

# General Conference

~~May 5-15, 2020~~

~~Aug. 29-Sept. 6, 2022~~

**POSTPONED  
Until 2024**



# Team Jeremiah

❖ Bishop Sharma D. Lewis

❖ Rev. Denise Bates

❖ Rev. Tom Berlin

❖ Rev. David Bonney

❖ Rev. Kyungsuk Cho

❖ Mr. David Dommissse

❖ Ms. Jill Gaynor

❖ Rev. Dr. Victor Gomez

❖ Mr. Barry Hewett

❖ Rev. Sarah Locke

❖ Rev. Derrick Parson

❖ Ms. Madeline Pillow White

❖ Rev. Dr. Steve Summers

❖ Ms. Martha Stokes

❖ Ms. Josefa Bethea Wall

## Resource Team Members

❖ Mr. Bo Bowden

❖ Mr. Steven D. Brown

❖ Mr. Andrew White

A black and white photograph of a winding asphalt road on a hillside. The road curves through a landscape of dense trees and grassy areas. Several road signs are visible, including directional arrows and a warning sign for a curve. A prominent red rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

**Where are  
we now?**

# Opening Prayer

Loving and gracious God, *we pray*.

As your faithful body and a *community* of grace, help us vividly see what you can see;

help us *candidly* speak what you would speak;

and help us carefully *hear* what you want us to hear.

*You alone* be the beginning and the end of all things we discern,  
of all ways we lead, of all beings *we* become.

As you promised to Jeremiah, may the plans you created *thrive* among us.

As Jesus prayed for every *disciple*, may we be one in your vision,  
so that all can see your *love* for all.

As on the day of Pentecost, O *Holy Spirit*, come, come and *unite* us for  
your greater will.

May your *grace* abide in us that we, as your people,

beyond and across and in spite of who we are, strive for your *kingdom*.

In Jesus' name that binds us together. Amen.



# What does it mean to be United Methodist?



# Theology

**Our doctrinal standards are clear and have not changed:**

- ❖ **The Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit**
- ❖ **The Lordship of Christ**
- ❖ **The virgin birth**
- ❖ **The bodily resurrection**
- ❖ **Scripture “contains all things necessary to salvation...”**

# Our Common Core as Methodists

- ❖ The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
- ❖ Disciplined Engagement with Scripture
- ❖ Articles of Religion/Confession of Faith
- ❖ Works of Piety, Mercy and Justice
- ❖ The General Rules
- ❖ Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist
- ❖ The Wesley Hymns
- ❖ Small Group Accountability and Support



It's all  
about  
**GRACE**



# Wesley's House of Salvation Metaphor

## PORCH: prevenient grace

- ❖ God's divine love for us, which moves us to repentance
- ❖ Prepares us to enter the house



# Wesley's House of Salvation Metaphor

## DOOR: justifying grace

- ❖ God reaching out to the repentant believer with accepting & pardoning love
- ❖ Changes our heart, crossing the threshold from unbelief to belief



# Wesley's House of Salvation Metaphor

**INTERIOR:  
sanctifying grace**

- ❖ **Being at home with God, continuing to nurture our growth in grace**



# Faith in Action

Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.

