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Group Covenant

We commit that our dialogue with each other will reflect the spirit of the Scriptures, where our posture toward each other is to be “... *quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*” (James 1:19).

We believe that each of us, and our fellow church participants, are created in the image of God. The respect we owe to God should be reflected in the honor and respect we show to each other, particularly in how we speak to each other. ***“With it (the tongue) we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God ... this ought not to be so”*** (James 3:9, 10).

We pledge that when we disagree, we will do so respectfully, without impugning the other's motives, attacking the other's character, or questioning the other's faith, and recognize, in humility, our limited human opinions, "***We see but a poor reflection as in a mirror***" (I Corinthians 13:12). We will therefore "***be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love***" (Ephesians 4:2).

We will be mindful of the language we use in expressing our disagreements, being neither arrogant nor boastful in our beliefs: ***“Before destruction one’s heart is haughty, but humility goes before honor”*** (Proverbs 18:12).

We will recognize that we cannot function together as participants in Matthews United Methodist Church unless we are mindful of how we treat each other in pursuit of the common good in the common life we share together. Each of us must therefore ***“put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his or her neighbor, for we are all members of one body”*** (Ephesians 4:25).

We will commit to pray for ... those with whom we may agree, as well as those with whom we may disagree. ***“I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made ... for ... all who are in high positions”*** (I Timothy 2:1-2). We believe that it is more difficult to think badly of people when we are praying for them. Together, we will strive to be faithful witnesses to our Lord, who prayed ***“that they may be one”*** (John 17:22).

We pledge to God and to each other that we will lead by example in a world where civil discourse seems to have broken down. We pledge to model a better way in how we treat each other. ***We commit to create in Matthews United Methodist Church, a safe and sacred space for common prayer and discussion as we come together to discern God's will for our church.***

The United Methodist Church came from the Episcopal/Anglican Tradition



John Wesley
1703-1791

Anglican Priest

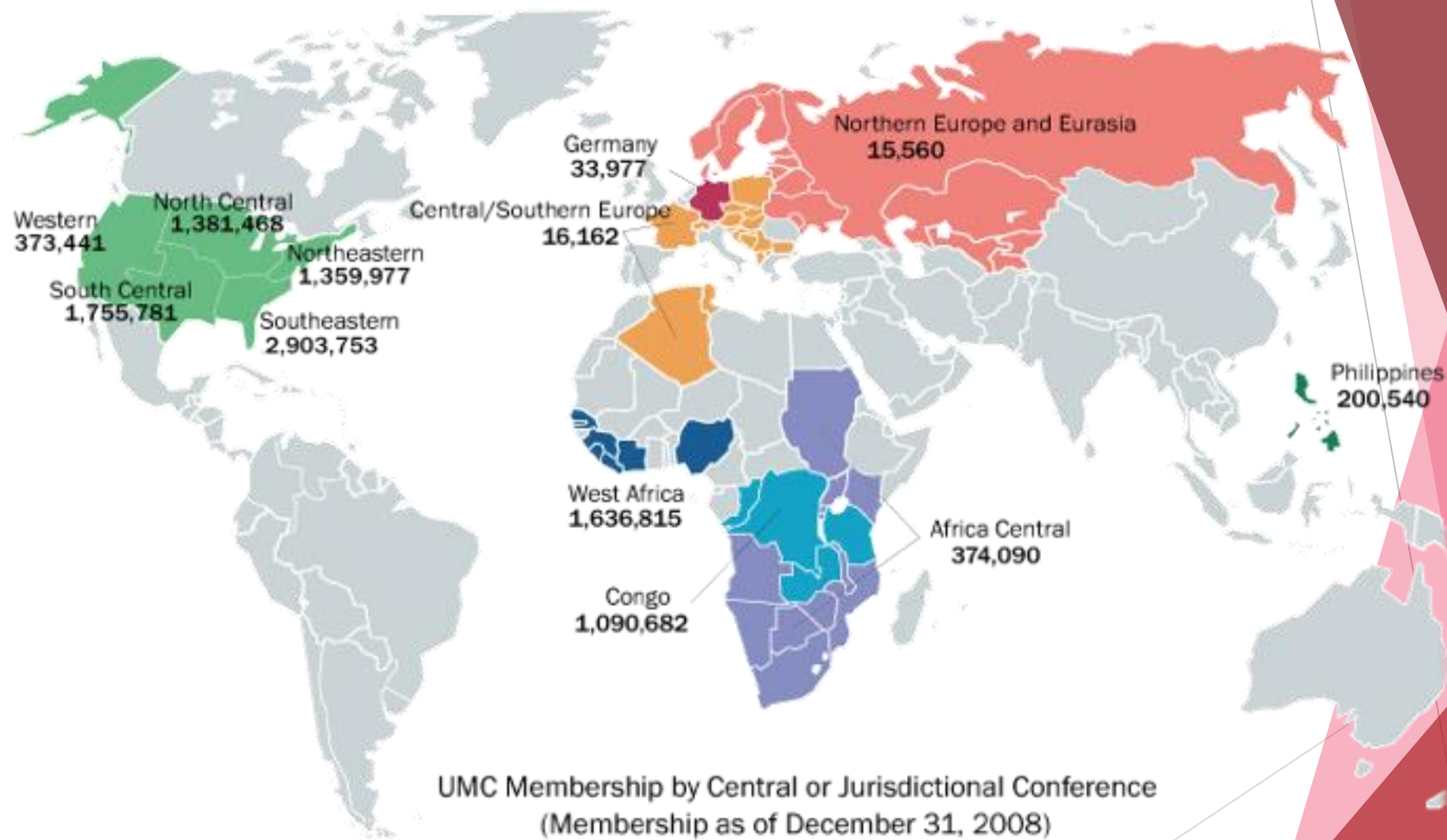
*At the Holy Club at Oxford
they were labeled "Methodists"*



