

Named Realities – Summary Report

01

Concerns with the institutional structure and self-preservation of the institution

02

Concerns with clarity, identity, or information as United Methodists and The United Methodist Church

03

Crises and lack of spiritual formation

04

Issues with hierarchy and lack of access (centering the U.S., lack of access to positions of power and leadership)

DISCIPLESHIP

- A crisis in spiritual formation & disciplines, especially when it comes to practices.
- The need for intentionally creating spaces of belonging for youth and young-adults outside of the church and within the church.
- The need to reconcile distrust of the institution among younger generations. There is room to celebrate and cultivate our integrity when it comes to what we say and what we do, especially in the adaptive work across differences.
- The local church is currently not interculturally competent or in a place to receive differences. Therefore we are not able to be in full relationship with all people, sustain one another, or mitigate harm.
- We claim to be connectional and united and we are still not that. We need to learn from each other in an equitable way and not compete.
- There are resources that do not express the needs of the local congregations. We are not taking enough time to listen to the community to understand their gifts and equip them with a good theology of teaching and how to care for their communities. Especially in rural areas.
- Our established institutional systems no longer prove sufficient to help local churches move from survival mode to transformative disciple making.
- The lack of clarity surrounding the essential elements of discipleship acts as a barrier to the development of mature Christians and faithful stewardship.
- We are lacking a culture of call that inspires conferences and local church to collaborate in the ongoing work of discipleship within the church and in response to the socioeconomic realities of the communities we serve.

LEADERSHIP

- Everybody doesn't listen, learn, and engage in the same way. Culture and context create complexity.
- Having a seat at the table is different from leadership, and co-creation is necessary for success. The United Methodist Church is not adaptive enough (practically, theologically, contextually) to welcome diverse and young people.
- Young people are underrepresented in leadership roles in the United Methodist Church.
- We do not have ample opportunities for children, youth and young adults to learn and participate in the life of the church - to integrate children, youth, and young adults into all aspects of the life of the church (everything, including participating in services, mission work, leadership, annual conferences, etc.)
- Global voices are not amplified and we are not intentional about ensuring they are shared.
- The connection that is focused on saving itself and is not serving a hurting world.
- Within a technologically infused culture of competing in time and focus, our current discipleship model, which was created with a bias toward US-centric, upper middle class people with leisure time, is not relevant and is designed for a world that no longer exists.
- A lack of financially sustainable models makes us fearful, so instead we focus on institutional preservation rather than innovative forms of leadership that right-sizes ministry to congregational capacity and pushes the United Methodist movement forward.
- We do not have a culture of experimentation, causing us to grow complacent and rigid in our current rules and discipleship models, lacking imagination and stifling the creativity that dwells in our congregations and communities.

IMPACT

- Deconstructing traumatizing, systemic injustices and moving towards reconciliation.
- Our next generation and cross-cultural leaders are not being empowered.
- Church physical infrastructure and economic funds are mismatched with current needs and capabilities.
- The UMC needs to embrace a more truly worldwide vision that listens to, values, and prioritizes the needs and voices of every region of the connection.
- The United Methodist Church does not have worldwide belonging despite its longstanding worldwide presence.
- An impactful church holds evangelism, discipleship, and justice together.
- Instead of empowering them to create new ministries that utilize their gifts and meet their needs, younger generations have been given the responsibility of sustaining the work of older generations' vision of the church, often without agency, resources, or support.
- Because of climate change, social injustice, disasters, and wars, younger generations are experiencing collapse awareness and widespread hopelessness. The church has not historically engaged them or addressed these issues with urgency, so many young people are currently coping with these crises, in positive and negative ways, outside of it.
- Although there is much work being done to address current crises, such as climate change, social injustice, disasters, and wars, at the institutional level in the UMC, there is a disconnect between how these are prioritized and embodied in local contexts. Similarly, the centering of the US results in a disconnect in priorities for/from and resources to other regions of the church.

