibility of alignment by effectively telling success stories</p>	<p><b>THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER</b></p> <p>Possibility of investing in effective mission and ministry by creating agreed upon evaluation</p>
<p><b>WILDERNESS JOURNEY</b></p> <p>Possibility of connexion by building listening opportunities</p>	<p><b>LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT IT</b></p> <p>Possibility of setting and achieving a significant goal by sharing needs and opportunities</p>

-  
Resonance/  
Identity

**+ Resonance/Identity**

**-Listening**

**IN THE CENTER:** Review and evaluate effectiveness of general program agencies

Click to resume reading the minutes.

# Commission on a Way Forward Update and Discussion



**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# Covenant

We will carefully listen to one another.

We will be careful not to judge one another.

We are not here to change one another's positions.  
(speak to be understood, not to convince)

We will ask questions.



**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# Covenant

We will speak our truth in love.

We will assume trust not suspicion.

We will protect the confidentiality of the conversation.

Let everyone participate, no one dominate, allow every voice to be heard.



**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# How did we get here?

## A brief history ...



**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



# Update on the work of the Commission on a Way Forward

1. Mission
2. Vision
3. Scope

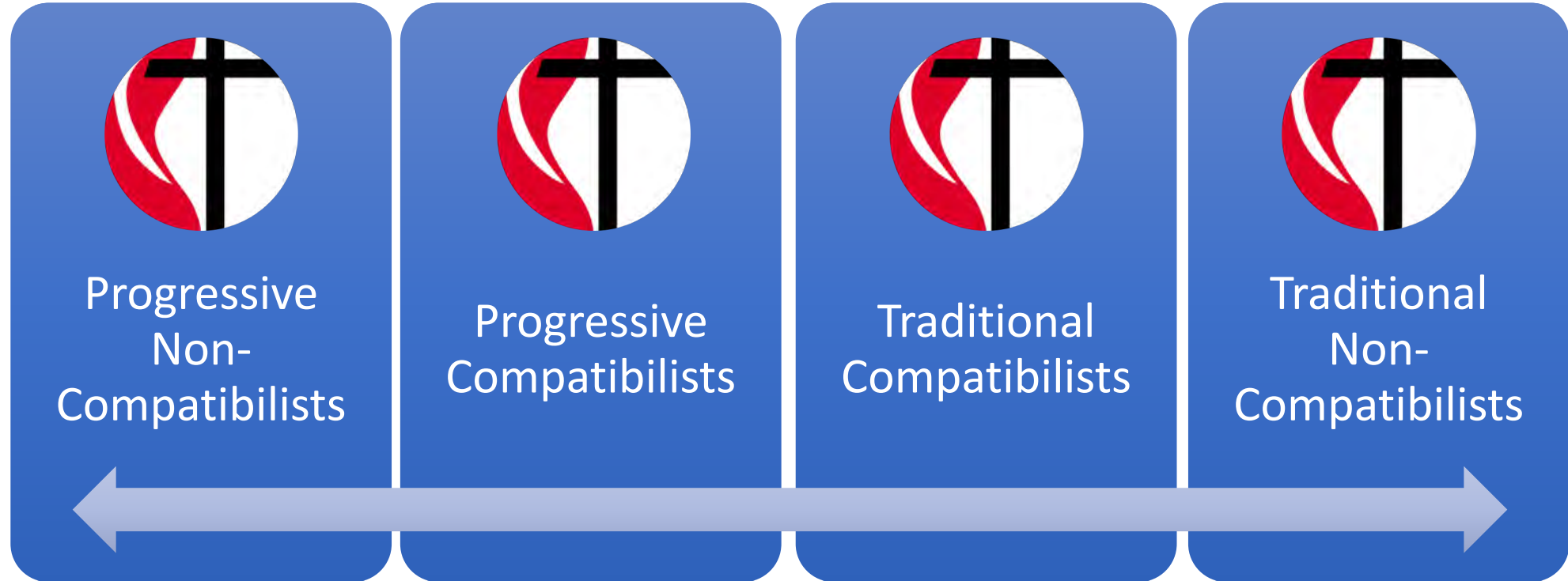