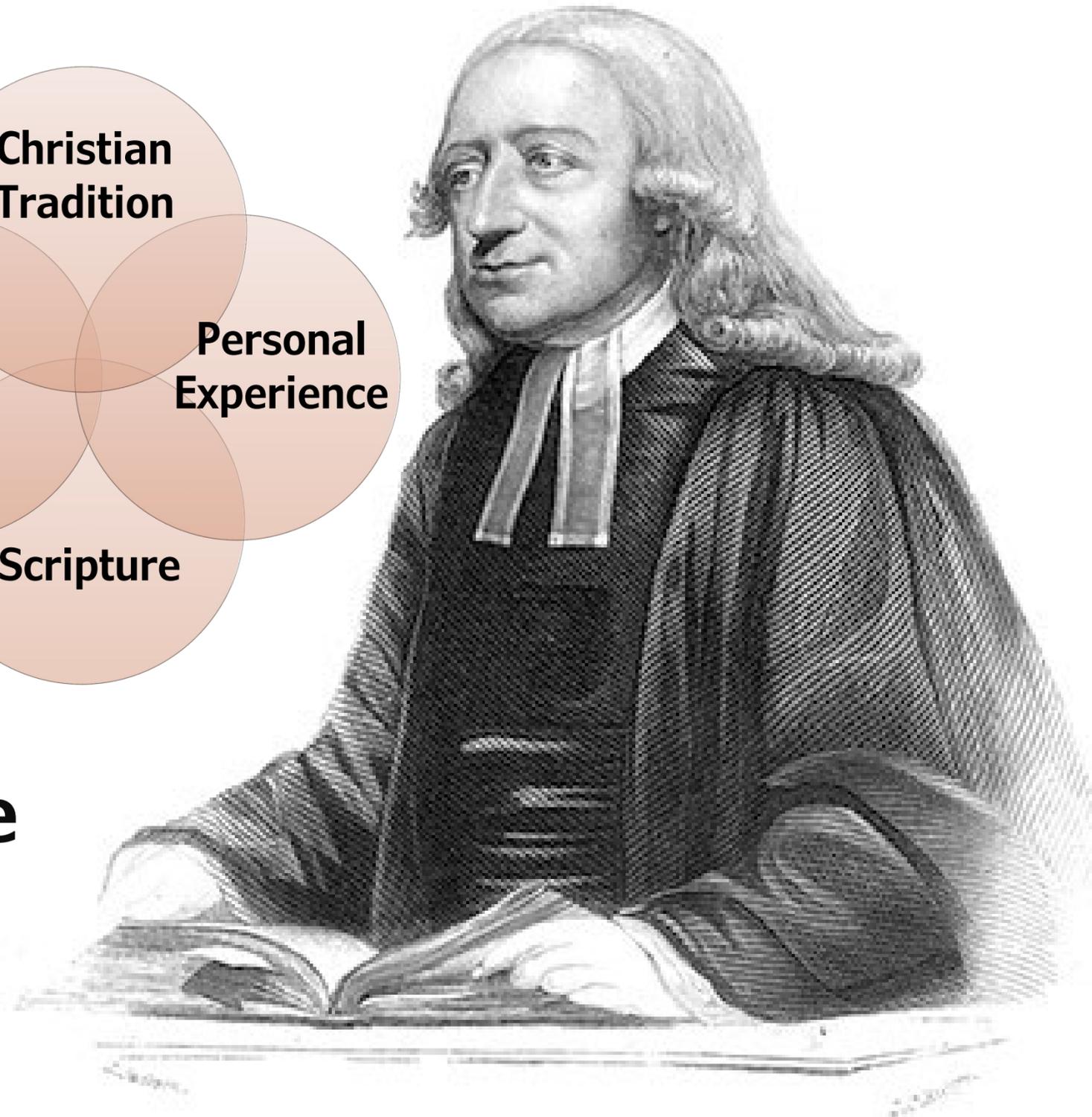
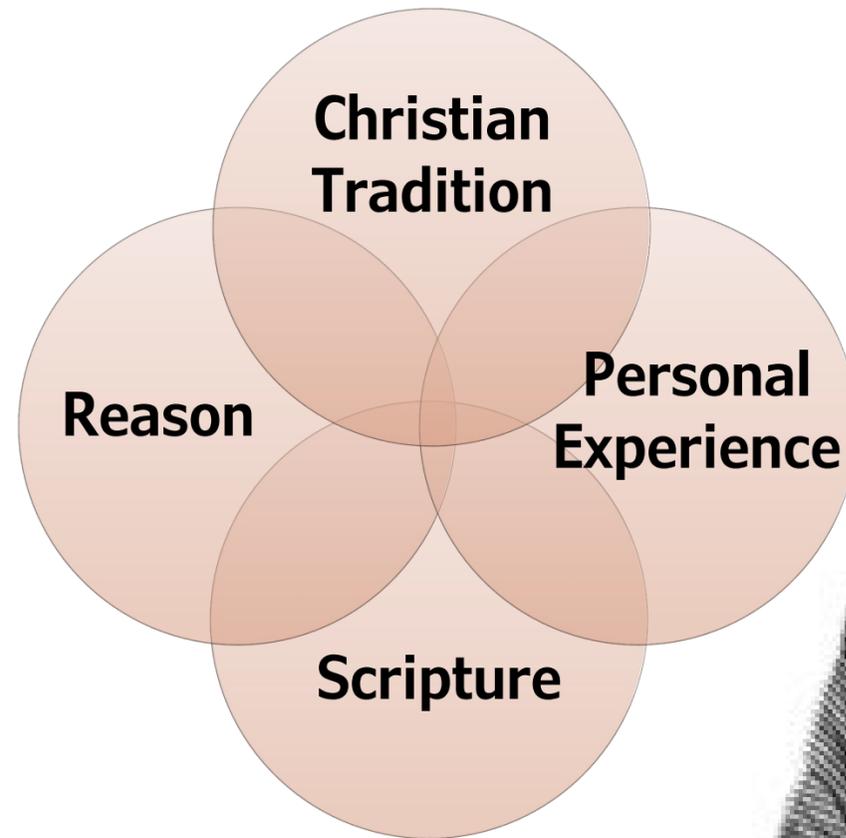
- John Wesley



# Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Wesley believed that the core of the Christian faith is:

- ❖ Revealed in Scripture
- ❖ Illuminated by Tradition
- ❖ Verified in Personal Experience
- ❖ Confirmed by Reason



**Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.**

***-John Wesley***





**Why are  
you  
United  
Methodist?**

# General Conference

## Purpose

- ❖ Elect leaders for general church ministries
- ❖ Adopt a budget
- ❖ Affirm plans for the shared ministry of the global connection
- ❖ Revise the social principles in *The Book of Resolutions*
- ❖ Amend *The Book of Discipline*



# How did we get here?

1972 language added  
to our *Book  
of Discipline* about  
LGBTQ+ exclusion  
has caused deepening  
divisions in our  
denomination for  
multiple General  
Conferences.

# **Three** Major Questions Before the Body

**1**

**Full  
inclusion  
of persons  
who are  
LGBTQ+  
in the life  
of the  
church**

**2**

**Ordination  
of persons  
who are  
LGBTQ+**

**3**

**Clergy  
ability to  
officiate  
same-  
gender  
weddings**

# GC 2019 Passage of the Traditional Plan

- ❖ **Ordination of LGBTQ+ persons not permitted**
- ❖ **Same-gender weddings not permitted**
- ❖ **Penalties escalated**
  - First violation: clergy suspension
  - Second violation: clergy credentials surrendered
  - Just resolution process no longer permitted

# General Conference

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# Where we are right now...

- ❖ **The United Methodist Church continues to do ministry and outreach while at the same time struggling with our internal disagreements about LGBTQ+ inclusion in the life of the church.**
- ❖ **The General Conference is the only body that can make significant changes to the policies of the church.**
- ❖ **The General Conference, due to the pandemic, has been postponed 3 times between 2020 and its new date of 2024.**

# What does this mean for me?

- ❖ **Your relationship to the Virginia Conference and the UMC does not change.**
- ❖ **During this season of waiting, some churches have considered disaffiliating from the UMC.**
  - Churches wishing to exit the denomination may consider disaffiliation.
  - Clergy wishing to withdraw from the denomination may also consider doing so.
  - Decisions of a local church and their clergy are independent of each other, and may be different.

# What does this mean for me?

- ❖ **We want you to have accurate information since we know some churches have talked about this and there is incomplete information online.**
- ❖ **TO BE CLEAR: No one is asking or encouraging you to disaffiliate.**
  - We want you to remain.
  - There is a spiritual home for all people in the UMC.

# If you are curious about disaffiliating...

**Contact your District Superintendent—they will be your partner in this process.**

- ❖ **¶2553 is recommended by the Council of Bishops and supported by the Judicial Council's recent rulings as the preferred process for disaffiliation.**
  - ¶2553 was passed at Special Session of General Conference in 2019.
  - The rationale for disaffiliation under ¶2553 is related to the current impasse regarding human sexuality (see ¶2553 .1)

# If you are curious about disaffiliating...

## ❖ **The ¶2553 disaffiliation process**

- Requires approval by 2/3 majority vote at a church conference
- Requires the approval of the annual conference session

❖ **Other ¶s in the Discipline (¶2549 – closure and ¶2548.2 – withdrawal) have not been commonly used as a process for disaffiliation; the Virginia Annual Conference has used ¶2549 up to now**

# What paragraph will the VAUMC use?

**Following the recommendation of the Council of Bishops, the Bishop, Cabinet, and Conference Trustees have agreed to utilize ¶2553 for all disaffiliations related to human sexuality until it ceases on 12/31/23.**

- ❖ Judicial Council Decision No. 1422 opens the use of this paragraph for local churches whether they agree or disagree with the current Discipline on this matter.**

# What paragraph will the VAUMC use?

- ❖ **Disaffiliation must be ratified by the Annual Conference.**
  - Periodic Called Annual Conferences will be held to ratify disaffiliations through 12/31/23.
- ❖ **For disaffiliations after 12/31/23, a subsequent pathway will be developed and communicated late in 2023.**

