



## RENEWAL & REFORM COALITION

*A HOPE AND A FUTURE THROUGH OUR WESLEYAN HERITAGE*

Dear Bishops,

God's grace and peace to you and yours.

We honor you as the duly elected spiritual and temporal leaders of The United Methodist Church and count it a privilege to share with you some carefully considered perceptions about our church's future.

The annual conferences of our church have recently spoken decisively through their votes on the 32 proposed constitutional amendments. Though most of these proposed amendments were endorsed by the Connectional Table, and all were approved by at least two-thirds of the 2008 General Conference, rank-and-file United Methodists through their annual conferences have apparently rejected most of them by wide margins. The people of the church are clearly calling their leaders to reconsider the direction proposed by most of the constitutional amendments.

More specifically, the reorganizational plan that the 23 Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church (WWN-UMC) amendments would have set in motion, has apparently been decisively overturned.

We are convinced that United Methodism's most pressing problem is not her organization. Our denomination's decline for over forty years is not the result of faulty organization. Indeed, if we focus attention and resources on reorganization, we will miss a precious opportunity to address the main problem in our church.

The main problem facing The United Methodist Church is spiritual and theological in nature. Over the last forty years, our church has drifted from the foundational truth of Biblical authority and Wesleyan doctrine. Significant portions of the church no longer believe that Scripture, well interpreted by the church, is "the true rule and guide for faith and practice" (The Confession of Faith, Article IV). A considerable minority in Methodism no longer believes that all persons, in their natural condition, are sinners in need of salvation. Some even disagree that Jesus' death on the cross was an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. Indeed, there is no general agreement in our church about what the Gospel is. Seldom do our clergy and other leaders teach the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith. Because our church lacks consensus about our message and its accompanying mission, we are a drifting, declining denomination.

We in the renewal movements take seriously John Wesley's warning that Methodism would surely become a dead sect unless it "hold[s] fast to the doctrine, spirit, and discipline" with which it began.

Only the Triune God—not reorganization—can renew The United Methodist Church. We are convinced you can help lead us into the proclamation, pedagogy, and practices that God can and will anoint with His Holy Spirit. We respectfully ask you to consider implementing the following initiatives.

- Call our entire denomination to acknowledge that we have failed to be an obedient church and to focus on II Chronicles 7:14 in a time of repentance and rededication to God.
- Lead and equip the church in a strengthened and energized prayer ministry, encouraging local congregations to engage in ongoing prayer for renewal and revival, for the needs of specific individuals and for the church's ministries, local and worldwide.
- Teach the clergy at least annually the truth of the church's faith as outlined in the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith, and challenge the clergy to do the same in their respective charges.
- On a regular basis preach doctrinal and evangelistic sermons which demonstrate how to invite hearers into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and His Church.
- We observe with sadness that last year in 43 percent of our local churches, not a single person joined by profession of faith. We urge the bishops and district superintendents to meet with the pastors and lay leaders of those churches and offer instruction in how to lead people into a personal relationship with Christ and how to foster a congregational climate of spiritual growth and evangelism.

Finally, we acknowledge that from time to time circumstances require a reorganization of the church's structure in order to make it more effective at fulfilling its mission. We appreciate and look forward to the opportunity to have input into the study commission's work. In that vein, we believe the following points are essential for creating a structure that is both helpful and has the broad based support of the church's people.

- Any restructuring plan should derive from the church's mission statement. It should make clear how its proposals will actually fulfill the mission statement and foster more effective transformational disciple-making.
- Any restructuring plan should assist and advance the proclamation of the Gospel around the world.
- The church's leadership must patiently leverage all the resources at its disposal to engage rank-and-file United Methodists in the development of any restructuring plan, including on-site meetings with United Methodists in several parts of Africa, as well as Europe, the Philippines, and other affected areas.
- Any restructuring plan should strengthen the connection between United Methodists in different regions of the world, rather than weakening it. It ought not to allow some regions of the church to foster moral positions or teachings that are at odds with those in other regions of the church.
- Any restructuring plan must not add to the administrative costs or bureaucratic structure of the church.
- And if a plan is developed, it is incumbent upon the church's leadership to share it widely with rank-and-file United Methodists, including those in the central conferences, before bringing it to General Conference for a vote and before any vote to ratify proposed constitutional amendments.

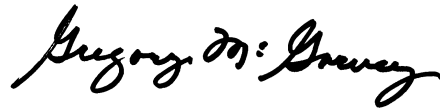
We share these perceptions with you and offer these initiatives and ideas for your consideration with profound respect and hope. In no less than two months, we plan to share this letter with our constituents, as we are speaking on their behalf, and they share our concerns and awareness of the problems facing our church. But first, we want to give you ample time to respond, individually and/or as a Council. Please know we are praying for the entire Council as you lead our beloved United Methodist Church in these challenging days.

In Christ,

### **The Confessing Movement within The United Methodist Church**



Sen. Patricia Miller, Executive Director



Rev. Greg McGarvey, Board Chair

### **Good News**

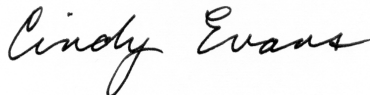


Rev. Rob Renfroe, President and Publisher



Rev. Chuck Ferrara, Board Chair

### **Lifewatch**



Cindy Evans, Administrator

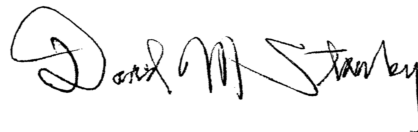


Rev. Paul Stallsworth, President

### **UMAction**

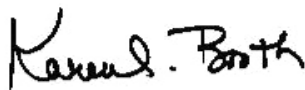


Mark Tooley, President



David Stanley, Board Chair

### **Transforming Congregations**



Rev. Karen Booth, Director