**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

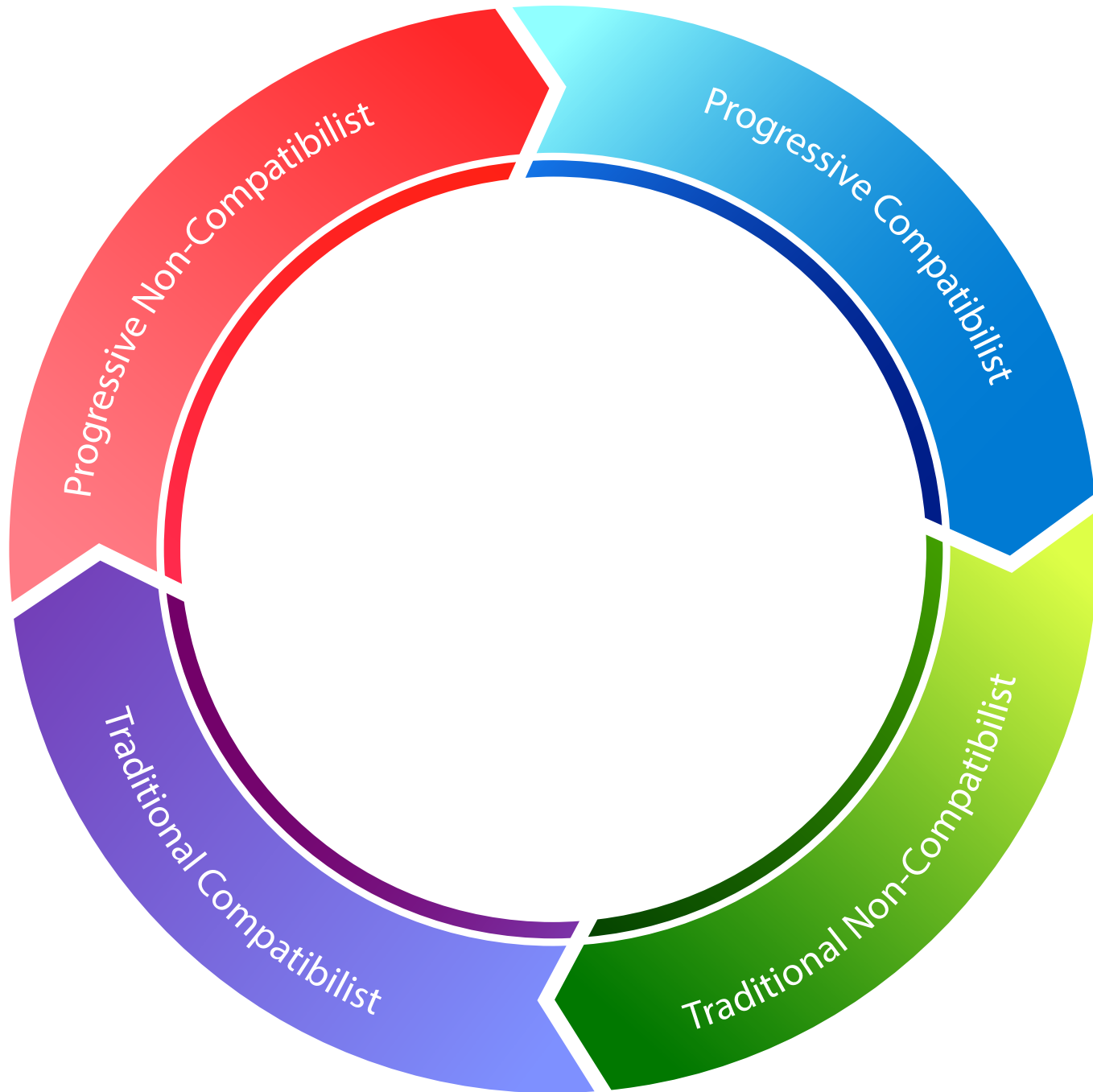
# One way to view the perspectives ...



**Commission on a Way Forward**  
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



# 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.

# 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](#)

# 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

# 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>

# What Connects Us Now: Our Common Core

Jesus is the Vine; We are the Branches

The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds

Articles of Religion/Confession of Faith

The General Rules

The Wesley Hymns



Disciplined Engagement with Scripture

Works of Piety, Mercy and Justice

Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

Small Group Accountability and Support  
(Class and Band Meetings)

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



# 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.

# 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

# 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.

# 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.

# 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](#)



[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)

**WE INVITE YOU TO PRAY AS WE CONTINUE THE WORK!**

## **The Accountability Covenant**

### **What are the covenantal practices that are so essential to our work together that we must perform them with excellence in order to fulfill our mission?**

We covenant to pray for one another, for the United Methodist Church, for the mission of Christ, and for a way forward together.

