

**Legislation Authorizing the Purchase of the St. James United
Methodist Church, Pine Bluff, Facility from the Methodist Foundation
for Arkansas Utilizing a Portion of the “Connected in Christ
Endowment Fund” Corpus**

Whereas the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church is making a renewed commitment to strengthening the mission and ministry of historically Black churches; and

Whereas St. James United Methodist Church is an historic Black church more than a 150 years old with a legacy of providing outstanding leadership in Arkansas; and

Whereas St. James United Methodist Church experienced a financial crisis during a former pastor’s leadership, which resulted in its inability to service the mortgage held by the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas and its eventual decision to voluntarily deed the property to the Foundation; and

Whereas it is critical that St. James United Methodist Church continue as a vibrant worshipping community in Pine Bluff committed to serving the mission field in new and fruitful ways, and

Whereas there is a significant opportunity for St. James United Methodist Church to jointly venture with the U.A.P.B. Wesley Foundation to enhance its ministry as it develops outstanding young African-American Christian leaders; and

Whereas the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church established the “Connected in Christ Endowment Fund” and authorized utilizing annual earnings from the corpus for the purpose of leadership development; and

Whereas there is a need for educational and leadership development opportunities for laity and clergy in the Delta, with a special emphasis on African-American leadership, that facilitate connections for faithful and fruitful ministry by connecting pastors together in peer learning and conversation, and connecting clergy and lay leadership together to discern God’s calling upon the church; and

Whereas the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas has made a commitment to provide a grant of approximately \$100,000 to repurpose existing space in St. James into a kitchen and dining area that will enable it to far better carry out its vision for missional outreach and leadership development; and

Whereas the Arkansas Conference is at a critical juncture for addressing racism and strengthening Black United Methodist congregations and their leaders;

We therefore move:

- 1) The Arkansas Annual Conference authorizes allocating \$550,000 from the corpus of the “Connected in Christ Endowment Fund” to purchase the facility formerly owned by St. James United Methodist Church from the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, and deed it to the congregation for its use as a place of worship, missional outreach and leadership development; and
- 2) If the current U.A.P.B. Wesley Foundation facility is sold, the proceeds will be utilized for the support of the U.A.P.B. Wesley Foundation campus ministry; and
- 3) The Arkansas Conference will continue to use annual earnings from the “Connected in Christ Endowment Fund” for the purpose of leadership development for laity and clergy in the Arkansas Conference.

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