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United Methodist Women Vows to Work Across Difference, Create Inclusive Spaces for All



At a gathering of delegates before General Conference 2019

Feb. 27, 2019, St. Louis, Mo.—As the United Methodist Church concluded its three-day, special session of the General Conference, United Methodist Women vowed to work across differences in the furtherance of mission on behalf of women, children and youth.

United Methodist Women CEO Harriett Jane Olson, issued the following statement:

“The Traditional Plan adopted by General Conference invites clergy, bishops and congregations who do not support the church’s stand regarding LGBTQIA persons to leave the denomination and form another expression of Methodism. However, while our

membership has many opinions about the matters considered at General Conference, United Methodist Women stands together, committed to serving women, children and youth. Part of the United Methodist Women Purpose is to be a creative supportive fellowship, and that's what we intend to do.

“For United Methodist Women, commitment to the Purpose and prayer are the only litmus tests for determining who can belong, who can serve and who can devote themselves to mission. Our differences make us stronger. We continue to be open to any woman who chooses to commit to our Purpose and mission.

“The Special General Conference was difficult for all—even the Traditional Plan adopted may not be enforceable—but LGBTQIA sisters and brothers bear the brunt of the pain. United Methodist Women will continue to pray for our beloved church and stand in solidarity with all those who are in pain.

“United Methodist Women will continue our focus on mission, living out our Christian discipleship together, and addressing the needs of women, children and youth.”

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For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Ephesians 2: 14-16)

To the People Called United Methodist of the Mountain Sky Conference:

We are called to love as Jesus loved — love God and love neighbor. Abiding by these two commandments, we as United Methodists become a beacon of hope to those who are walking in a broken world.

It was not the best week for the evangelical witness of United Methodism. The wide divide of our church regarding the role of LGBTQ persons in the life of the church was played out on a global stage. Unfortunately, what we know to be true of our local churches — that we sit in the same pews with people whom we disagree with, and yet have found our unity in Christ through mutual love and commitment to mission — was missing in the debates of St. Louis. We instead experienced the reinforcement of human walls within the Body of Christ rather than leaning into the power of Christ, which has the power to

break down our walls through the unifying power of love. Instead of reconciliation, we experienced estrangement from one another as we failed to keep our eyes on Jesus and our hearts focused on the mission and ministry to which He calls.

We cry a psalm of lament at our corporate sin, but we know that while “weeping may last through the night, joy comes in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5). As your episcopal leader, lay leaders, superintendents and delegates, we call the clergy and laity of our conference to hold fast to the commitment we have as the Body of Christ. We have learned that we see the image of God in every human face. We have been blessed by the enthusiasm of our youth and the wisdom of our elders. Our discipleship is enriched by the theological gifts of conservatives, centrists and progressives. We have found our common life blessed by different cultures. And we have been ably led by the many people — heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender — whom God has called and set aside for a particular ministry.

The joy and oneness we feel by participating in the Body of Christ overcomes any walls that have been created. We will continue to support our ministries, pastors, and lay leaders across the theological and geographic differences that exist in our region. We are truly better together than apart.

We will continue to let our love of God and neighbor guide us. This will ground us as we seek to strengthen our local churches for vital ministries and equip and empower lay and clergy leaders, so that our churches can continue to be mission outposts, offering the life-saving, life-changing love of Christ in tangible ways.

Bishop Karen P. Oliveto

Gayla Jo Slauson, Co-Lay Leader

Margaret Hotze, Co-Lay Leader and delegate to General Conference

Don McCammon, Co-Lay Leader and delegate to General Conference

Rev. Jeff Rainwater, Dean of the Cabinet, Wyoming District Superintendent

Rev. Jan Witman, Montana West District Superintendent

Rev. Margaret Gillikin, Trinity District Superintendent

Rev. Paul Kottke, Mile High Metro District Superintendent



Rev. Tezenlo Thong, Peaks/Pikes Peak District Superintendent
Rev. Marv Vose, Utah/Western Colorado District Superintendent
Rev. Deborah Christine, Montana East District Superintendent
Rev. Amy Gearhart, Senior Executive for Transition and Conference Culture
Rev. Youngsook Kang, Director of Connectional Ministries/Superintendent for Leadership Development
Rev. Tyler Amundson, clergy delegate, Yellowstone Legacy Conference
Rev. Kent Ingram, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Megan Armstrong, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Bradley Laurvick, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Doug Palmer, laity delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Kunle Taiwo, laity delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Harvey Tukutau, laity delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Jeremy Scott, clergy delegate, Yellowstone Legacy Conference
Peg Plimpton, laity delegate, Yellowstone Legacy Conference
Rev. Jessica Rooks, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Cathie Kelsey, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Skip Strickland, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Rev. Elizabeth McVicker, clergy delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference
Laurie Day, laity delegate, Rocky Mountain Legacy Conference