We covenant to attend all meetings unless unexpected urgencies prevent us, to prepare adequately for meetings by reading assigned books or papers, to stay engaged and focused, to participate actively in learning experiences and conversations, and to follow through with any assignments or projects that we agree to accept. We will offer our best and highest to the work we share as servants of Christ and leaders of the church.

We covenant to treat one another with respect, to assume the best in others, to represent one another in the best possible light, to speak the truth with love, and to practice and expect trustworthiness. We will each do our part to offer grace, to create an atmosphere of hospitality, and to moderate our anxiety through mutual encouragement, good humor, and with genuine love for one another.

We covenant to listen actively to others, to seek first to understand rather than to be understood, to ask for clarity or help from others, to remain attentive to cultural, language, and contextual diversity, to be patient with one another, and to foster hopefulness and mutual encouragement.

We covenant to maintain strict confidentiality, and so we will avoid inappropriate sharing of personal information, stories, or perspectives of others without their consent.

### **What are the behaviors that are so harmful that failure to avoid them will cause us to fail?**

We covenant to avoid harmful speech toward or about others, during our meetings and outside our meetings. We will refrain from blaming others, misrepresenting others, making judgments about others, or using derogatory speech about others.

We covenant to avoid the practices of interrupting others, ignoring others, discounting others, speaking for others, or exhibiting dominating or domineering behavior. We shall practice self-monitoring, gently holding one another accountable for divisive or hurtful behaviors.

We covenant to avoid dividing into factions, politicizing our processes, and retreating into camps and silos based on ideology or regional affinities, and so we will intentionally seek to cultivate deeper relationships with those we do not know rather than merely spend time with those we already know.


We covenant to restrain ourselves from distracting behaviors during our meeting sessions so that we may remain attentive to one another and to our work, and so we will refrain from checking emails, reading online news, and otherwise letting ourselves become distracted for outside obligations.

We covenant to abide by the agreed-upon protocols for sharing news, information, or photos on social media.

### **Additional Commitment:**

We will use Matthew 18 as a model for how to work with each other.

[Click to resume reading the minutes.](#)

The logo consists of the letters '4AF' in a bold, serif font, rendered in a light brown color with a subtle gradient and a drop shadow. The letters are centered within a rectangular box that has a light olive green background and a thin white border.

4AF

***Shaping Mission and Ministry in the  
Worldwide Church:***  
**The Emerging Work of the Four Areas of  
Focus Strategy Team**

Junius Dotson & Gary Mueller



# Introduction

**Desired Outcome:** Share information about the emerging work of the Four Areas of Focus Strategy Team and engage the Connectional Table in a process that enables to CT to decide

- 1) how the Four Areas of Focus can be implemented in the future so that it helps bind the worldwide church together in vital mission and ministry; and
- 2) 2) the kind of leadership the CT needs to provide that will enable a collaborative partnership between the CT, general agencies, residential bishops, annual conferences and congregations.

# 2017-2020 Four Areas of Focus

## **Developing principled Christian leaders.**

- **Equipping 3 million people across the connection to be “difference makers,”** called out to serve as principled Christian leaders in our world today.

## **Creating new places for new people.**

- **With 1 million new disciples** who profess their faith through renewed and new faith communities around the world.

## **Engaging in ministry with the poor.**

- **That can build 400 vibrant, flourishing and transforming communities addressing issues of poverty and ministry with the poor,** particularly with children.

## **Stamping out the killer diseases of poverty like malaria.**

- **That can reach 1 million children with life-saving interventions.**

4AF

*Shaping Mission and Ministry in the Worldwide Church:*  
The Emerging Work of the Four Areas of Focus Strategy Team

# Analysis of the Four Areas of Focus

## “No Blame” Autopsy:

- What’s working well with the 4AF?
- If the 4AF were working as originally conceived, what would be going on across the denomination? What would the CT be doing?
- How are the 4AF valuable to the United Methodist Church as we carry out our mission, especially in these uncertain times?