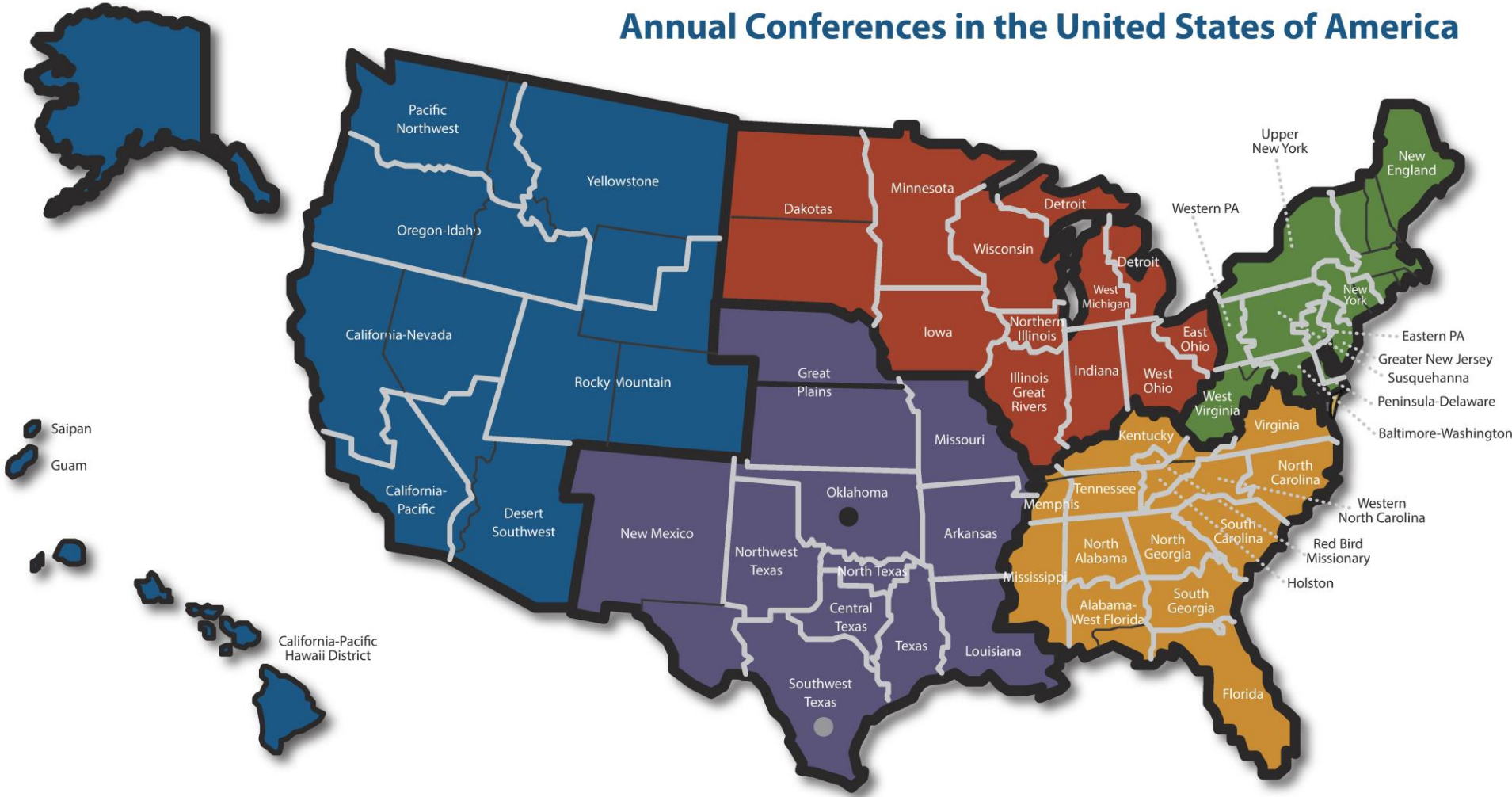
The People called "Methodist"


