

Submitted by and contact: Minnesota Methodists Steering Team, Rev. Carol Zaagsma, czaagsma@msn.com, 651-329-7878

Relationship to the Scriptural Imperatives and Rationale: WHEREAS in these times of denominational disagreement, we have been encouraged to articulate what kind of conference the Minnesota Annual Conference is going to be, and

WHEREAS the Traditional Plan, as drafted, presented and adopted at 2019 General Conference, requires each annual conference to vote to approve or reject a statement to “support, uphold, and maintain accountability to the United Methodist standards found in ¶304.3 ‘Qualifications for Ordination,’ ¶341.6 ‘Unauthorized Conduct,’ ¶613.19 ‘Responsibilities of the Council on Finance and Administration,’ and ¶2702.1a-b ‘Chargeable Offenses’ of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2016* in their entirety,”¹ articulating a vision may help the Minnesota Annual Conference discern such a question if required in the future, and

WHEREAS our Gospel Imperatives to Grow in Love of God and Neighbor, Reach New People, and Heal a Broken World are most fully realized as an inclusive Church, and

WHEREAS we wish to be clear about our beliefs as rooted in our Wesleyan tradition and move forward into the next vibrant expression of Methodism,

Action: THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church adopt the following vision for the future of the Church as a step toward moving forward into the next vibrant expression of Methodism:

We envision a Methodism that is rooted in Jesus, grounded in Wesleyan theology, inclusive of all persons, and engaged in the work of justice and reconciliation.

We believe in and are committed to God’s Beloved Community; a Community that Christ has told us is close at hand. We are a people, each one created uniquely and beautifully in God’s image, who are united by our faith in Jesus.

As a diverse body of Christ, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to and with all persons. Consequently, we are committed to inclusiveness in all aspects of the life of the Church, regardless of sexual orientation, race, physical or mental disability, national origin, marital status, gender identity, ethnicity, economic status, or age. We seek to move voices from the margins to the center of our denominational and local church conversations. We affirm each clergy person’s prayerful discernment in officiating wedding ceremonies for any prepared couple who comes to them. We affirm the prayerful discernment of our Board of Ordained Ministry, who, along with our Conference leadership, have determined nine characteristics for evaluation of clergy. We support the Board of Ordained Ministry’s decision to evaluate candidates for ordination, licensing, and candidacy on the basis of these characteristics alone.

It is God’s truth and central to our Wesleyan tradition that we are loved because it is God’s nature to love. We follow the way of Jesus because we are deeply and profoundly loved. While John Wesley shared with many other Christians a belief in grace, justification, assurance, and sanctification, he combined them in a powerful manner to create distinctive emphases for living the full Christian life. Grace pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life. By grace we mean the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as “prevenient grace,” continues in “justifying grace,” and is brought to fruition in “sanctifying grace.”²

God is the “ground of all being,”³ ever creating in our midst, while entrusting us as partners and stewards of God’s vision for our world. As such, we remain open to God’s creating action within us, both individually and collectively. Jesus is our foundation, the One who teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love our enemies and welcome the stranger. He is our peace, breaking down the dividing walls and ending the hostility. Christ is the very embodiment of Love; Emmanuel – “God with us.” It is our love for him that calls us to keep his commandments.

¹ Petition 90041 “CoWF-Traditional Plan #10 – Traditional Plan Implementation Process – NEW Par. 2801”

² pp. 51-53 of 2016 BOD

³ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology

Christ brings salvation by restoring broken relationships between humankind and our Creator, and reconciling broken relationships between one another. After giving his whole life, including death on the cross, God raised Him on the third day, showing the power of Love and the hope of resurrection. Christ's promise that an Advocate would be sent was fulfilled through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit, as Divine Presence, who enlivens us, transforms us, sustains us, and empowers all God's children who would bring peace on earth.

The Holy Spirit calls us into community and sends us forth bringing good news to the oppressed, binding up the broken hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, and building a sustainable world for future generations. We envision this to be a world where workers receive a just reward for their labors, and the value of corporate structures is measured by their benefit to the community at large.