# What is the process to disaffiliate?

- ❖ **Contact your District Superintendent to schedule an Information Meeting for your congregation to share details of the process and answer questions.**
- ❖ **Design a 30-day period of prayerful intentional discernment for the congregation to be in alignment with God's purpose for your church.**
- ❖ **Communicate the results of the discernment to the DS.**

# What is the process to disaffiliate?

- ❖ **If proceeding with disaffiliation, the Disaffiliation Agreement will be discussed and finalized with Local Church Trustees (and their attorney) and Conference Trustees (and their attorney).**

# What is the process to disaffiliate?

- ❖ **A Called Church Conference will be held to vote on the agreement.**
  - **All professing members who are present may vote.**
  - **2/3 majority of professing members present is required for disaffiliation.**

# What is the process to disaffiliate?

- ❖ **Legal matters relating to the transfer of all property, real and personal, tangible and intangible, are completed following ratification by the Annual Conference.**

# If I am Clergy, how would I withdraw?

- ❖ **Contact Clergy Excellence and your District Superintendent for details of this process**
- ❖ **Surrender of Annual Conference membership**
- ❖ **Coverage under VAUMC benefit plans cease**
- ❖ **Contact VUMPI about the specifics related to your pension**

# How to remain United Methodist

- ❖ **No vote is needed.**
- ❖ **No formal action is needed by you or your church.**



# Questions for Judicial Council

- ❖ **General Conference status: new or postponed?**
  - Postponed = current delegates serve, current legislation still valid
  - New = elect new delegates, submit new legislation
- ❖ **Can Jurisdictional Conference move forward?**
  - Does the Council of Bishops have the authority to hold a Jurisdictional Conference without the General Conference?
  - Tentatively scheduled for Nov. 2 – 5, 2022
  - Elect new bishops to replace those who have retired
- ❖ **Can an Annual Conference vote to disaffiliate?**
  - ❖ If so, what rules apply?

# Jurisdictional Conferences

- ❖ **Can we hold Jurisdictional Conferences this year?**
  - Yes, for the express purpose of electing and assigning new episcopal leaders in the U.S.
- ❖ **Judicial Council Decision 1445**
  - The Council of Bishops is authorized to hold Jurisdictional Conferences for the limited purpose of effectuating the continuance of an episcopacy under the Constitution.
  - That authority does not extend to changing the Sept. 1 date when church law says newly elected U.S. bishops officially take office.
    - Newly elected bishops could serve on an interim basis.
  - The number of bishops approved for each jurisdiction by the 2016 General Conference remains legally binding.

# Annual Conferences

- ❖ **Can an Annual Conference vote to disaffiliate?**
  - U.S. annual conferences cannot leave the denomination under current church law
- ❖ **Judicial Council Decision 1444**
  - U.S. – “while an annual conference has the reserved right to vote on disaffiliation, the General Conference must first enact enabling legislation to establish the right to withdraw but has not done so for conferences in the United States.”
  - Central Conferences - ¶ 572 applies only to annual conferences outside the United States; it sets the process and requirements for those annual conferences to separate from the UMC

# How to be helpful to your church

- ❖ **Stay focused on the mission of the church:  
Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation  
of the World.**
- ❖ **Continue to highlight the important ministries of your  
local church.**
- ❖ **Share simple, accurate information.**
- ❖ **Build relationships across differences.**

# How to be helpful to your church

- ❖ **Listen: allow multiple perspectives to be shared in an open and transparent process.**
- ❖ **Go slow. Have multiple conversations. Be intentional.**
- ❖ **General Conference 2024 is at a distance and there is work for us to do now.**



# RESILIENT PEOPLE OF GOD

**#BeUMC**

 [UMC.org/PeopleOfGod](https://umc.org/PeopleOfGod)

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# #BeUMC Campaign

Reminds us of who we are  
at our best:

**The resilient, spirit-filled,  
connected, missional,  
faithful, diverse, deeply  
rooted, committed,  
disciple-making,  
Jesus-seeking, generous,  
justice-seeking,  
world-changing  
people of God called  
The United Methodist  
Church.**

# #BeUMC honors the core values that connect the people of The United Methodist Church

- ❖ No matter the challenges we face,  
God is with us
- ❖ We continue to have opportunities  
to make disciples of Jesus Christ  
for the transformation of the world
- ❖ Every day offers a chance to live  
into our mission and to strive to  
#BeUMC



