



PRESS RELEASE

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UMCNext Concludes Meeting with Four Commitments

(Leawood, Kansas) -- More than 600 United Methodists gathered in Kansas this week for UMCNext, a conversation in response to the adoption of The Traditional Plan by the 2019 Special General Conference. The participants depart today from an event that has been remarkable for many reasons.

"Every movement has a tipping point, a game changer, a watershed moment, this is one of them," said convening team member Rev. Junius Dotson. "In a moment none of us have experienced before and could never have fully anticipated, we have come together and held many important things in tension. We have managed ambiguity, and cared for the waves of our own emotions and reactions. It has been intense, challenging, powerful, beautiful work we have engaged together."

The depth of the discussion is evidence of the strength of this movement and points toward an authentic new beginning. Participants from every U.S. annual conference took part in the gathering. The group found ways to work together, despite differences, and found many areas of common ground including four commitments.

Four Commitments of UMCNext

We believe these commitments are essential to a hope-filled future for the global Methodist movement as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world:

1. We long to be passionate followers of Jesus Christ, committed to a Wesleyan vision of Christianity, anchored in scripture and informed by tradition, experience and reason as we live a life of personal piety and social holiness.
2. We commit to resist evil, injustice and oppression in all forms and toward all people and build a church which affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.
3. We reject the Traditional Plan approved at General Conference 2019 as inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and will resist its implementation.
4. We will work to eliminate discriminatory language and the restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons. We affirm the sacred worth of LGBTQ persons, celebrate their gifts, and commit to being in ministry together.

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"What is clear as we depart this meeting is that we have a vision for a future filled with hope. We have not reached closure," said team member Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli. "This is just the beginning. We remain open to the Holy Spirit and with convicted humility, we will follow where God leads us."

Noting that this is a gathering of leaders rather than a leadership team, the convening team will now begin to process pages of substantive work that were generated through table conversations over the next few days.

Participants will go back to their annual conferences to organize and mobilize others in ways appropriate to their context.

"Resistance looks very different in Baxter Springs, Kansas than in Boston, Massachusetts," said team member Rev. Adam Hamilton. "For some, resistance is putting up a banner saying all are welcome; and for others, it may mean participating in a same-gender wedding. The hundreds of participants are all thinking about what does resistance look like in their particular context."

Just as the gathering began with worship, the event closed Wednesday with worship. UMCNext participants stand firmly on this promise: "God, by His mighty power at work within us, is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of – infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes." Ephesians 3:20

UMC Next Convening Team

Tom Berlin, Floris UMC

Michael Bowie, St. Luke's UMC, Dallas

Lonnie Chafin, Northern Illinois Annual Conference

Stan Copeland, Lover's Lane UMC

Katie Dawson, Immanuel UMC

DJ del Rosario, Pacific Northwest Conference

Junius Dotson, Discipleship Ministries

Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Foundry UMC

Adam Hamilton, Church of the Resurrection

Bishop Sue Haupert-Johnson, North Georgia Annual Conference

Jan Lawrence, Reconciling Ministries Network

Pat Luna, Point Washington UMC

Bishop Mike McKee, North Texas Annual Conference

Jasmine Smothers, Atlanta First UMC

Cynthia Weems, Florida Annual Conference