Evangelical Experience, Disciplined Faith Development,
Connectional Ministry


United Methodists Around the World





United Methodist Jurisdictions and Annual Conferences in the United States of America





 Jurisdiction Boundaries


 Conference Boundaries


 State Boundaries


 North Central Jurisdiction


 Northeastern Jurisdiction

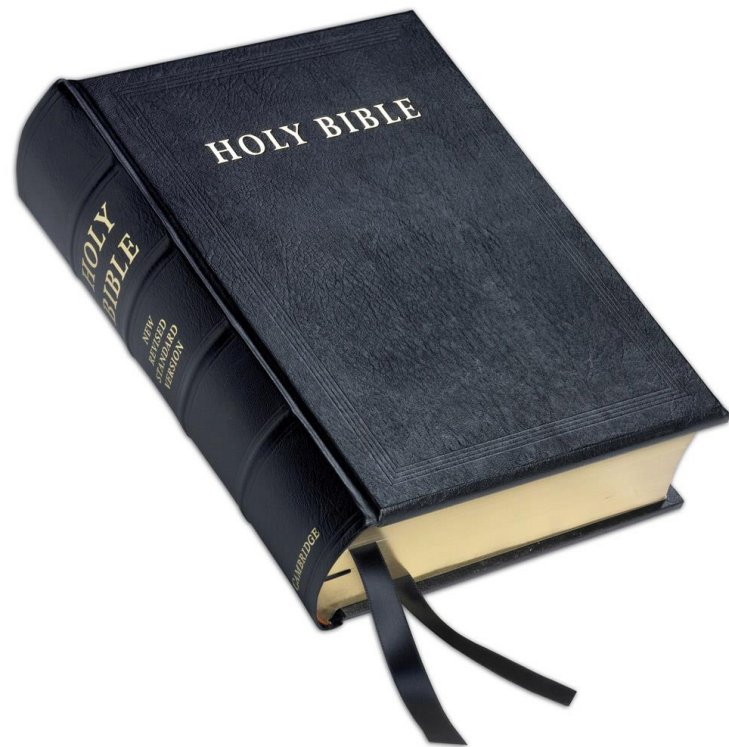
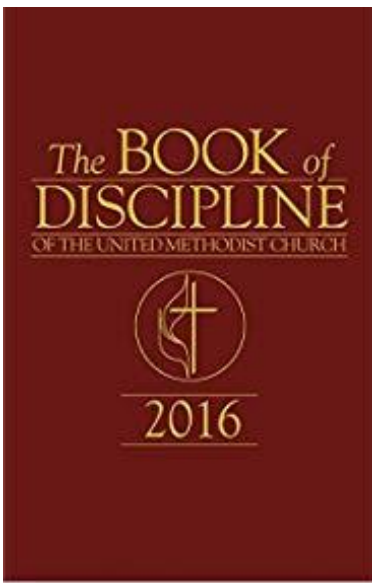
 South Central Jurisdiction

 Southeastern Jurisdiction

 Western Jurisdiction

 Rio Grande Annual conference is comprised of Spanish-Language United Methodist Congregations in the states of Texas and New Mexico.

 Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference is comprised of Native American Congregations of Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.



What is your understanding of being a connectional church? What does being connectional have to do with unity?

2016 General Conference



“Bishops, you are our leaders. We need your help.”

(May 17, 2016)

Commission on a Way Forward



Commission on a Way Forward

Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

An Offering For A Way Forward

- ▶ Deep commitment to unity
- ▶ Lead the UMC in a “pause for prayer”
- ▶ Next steps:
 - ▶ The General Conference defers all votes on human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special Commission, named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality.
 - ▶ We will name such a Commission to include persons from every region of our UMC, and will include representation from differing perspectives on the debate.
 - ▶ Bishops will maintain an on-going dialogue with this Commission as they do their work.
 - ▶ Should the Commission complete their work in time for a called General Conference, call a two- to three- day gathering before the 2020 General Conference.

¶161F) *Human Sexuality*— We affirm that **sexuality is God's good gift to all persons**. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, **sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage**.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. **All persons**, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, **are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence**. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

We affirm that **all persons are individuals of sacred worth**, created in the image of God. **All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment**, as well as the **spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self.**

The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. **We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.** We commit ourselves to be **in ministry for and with all persons.**

- ¶304.3 Self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
- ¶341.6 Homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.
- ¶613.19 No annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of the UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.”

- ¶2702.1 A bishop, clergy members of an annual conference, local pastor on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged with ... (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies

The Commission on a Way Forward

- 32 members – 8 bishops, 11 laity, 11 elders and 2 deacons
- A Professional facilitator was been employed by the Council of Bishops to design and guide the Commission's work.
- Bishops Ken Carter, Sandra Steiner Ball and David Yembe were selected to serve as a moderator team.
- Commission's mission was to “bring together persons deeply committed to the future(s) of The United Methodist Church, with an openness to developing new relationships with each other and exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional, and central conference actions.”
- Full Council of Bishops have called for a special session of the General Conference February 23-26, 2019.

The Commission on a Way Forward Members





FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS

OUR CHARGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

MISSION:

“Exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional, and central conference actions.”

VISION:

“Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible.”

SCOPE:

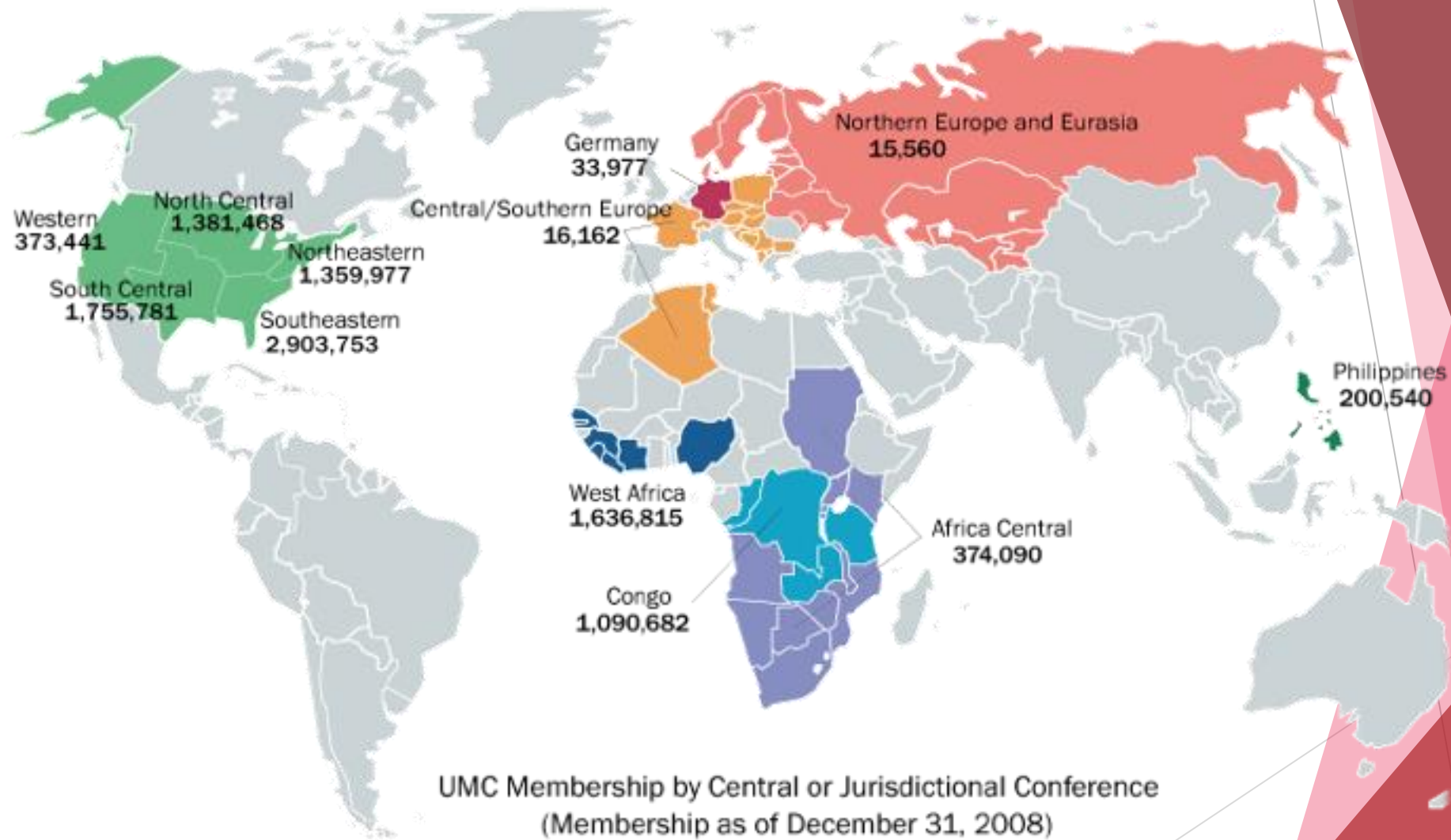
“Be open to new ways of embodying unity that moves us beyond where we are in the present impasse and cycle of action and reaction around ministry and human sexuality. Give consideration to greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present connectionality.”

Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible

Allow for as much contextual differentiation as possible

Balance an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible

United Methodists Around the World





AN INVITATION TO PRAYER

▶ Foundational Scriptures

John 15: 1-7 ~ Acts 2 ~ Colossians 1



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES:

THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

BEING LED TO A WAY FORWARD

- ❖ PRAYER: We pray together during the days we meet and covenant to pray for each other when apart.
- ❖ STUDY: We study the Bible together.
- ❖ LISTEN: We hear each other's testimonies.
- ❖ WORSHIP: We have spent time in worship.
- ❖ HOLY CONFERENCING: We engage in Christian conversation throughout our meetings.
- ❖ COVENANT: We have a covenant that creates a Spirit-led structure for mutual accountability.

Covenant

We will carefully listen to one another.

We will be careful not to judge one another.

We are not here to change one another's positions. (Speak to be understood, not to convince)

We will ask questions.



Commission on a Way Forward
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Covenant

We will speak our truth in love.

We will assume trust not suspicion.

We will protect the confidentiality
of the conversation.

Let everyone participate, no one
dominate, allow every voice to be
heard.



Commission on a Way Forward
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Video:
Gil Rendle, a parable for today.

As we discuss the level of inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the United Methodist Church, why is it important that we listen for the interests of people over and above the positions we hold?

The Principles of a Way Forward



- ✦ Fruitfulness in Mission is First
- ✦ Multiplying Wesleyan Witness
- ✦ Operating out of a “Heart of Peace”
- ✦ Allow for Contextualization of Structure
- ✦ Creating “Space”
- ✦ Simplicity of Proposal
- ✦ Resolution of Impasse
- ✦ Working with the Council of Bishops to prepare for General Conference

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER BY THE AUTHORS OF
Leadership and Self-Deception