# Analysis of the Four Areas of Focus

Adaptive Issues:

# The emerging vision and approach of the Four Areas of Focus

Purpose of 4AFST (adopted 2016):

*To focus, by reviewing, monitoring, and supporting the collective work across annual conferences through the Council of Bishops and General Agencies through the Connectional Table on strategic planning and missional focus over the next quadrennium.*

# The emerging vision and approach of the Four Areas of Focus

Purpose of 4AFST (adopted 2018):

*The purpose of this group is to develop strategy, advance, inspire, align and equip the COB and the CT around the work of the four areas of focus with the purpose of increasing the number of vibrant congregations.*



# Next steps emerging in the 4AFST: Communication Plan

- We Are Disciples: Four Areas of Focus
- Make disciples. Grow in faith. (New and renewed congregations)
- Lead where God calls you. (Leadership development)
- Serve with your community. (Ministry with the poor)
- Promote health and wholeness for all. (Global health/Abundant health)

# Ongoing conversations about 4AF Strategy Team

**Question:** If we don't utilize the heavy hand of enforcement (budget and evaluation), how do we thrive in the 4AF? How do we inspire all aspects of the connection to participate? What outcomes are we looking for and how will we measure them?

**Question:** What is the distinctive role of the CT in ‘stewarding’ the 4AF across the connection, especially in terms of having as much of the connection as possible participate in them? What kind of specific strategy does the CT need to provide to enable a collaborative partnership between the CT, general agencies, residential bishops, annual conferences and congregations?

**Question:** Why is it important for the CT to recommend the continuation of the 4AF in the coming quadrennium? How will it do so in a way that reflects the adaptive realities that the UMC is facing?

## Wrap-Up

**Question:** What have we discovered out of this conversation?

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To: Members of the Connectional Table  
From: Internal Finance and Evaluation Committee  
Date: March 28, 2018

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The following is a narrative summary from the CT Internal Finance Committee with a financial statement showing 2017 Year-End Actuals (unaudited) compared to budget and a revised forecast for 2018. We included the 2016 audited figures for comparison.

**Year-end 2017 Summary:** The Connectional Table ended 2017 spending \$592,550, a 4% decrease from the 2017 spending plan of \$619,700. This is attributed to a \$45,000 reduction in administrative costs, and an increase of \$18,000 in meeting expenses. Increased meeting expenses covered additional advisory group meetings in 2017. Higher interest income combined with lower spending resulted in an overall reduction of reserves spending than budgeted.

**Adjustments to 2018 Spending:** As we move into 2018 with staff transitions, additional consultants and more accurate meeting estimates, we anticipate a few minor adjustments to CT income and spending that may result in a reduction of overall spending for the year.

In 2017, the CT approved spending for consultative services and expertise in the area of assessment and evaluation. In addition, the CT has contracted with adaptive change leader Eric Martin, who will consult with CT leadership throughout this year. As of today, the contracts commit the CT to \$38,000, well within the \$50,000 budgeted for independent contractors in 2018. Below is more information about the consultants under contract:

- **Eric Martin, Adaptive Change Advisors:** Mr. Martin is consulting with CT executive leaders in 2018 in preparation for and during both 2018 CT meetings to assist the CT in its purpose of discerning and articulating vision in a time of transition and adaptive change for the church.
- **Dr. Mark McCormack, evaluation specialist:** Dr. McCormack consults with the CT's connectional assessment process, advising on best practices and methods on data gathering and analysis toward missional fruitfulness and assessing needs and opportunities for strategic connectional partnerships between annual conferences and general agencies. He will also assist with the analysis and final report of the beta-phase.
- **Dr. Brian Cesario, evaluation specialist:** Dr. Cesario is consulting on the agency evaluation work to continue analyzing the Four Areas of Focus logic models and advising on designing and executing evaluation processes for phase 2 of the proposal approved by CT in Spring 2017. He will also consult on CT internal and external evaluation plans for the quadrennium.

**Minor Income/Expense Adjustments for 2018:** A slight increase (1%) to World Service allocations and a change from a fixed to a variable benefit Trust payout formula will result in minor fluctuations of CT income. CT staff anticipates minor reductions in the following areas: group insurance, taxes, rent, and building management. Staff also anticipates a slight increase in meeting expenses in 2018 but will monitor costs closely to stay within our overall spending plan.

