



Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



For Immediate Release
May 9, 2019

Bishops offer pastoral word; make key decisions at May 2019 meeting

CHICAGO – (May 09, 2019) The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church completed its May 2019 meeting held outside Chicago with a pastoral and prophetic word in response to the decisions of the Special Session and the codification of some of those decisions in the *Book of Discipline*.

“Bishops are not judges or legislators. Bishops are preachers, teachers, shepherds, mediators, and missional strategists who appoint clergy and lead annual conferences to make disciples for the transformation of the world,” the statement said. “We offer this reflection as an expression of our pastoral and prophetic witness. The prophetic gift to our church calls for a confession of the harm that has been done, an acknowledgement of grief and support of a vision of God’s promise to do a new thing (Isaiah 43).”

[Click here to read the full statement, titled “A Common Word from the Council of Bishops”](#)

During the May 4-9 meeting, the bishops’ conversation was focused on the following questions:

- How can we place hope at the center of our life and work?
- What models, plans and conversations are taking place and how can we accompany them?
- How can we be honest and transparent about our participation in these conversations?
- Where do we see leadership in our annual conferences, and how are we leading?
- Where is the pain in our residential areas?
- What is the core of the gospel that we share?
- How can the Mission, Vision and Scope of the Way Forward continue to serve as a prophetic challenge for us?

The bishops prayed, met in covenant groups, received Holy Communion, experienced examen in the Ignatian tradition, and renewed their baptismal vows.

The bishops of the UMC took the following actions during their meeting:

- **Clarification on Special Session’s decisions:** The bishops voted to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council as to the constitutionality and the meaning, application and effect of certain legislation enacted by the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference in February this year. This request will be sent to the Judicial Council before the July 15th deadline.
- **Investigations into allegations of voter irregularities:** The bishops received an update on the request from the Executive Committee to the Commission on the General Conference about an independent investigation into voter irregularities.

- **Formation of a Servant Listening Team:** The bishops named a Servant Listening Team that will accompany conversations across the church about future models of structural unity and differentiation across the connection. The team will be convened by Bishop Carter and Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey. The other members of the team are Bishop Rudy Juan, Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Bishop Bill McAlilly, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Bishop Bruce Ough, Bishop Harald Rückert, Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, Bishop James Swanson and Bishop John Yambasu.
- **Standing Committee on U.S. Matters:** The Bishops approved a motion to collaborate with the Connectional Table on proposed legislation to General Conference 2020 for the formation of a Standing Committee on U.S. Matters, comparable to the existing Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters.
- **Resolution for full communion with Episcopal Church:** The bishops have authorized the submission of legislation to General Conference 2020 to enact a full communion relationship between The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church.
- **Immigration efforts:** The bishops called for UMCOR to continue to support United Methodist efforts to address the humanitarian needs of migrants around the world with special attention to the efforts of the episcopal areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Connectional Table and the General Council on Finance and Administration were asked to authorize a Sunday in 2020 for the promotion of the Advance for Global Migration (#3022144) in consultation with the Council of Bishops Immigration Task Force.

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