DEEPLY ROOTED  
**PEOPLE  
OF GOD**

#BeUMC

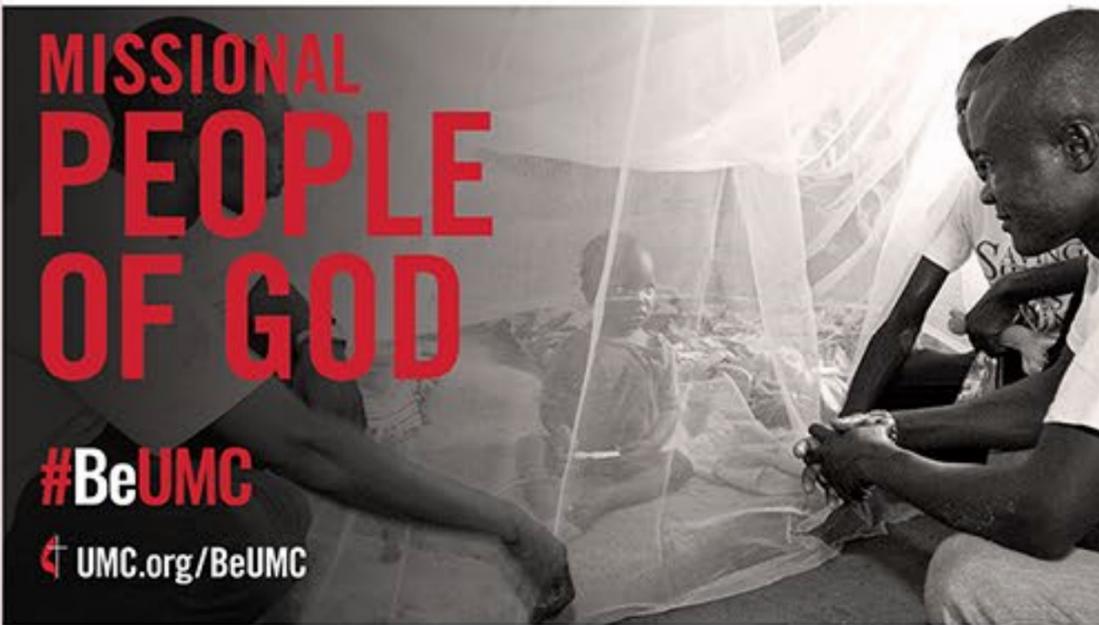
UMC.org/BeUMC



MISSIONAL  
**PEOPLE  
OF GOD**

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How is  
**#BeUMC alive  
in your church?**

DISCIPLE-MAKING  
**PEOPLE  
OF GOD**

#BeUMC

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JUSTICE-SEEKING  
**PEOPLE  
OF GOD**

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# Our Mission

**Make disciples of  
Jesus Christ  
for the  
transformation  
of the world**

# Appendix / Resources

- ❖ **For the latest UMC updates:**
  - **UMC.org**
  - **ResourceUMC.org**
  - **UMnews.org**
- ❖ **For #BeUMC resources: [UMC.org/beumc](https://www.umd.edu/umc/beumc)**
- ❖ **For Wespath resources: [Wespath.org](https://www.wespath.org)**
- ❖ **Contact your district office with additional questions**

# Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation

*Provides a mechanism for groups to “part with a blessing”*

- ❖ **Financial provisions for new Methodist denominations:**
  - **Rules to form a new Methodist denomination include 100 churches who want to align**
  - **Provides \$25 million to be split among new traditionalist denominations**
  - **Provides \$2 million to be split among other new Methodist denominations**
  - **Also includes \$39 million over 2 quadrennia for ministries to Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander Communities and Africa University**

# Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation

- ❖ **Vision for the post-separation UMC**
  - ❖ **“...will repeal the Traditional Plan and remove all other restrictive language related to LGBTQ persons.”**
  - ❖ **“...will strive to be a place where traditional United Methodists can continue to serve.”**

# Christmas Covenant

- ❖ **GOAL: establish regional equity in the structures of the church for missional effectiveness, while sustaining connectional unity**
  - **Written primarily by members in Africa, the Philippines, and Europe**
  - **“We envision a Church that connects globally, engages in mission together, respects contextual ministry settings, celebrates the diversity of God’s creation in its many beautiful expressions, and values mutually empowering relationships in order to strengthen our core mission of evangelism, discipleship, and social witness for the transformation of the world.”**

# Christmas Covenant

- **Transforms Central Conferences into Regional Conferences**
  - **Creates the United States Regional Conference**
  - **Strengthens the ability of Regional Conferences to adapt the *Book of Discipline* to meet the unique missional needs of each region**
- ❖ **Recently endorsed by the Virginia GC delegation**

# UMC 2020 Global Membership

## General Conference Delegates

Based on number of clergy & lay members in each annual conference