THE ANATOMY OF PEACE



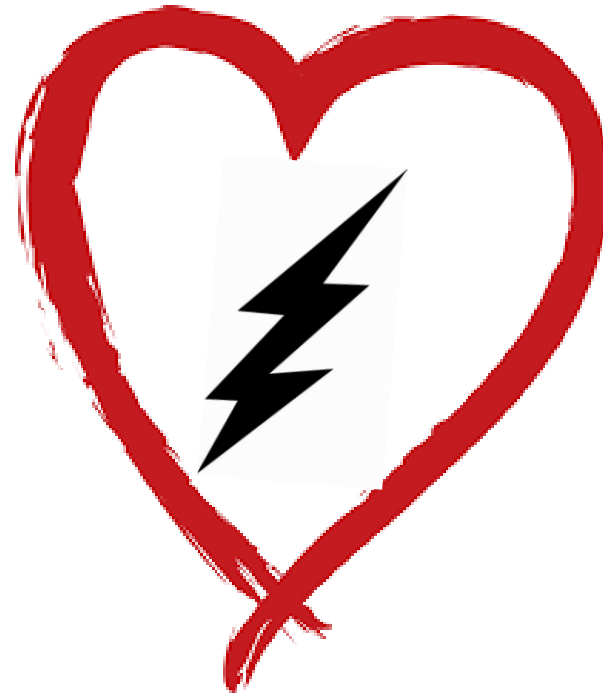
resolving the heart
of conflict



The Arbinger Institute



Heart at Peace



Heart at War

Choice

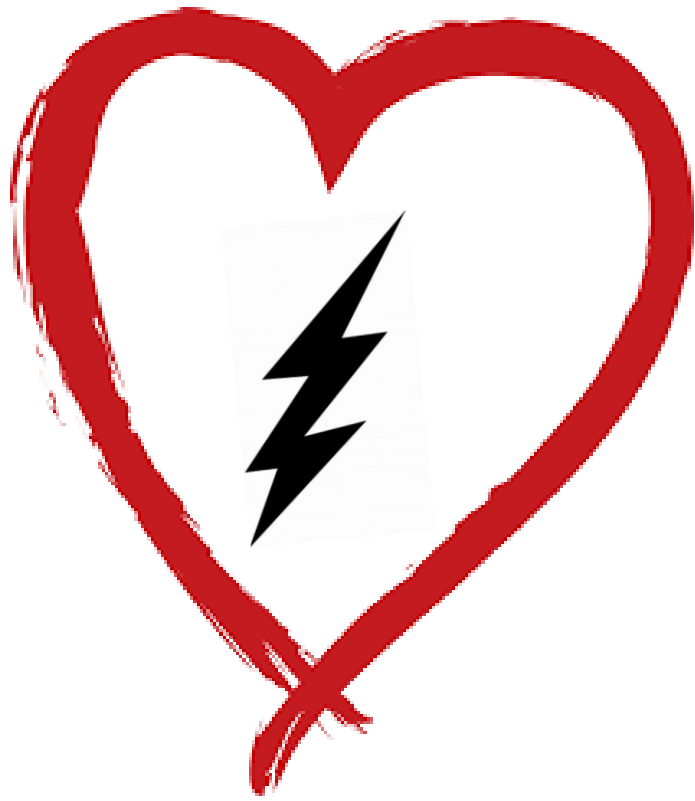


Persons

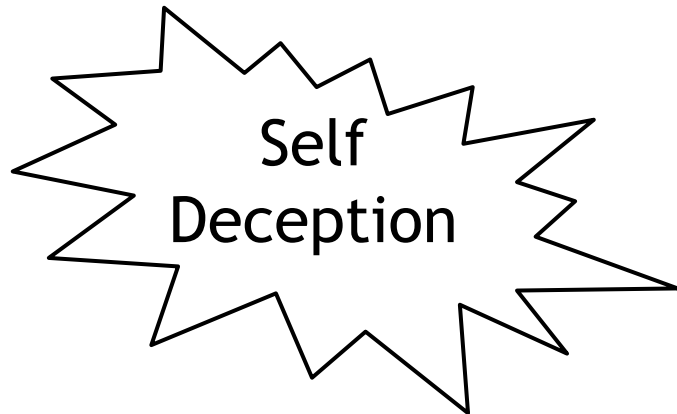
See Others



Objects



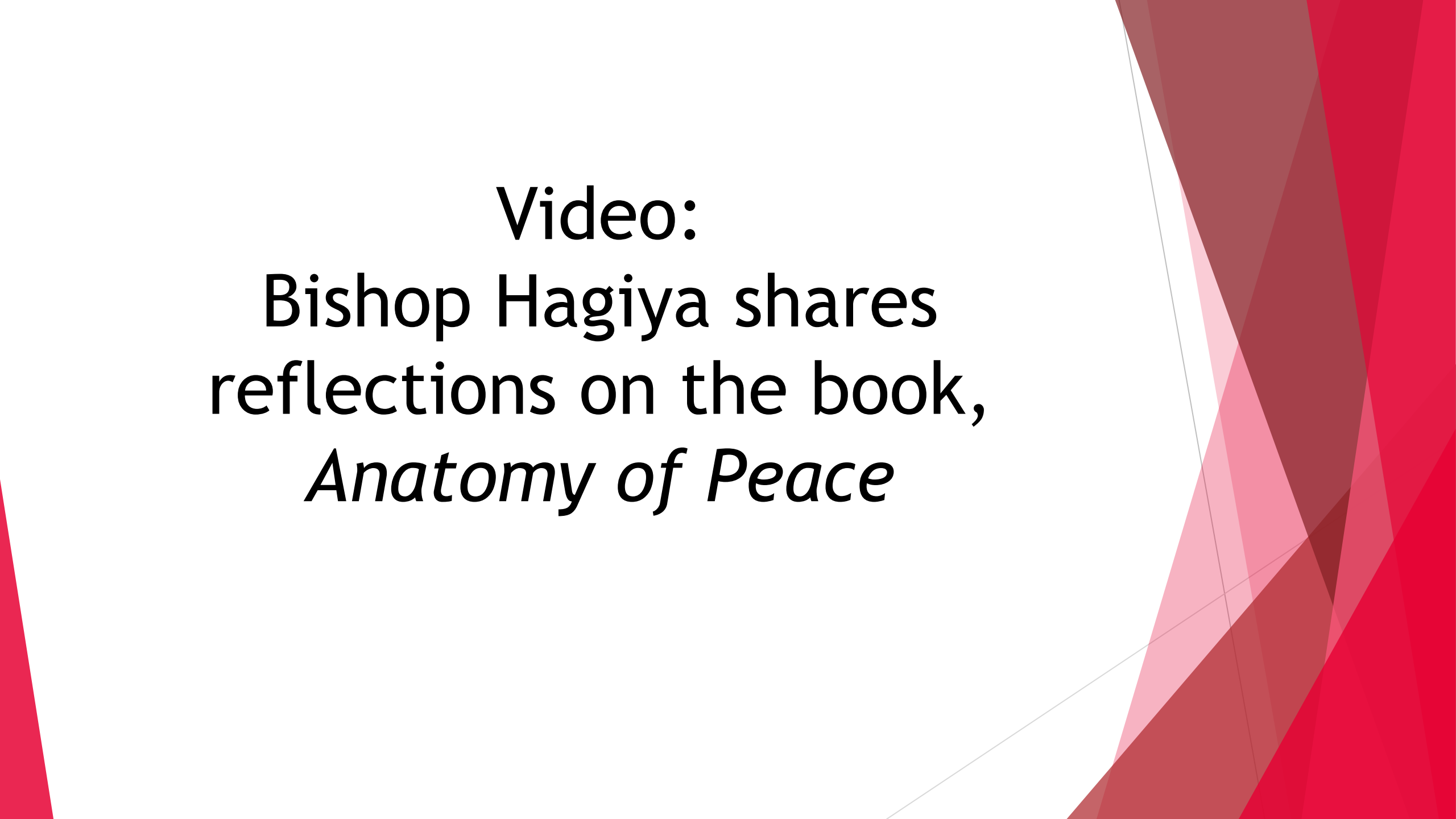
Heart at War



Better-Than	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superior• Important• Virtuous/Right
Worse-Than	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not as good• Broken/Deficient• Inevitable
I - Deserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meritorious• Mistreated/Victim• Unappreciated
Must-Be-Seen-As	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to be thought well of• Fake

Share an example of when you've operated out of one of these 4 mental boxes.

