



# Council of Bishops

## The United Methodist Church



### A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH FROM THE WOMEN BISHOPS

May 7, 2018

Grace and peace! We, the active and retired women bishops of The United Methodist Church, are writing in response to the news release this week, announcing the results of five proposed amendments to our Constitution that were approved at the 2016 General Conference and then sent on to the annual conferences. We are deeply grieved that two of the amendments did not receive the necessary  $\frac{2}{3}$  aggregate vote of all the annual conferences in The United Methodist Church. Both are related to the right of girls, women, and other vulnerable groups to full access to a meaningful life.

Amendment #1, which added language that both men and women are made in the image of God and that we will confront and seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, received an aggregate vote of 66.5%, falling short of the necessary  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority by .2 % (less than 100 votes).

Amendment #2, which added this language, "... nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition," received an aggregate vote of 61.3%, again falling short of a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote. The complete language of these two amendments is found below.

Like Rachel weeping for her children, so we as episcopal leaders weep for our church. We weep for the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual harm that is inflicted upon women and girls because of this action. We weep for those who are denied the ability to use their gifts to make a difference in the world. We also weep for those who are not protected from exclusion in the church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition.

We see you. We weep with you. We seek your healing. We work for the healing of our church. We strive for a church and world that honors every person as a beloved child of God, made in the image of our Creator.

The women of the Council of Bishops recognize that we have much work to do as leaders to foster inclusion in The United Methodist Church. At the same time

as we lament the devaluation of and discrimination against many groups of people in our world, we renew our commitment as United Methodist women bishops to ensure that all people are treated with respect, compassion, and grace and that all doors of opportunity and leadership are open to them. We pledge to model healthy relationships ourselves and are committed to researching why these amendments failed and what actions we can take to create a world where all people are able to live in safety, justice, and love.

This pastoral letter has been unanimously affirmed by the entire Council of Bishops. We invite you to join us in the journey of bringing God's shalom to all corners of The United Methodist Church and our world.

----

### **Proposed Constitutional Amendment – I**

On May 16, 2016, at a session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church held in Portland, Oregon, the following Constitutional Amendment was adopted by a recorded vote of 746 Yes, 56 No (Calendar Item 121, DCA p. 2106).

**In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division One, add a new paragraph between current ¶¶ 5 and 6: As the Holy Scripture reveals, both men and women are made in the image of God and, therefore, men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God. The United Methodist Church recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female, as maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies and cultures, not characteristics of the divine. The United Methodist Church acknowledges the long history of discrimination against women and girls. The United Methodist Church shall confront and seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large. The United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten the cause of women's and girl's equality and well-being. If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, this would become the new ¶6, and the current ¶¶ 6-61 would be renumbered as ¶¶ 7-62.**

### **Proposed Constitutional Amendment – II**

On May 20, 2016, at a session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church held in Portland, Oregon, the following Constitutional Amendment was adopted by a recorded vote of 509 Yes, 242 No (Calendar Item 429, DCA p. 2212).

In the 2012 Book of Discipline, Division One, ¶4, Article IV, amend by deletion and addition as follows: After “all persons” delete “without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition”. After “because of race, color, national origin,” delete “status,” and add “ability”. At the end of the paragraph, add “nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition.” Page 2 of 4 If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, ¶ 4 would read: **The United Methodist Church is part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In the United Methodist church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, ability, or economic condition, nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition.**

Signed by the female bishops  
Council of Bishops

###

**Media Contact:** *Rev. Dr. Maidstone Mulenga*  
*Director of Communications – Council of Bishops*  
*The United Methodist Church*  
[mmulenga@umc-cob.org](mailto:mmulenga@umc-cob.org)  
202-748-5172