Lastly, GCFA is managing the annual audit conducted by Cherry Bekaert LLP and is currently underway. There is no action needed on these financial statements, and we submit them as information of record.

Faithfully,

Dave Nuckols  
CT Treasurer and Chair of CT Finance

Lyssette Perez  
Chair, CT Internal Evaluation

**The Connectional Table - Sources & Uses of Funds**

In Thousands	Year-to-date December			Variance to:	
	2016 Budget	2017 Actual	2016 Actual	Budget	2016
<b>Sources of Funds</b>					
CT-WS Income	\$535,075	\$535,092	\$528,768	\$ 17	\$ 6,324
CT-Interest Inc-GCFA	5,000	18,641	26,203	13,641	(7,562)
CT-Benefit Trust Income	36,000	31,115	37,938	(4,885)	(6,824)
Use of Unrestricted Reserves	43,625	7,702	310,654	(35,923)	(302,952)
<b>Total Sources of Funds</b>	<b>\$619,700</b>	<b>\$592,550</b>	<b>\$903,564</b>	<b>\$(27,150)</b>	<b>\$(311,014)</b>
<b>Administration Expenses</b>					
Salaries & Benefits	359,900	321,059	\$315,865	(38,841)	5,193
Training & Continuing Education	4,000	1,293	2,794	(2,707)	(1,501)
Temp. Staff & Independent Contractors	10,000	7,346	23,026	(2,654)	(15,680)
Facilities Costs	33,700	30,319	31,017	(3,381)	(699)
Telephone, supplies & other office costs	10,100	9,380	11,660	(720)	(2,280)
IT related costs	2,000	2,217	6,579	217	(4,361)
Insurance	6,000	17,288	5,239	11,288	12,049
Staff Travel & Meeting Costs	25,000	19,363	30,068	(5,637)	(10,705)
Other	3,000	1,396	1,321	(1,604)	74
Depreciation	1,000	-	-	(1,000)	-
<b>Total Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>\$454,700</b>	<b>\$409,661</b>	<b>\$427,570</b>	<b>\$(45,039)</b>	<b>\$ (17,909)</b>
General Conference	-	275	40,807	(275)	(40,807)
Grants	-	-	300,000	-	(300,000)
Task Groups	35,000	70,018	44,337	(35,018)	(9,337)
Meetings	130,000	112,596	90,850	17,404	39,150
<b>Total Uses of Funds</b>	<b>\$619,700</b>	<b>\$592,550</b>	<b>\$903,564</b>	<b>\$(62,927)</b>	<b>\$(328,903)</b>



## The Connectional Table - Balance Sheet

In Thousands	As of Dec. 31,	
	2017	2016
<b>Assets</b>		
Due From GCFA Short Term Invest. Pool	\$428,901	\$434,235
AR Trade	-	\$ 870
Prepays & Deposits	3,339	1,414
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$432,240</b>	<b>\$436,519</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts Payable Trade	\$ 13,978	\$ 8,457
Accrued Expenses	9,718	11,816
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 23,696</b>	<b>\$ 20,273</b>
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>\$408,544</b>	<b>\$416,246</b>
<b>Total Liabilites &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$432,240</b>	<b>\$436,519</b>