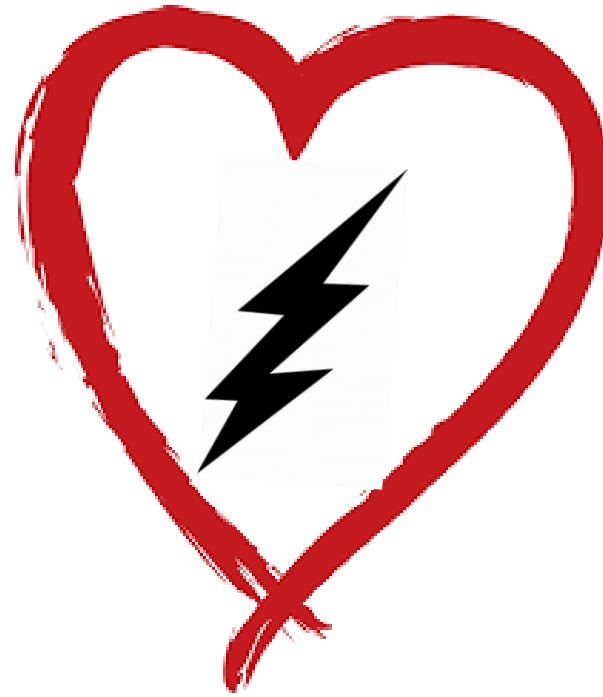
Share an example of when an organization you've been a part of have operated out of these 4 boxes.



Video:
Bishop Hagiya shares
reflections on the book,
Anatomy of Peace



Heart at Peace



Heart at War

Choice



Persons

See Others



Objects

What Connects Us Now: Our Common Core

Jesus is the Vine: We are the Branches

The Apostle's 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 Wesleyan Hymns

Small Group Accountability and Support
(Class and Band Meetings)



A Connectional Way of Life that includes Superintendency, Itineracy, and Conferencing

WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

LEARNINGS ABOUT CONTEXTUALIZATION

- ✦ The way forward cannot be an extension of our path of conflict
- ✦ We need to escape our own assumptions about structure and polity
- ✦ When you give people freedom, you get incredible creativity



Commission on a Way Forward

Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

OUR GLOBAL CONTEXT

- ✦ Concerns and goals related to human sexuality vary widely across the globe.
- ✦ The landscape in our Central Conferences is very different from the U.S. landscape.
- ✦ Conferences are not of one mind on ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons.
- ✦ The global context is complex due to cultural, civic, and legal restrictions and freedoms that differ.
- ✦ Some changes within the U.S. church may pose a potential threat to the vital mission of our Central Conferences.
- ✦ Understanding and honoring the nuances of each central conference is critical.

What is a way forward
that would maximize the
presence of a United
Methodist witness in as
many places in the world
as possible

Three Plans

1. Traditional/Traditionalist

2. One Church

3. Connectional Conference



Western North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church

For the resources used tonight as well
as additional information go to:

<https://www.wnccumc.org>
*click on **Commission On A Way
Forward Resources***

A Prayer for The United Methodist Church and The Commission on A Way Forward

Gracious God, you are the source of all life and giver of all good and perfect gifts. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, and with your Holy Spirit, you have drawn us together to be your church, to be a witness to the world of your glory, to reflect your love, and to convey your grace. We thank you especially for The United Methodist Church, and its ongoing commitment to both social holiness and vital piety.

We remember that your desire is for us to be in relationships with one another that are life giving and soul renewing. Yet, we have allowed our kinship to others to be defined more by our differences than by our commonalities. Forgive us, O God, for our thinking, conditioned in us by a culture beset by winners and losers. Show us the way of love, which is the only way that saves and the only basis for relationships in your kingdom.

O God, we pray for your church. We pray for those who have been marginalized by Christians on the basis of their sexual orientation. We pray for a return to Biblical literacy as a standard for discipleship. We pray for a renewal of the church's witness, that it may not be governed by culture, but a transformer of it. We pray for the people called Methodist, that as your Spirit guides each of us toward perfection in love, we might move closer to holiness in heart and life.

Over the days ahead, illuminate my heart through prayer, and guide me in praying for those who will be a part of the General Conference in 2019. And show me how I might make your love real in ways that **reach, teach, praise and serve** ... both significant and small, for the sake of your kingdom.

Amen.

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