

RESOLUTION URGING FAIR & GRACIOUS EXITS FOR CHURCHES SEPARATING FROM THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WHEREAS, at the 2016 General Conference of The United Methodist Church (“UMC”), the delegates directed the Council of Bishops (“COB”) to create a commission charged with developing a proposal to resolve conflict in the denomination regarding its sexual ethics, teachings on marriage, and its ordination standards, and that the COB convened a special General Conference in 2019 to debate and vote on various proposals;

WHEREAS, the commission (subsequently named the Commission on the Way Forward), presented its various proposals to the 2019 special General Conference, that the delegates reaffirmed the UMC’s standards on the issues, but the reaffirmation failed to resolve the conflict;

WHEREAS, the 2019 special General Conference also adopted legislation in ¶ 2553 permitting local churches to disaffiliate from the UMC for reasons of conscience regarding the ongoing conflict;

WHEREAS, ¶ 2553 specified financial terms for such a disaffiliation;

WHEREAS, an initiative to mediate a resolution of the conflict in the UMC was organized by the late Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, culminating in the signing of an agreement to the *Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation* by eight bishops (including the president, the president-elect, and the immediate past president of the COB) and eight other leaders in the UMC;

WHEREAS, the *Protocol* acknowledged that the UMC and its members were at an impasse, that its witness and mission was being impeded, and its members were being harmed;

WHEREAS, the *Protocol* proposed restructuring the UMC by separation as the best means to resolve the conflict through the emergence of at least two new denominations, allowing each denomination to remain true to its theological and ethical convictions, while recognizing the equality and integrity of all people;

WHEREAS, the *Protocol* provided for amicable and fair terms for local churches to exit the UMC with their property released from the denomination’s trust clause, so they could align with a new denomination;

WHEREAS, four annual conferences submitted the *Protocol’s* implementing legislation for adoption at the UMC’s 2020 General Conference;

WHEREAS, following its release in 2020 that Protocol received the endorsement of ten major advocacy groups representing differing sides of the conflict, including the Africa Initiative, the national Black Methodists for Church Renewal, the Confessing Movement, Good News,

Mainstream UMC, the Reconciling Ministries Network, UMAction, UMCNext, Uniting Methodists, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association;

WHEREAS, resolutions which endorsed the Protocol were similarly approved by numerous and theologically diverse annual conferences by significant majorities, including the Baltimore-Washington Conference (76 percent), the California-Pacific Conference (64 percent), the North Georgia Conference (65 percent), the Northwest Texas Conference (82 percent) and the Mountain Sky Conference (86%);

WHEREAS, the 2020 General Conference of the UMC has been postponed three times preventing its delegates from voting on the *Protocol*;

WHEREAS, the conflict remains unresolved in the UMC;

WHEREAS, the Global Methodist Church (“GMC”) has been formed, is now operating, and so provides an alternative for local churches who desire to exit a UMC that remains in conflict;

WHEREAS, numerous local churches in the UMC are in the process of leaving the UMC to become part of the GMC;

WHEREAS, each annual conference of the UMC determines its own financial terms for local churches to separate from the UMC with their property released from the trust clause; and

WHEREAS, ¶ 2553 includes an expiration date of December 31, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, in order to implement the spirit and principles of the *Protocol*, the delegates to the WCA’s 2022 Global Legislative Assembly call upon UMC annual conferences, bishops, and annual conference boards of trustees,

1. To agree to fair and gracious terms for local churches to depart the UMC with their property released from the trust clause to unite with the GMC.
2. To not add terms and conditions to the process of disaffiliation different than those expressly stated in ¶ 2553.
3. To use ¶2548.2 to permit the property of local churches to be transferred to the successors of such churches in the GMC, released from the UMC trust clause, on fair and gracious terms, including permitting any payments for their proportionate share of any unfunded pension liability to be paid over a term of years.
4. To facilitate the departure of local churches who desire to depart from the UMC to join the GMC as expeditiously as possible so that the long conflict over the disputed matters will come to an end.