The Connectional Table - Sources and Use of Funds

In Thousands	Year-to-date February			Variance to:		Full Year 2018 Budget	YTD % of Full Year Budget
	2018 Actual	2018 Budget	2017 Actual	Budget	2017		
<b>Sources of Funds</b>							
CT-WS Income	\$90,944	\$ 89,181	\$89,182	\$ 1,763	\$ 1,762	\$ 535,088	17%
CT-Interest Inc-GCFA	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	0%
CT-Benefit Trust Income	5,276	5,833	6,270	(558)	(995)	35,000	15%
Use of Unrestricted Reserves	(11,580)	13,097	(28,761)	(24,677)	17,182	99,647	-12%
<b>Total Sources of Funds</b>	<b>\$84,640</b>	<b>\$108,112</b>	<b>\$66,691</b>	<b>\$ (23,472)</b>	<b>\$17,949</b>	<b>\$ 674,735</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Administration Expenses</b>							
Salaries & Benefits	51,739	59,878	\$53,839	(8,140)	(2,100)	385,335	13%
Training & Continuing Education	-	667	-	(667)	-	4,000	0%
Temp. Staff & Independent Contractors	2,157	8,333	-	(6,176)	2,157	50,000	4%
Facilities Costs	5,062	5,883	4,921	(821)	141	35,300	14%
Telephone, supplies & other office costs	1,310	1,683	1,127	(373)	183	10,100	13%
IT related costs	504	333	26	171	478	2,000	25%
Insurance	3,160	1,000	910	2,160	2,251	6,000	53%
Staff Travel	6,978	5,000	3,452	1,978	3,526	30,000	23%
Other	144	333	66	(189)	78	2,000	7%
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
<b>Total Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>\$71,055</b>	<b>\$ 83,112</b>	<b>\$64,340</b>	<b>\$ (12,057)</b>	<b>\$ 6,715</b>	<b>\$ 524,735</b>	<b>14%</b>
General Conference	-	-	275	-	(275)	-	0%
Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%
Task Groups	3,105	1,945	330	1,160	2,775	11,670	27%
Meetings	10,480	23,055	1,746	(12,575)	8,734	138,330	8%
<b>Total Uses of Funds</b>	<b>\$84,640</b>	<b>\$108,112</b>	<b>\$66,691</b>	<b>\$ (23,472)</b>	<b>\$17,949</b>	<b>\$ 674,735</b>	<b>13%</b>

## The Connectional Table - Balance Sheet

In Thousands	As of Dec. 31, 2017	As of Feb 31,	
		2018	2017
<b>Assets</b>			
Due From GCFA Short Term Invest. Pool	\$ 428,901	\$ 410,717	\$451,925
Prepays & Deposits	3,339	18,666	5,963
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 432,240</b>	<b>\$ 429,383</b>	<b>\$457,887</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Accounts Payable Trade	\$ 13,978	\$ -	\$ 737
Accrued Expenses	9,718	9,259	12,143
<b>Total Administrative Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 23,696</b>	<b>\$ 9,259</b>	<b>\$ 12,880</b>
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 408,544</b>	<b>\$ 420,123</b>	<b>\$445,007</b>
<b>Total Liabilites &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 432,240</b>	<b>\$ 429,383</b>	<b>\$457,887</b>

Click to resume reading the minutes.

## General Church Council Advisory Group Report – April 6, 2018

### Our Task:

The Connectional Table in partnership with the Council of Bishops will create a Missional Collaboration Group made up of CT and COB Members from our worldwide church. This group will be tasked with establishing and recommending a model for a General Church Council to align with the work of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters (Stc-CCM) and the Committee on Faith and Order (CFO) for a *General Book of Discipline*.

The Missional Collaboration Group will be tasked to: 1) provide a forum for conversations with key constituents within our primary partnerships to foster wide investment in a “General Church Council” concept; 2) develop legislation to create a General Church Council replacing the Connectional Table in 2020 to accompany the *General Book of Discipline* legislation. The General Church Council legislation will address the membership of the General Church Council, name the essential functions, and set a timeline for implementation.

### Emerging Reality:

1. CT emerged as a leadership body to replace the former Council of Ministries, and inherited some of the purposes and task of that body. We have continued to attempt to perfect this leadership body, without really taking the time to consider what type of leadership body the church may need at this time.
2. CT’s purpose and essential functions are not clear.
3. The church is in flux with so many moving parts.
4. CT members (as presently configured) and COB members are “central” church leaders who are predominantly from the US, and lack diversity in geography, race, age, and life experience.
5. We may need a season of contemplation and discernment, of letting go and opening ourselves to God to take us into a new future.

### Recommendation:

Develop legislation to create a Global Forum to be initiated in 2020 and carried out through a multi faceted system of engagement that may include online technology, social media, and face to face meeting. The opportunity for engagement will result in the creation of an instrument that better reflect the diversity in geography, race, age, and life experience, and will determine the nature and capacity of this leadership group. The legislation may include the formation of a basic interim leadership body that will care for “essential functions” during this time of global discernment and engagement. Ultimately, the Global Forum will result in legislation that will further its work, by addressing membership, naming essential functions, setting a timeline for implementation, and offering new possibilities that God may be calling us to.

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