STEWARDSHIP

- Lack of relevancy and clear identity of who we are and our why
 - We are funding maintenance more than mission, in isolation, for the means of survival
 - Lack of engagement, education, enthusiasm/joy around stewardship
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- We are not good stewards of our UMC story which includes our identity, our mission, and vision both congregationally and globally.
 - Church structures and governance- that impede our ability to live and carry out God's mission in both local and global realities
 - Disparity in our economic realities , and context Underrecognized Global Resources spiritual, human, cultural and economic resources of other regions, the work of the Holy spirit , our role in participating in God's transformation of the world. A transformed world is one where poverty gives way to dignity, dependency to empowerment, inequality to justice, and exploitation to responsible stewardship.
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- The resources of power and leadership have been hoarded by people in dominant positions, preventing young people and people of marginalized identities from stepping into meaningful leadership.
 - We have misallocated resources by overfunding maintenance and underfunding mission to innovation at the margins.
 - We are asking the younger generation to step in with their prayers, gifts, presence, service, and witness without acknowledging the ways we have misused those resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- In a world where people report being isolated and lonely, authentic relationships could be forward in the church in ways that would lead to authentic Christian formation.
- In a church that claims to be inclusive and to embrace everyone, there is still a lack of meaningful opportunities for young people to share their stories, have their voices heard, and actively participate in shaping the future of our church.
- Discipleship has increasingly become individualized, focused on personal salvation, individual spirituality, and religious identity, while becoming disconnected from the life, teachings, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—who stood with the marginalized, challenged injustice and systems of power, and gave his life for the sake of others.
- The training, development, and sustainability, or the lack thereof of ministry leadership.
- Our current structure does not meet the needs of the emerging church. (i.e. hierarchy of systems, caste).
- We have not lived into our baptismal vow to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in all the ways it presents itself.
- No shared, relational understanding of accountability or impact beyond numbers
- Equity under pressure: authoritarianism, tribalism, far-right movements, economic inequality, racism, discrimination, sexism, etc.
- A US-centric perspective in a global church that leads to inequitable voice, representation, and participation.

Virtual Covenant Group

- Declining worship attendance and the need for new approaches to discipleship.
- Economic challenges are limiting the church's ability to sustain discipleship and Pastoral Ministry.
- Rural ministry needs innovation, While urban Communities offer new opportunities.

Day 1: Overarching, Emerging Themes:

- Concerns with the institutional structure and self-preservation of the institution
- Concerns with clarity, identity, or information as United Methodists and The United Methodist Church
- Crises and lack of spiritual formation
- Issues with hierarchy and lack of access (centering the U.S., lack of access to positions of power and leadership)

Discipleship

We do not always live out what we say we believe. We need to deepen spiritual practices that lead to a transformed life in Jesus. We need to create places where people of different ages and cultures truly belong, building trust by living out our values and treating one another fairly. Our church structures and resources must help local churches meet the needs of their communities and make a lasting difference.

Leadership

People listen, learn, and take part in different ways, but our church does not give young people and voices from around the world enough power to help shape its future. Fear about financial sustainability, institutional self-preservation, and rigid, U.S.-centered structures keep us from trying new ideas and serving a hurting world.

Impact

Unfair systems cause harm, and our focus on the United States keeps people in other regions from fully belonging and sharing in decisions. Our buildings and money do not always match today's needs. We struggle to support new leaders. We struggle to share Jesus, follow Jesus, and embody Jesus as people face climate change, disasters, and war.

Stewardship

We are not caring well for our United Methodist story or using our money, gifts, and power to serve God's mission around the world. We focus too much on keeping the church going as it is, overlook skills and contributions from non-U.S. regions, and ask younger people and those often left out to give without sharing power and leadership or admitting how we have misused their gifts.

Accountability

Many people feel lonely, but our church does not always cultivate caring relationships where we help one another follow Jesus, hear young people's voices, and support our leaders. We too often treat faith as something we practice alone, hold power at the top, and fail to keep our baptismal promise to stand against evil, unfair treatment, and the abuse of power.