Our baptism is by water and the Spirit into God's new creation, bringing us together as one in Christ, rejecting that which divides and demeans us. To work toward such a new creation, we take to heart our baptismal covenant to "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin; to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves; and to confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, putting our whole trust in his grace, serving him as our Lord, in union with the Church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations and races."⁴

With joy and thanksgiving, we welcome all God's people, celebrating the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as signs of God's grace, open to all who love Christ, earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.

We reflect critically on our biblical and theological inheritance, and understand as John Wesley did: that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason, with Scripture being the primary source through which the other sources are engaged.⁵

We understand that faithful people come to different conclusions on theological and political matters, and resolve to unite in love as John Wesley preached in his sermon on "Catholic Spirit" saying, "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works."

We value the General Rules as John Wesley established: First, by doing no harm; Secondly, by doing good; and Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God;⁶ while striving to fulfill our baptismal vows by promoting the General Rule of Discipleship: "To witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and to follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."⁷

We celebrate our heritage of ecumenism and commit to continuing intentional interfaith encounters and explorations between Christians and adherents of other living faiths of the world.⁸

We are a Church created to participate in God's redemptive work in this world. We hold an unwavering commitment to the hard work of advocacy, justice, reconciliation and liberation. We work together in unity to build God's Beloved Community with more creativity than each of us can bring individually. And we encourage each congregation and its leaders to lead boldly within their context to realize our mission "to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."⁹

Implementation: The Minnesota Annual Conference adopts this resolution.

Outcome: The Minnesota Annual Conference has the beginnings of an articulated vision with which to move into the next vibrant expression of Methodism.

Resources Required: No financial impact.

⁴ p. 88 of UM BOW copyright 1992

⁵ p. 82 of 2016 BOD

⁶ pp. 77-80 of 2016 BOD

⁷ Para. 1117.2a, citing Gayle Turner Watson's *A Guide to Covenant Discipleship Groups* (Discipleship Resources, 2000), p.12

⁸ p. 90 of 2016 BOD

⁹ Para. 120, 2016 BOD

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Relationship to the Scriptural Imperatives and Rationale:

WHEREAS an estimated 67% of US delegates voted against the Traditional Plan adopted by the 2019 Special Session of General Conference,

WHEREAS the ability to implement all three of our Gospel Imperatives (Grow in Love of God and Neighbor, Reach New People, and Heal a Broken World) with the LGBTQIA+ community and their Allies is not only inhibited but compromised by the punitive nature of the Traditional Plan,

WHEREAS the Minnesota Annual Conference has a history of affirming our commitment to a fully inclusive, grace-filled, compassionate church,

Action:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church formally recognizes that the Traditional Plan passed by the 2019 General Conference does great harm to the witness of The United Methodist Church.

The Traditional Plan, as presented, tightens restrictions on the ordination of LGBTQIA+ clergy while maintaining prohibitions and strengthening punitive actions on clergy who perform same-sex marriage ceremonies. We grieve this decision and the pain this discrimination causes our siblings throughout the world. Too often, our silence has done harm.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Annual Conference will not perpetuate this harm in any form.

We recognize the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry's primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ministerial leadership for our churches and other ministry settings (¶635.2.a), and support their commitment to examining all applicants as to their fitness for ordination, licensing, and candidacy on the basis of nine characteristics alone, with special emphasis on the first four: Personal Passionate Faith; Evangelistic Heart; Emotional and Social Intelligence; Apostolic Leadership; Wesleyan Way of Discipleship; Leading Adaptively; Healthy, Holy Habits; Loves God's World; and Lifelong Learner. (*Letter dated March 6, 2019*)

Furthermore, members of the Minnesota Annual Conference commit to avoiding trials related to any aspect of ministry with and for our LGBTQIA+ siblings, with the understanding that the Rule of Christ is Jesus' primary teaching on the matter of resolving grievances (*Matthew 18*), while a Just Resolution process is noted as the primary purpose of reviewing a complaint in the *2016 Book of Discipline*, suggesting the hope that "God's work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ." (¶362)

Silence is often harmful and serves to perpetuate discrimination. We will no longer remain silent. We say to our LGBTQIA+ siblings: you are beloved children of God, and you are beloved by us. We celebrate the many gifts and graces you bring to the church. We humbly seek forgiveness.

We commit ourselves to creating the inclusive church God intends us to be. We seek to undo the harm caused by exclusion and discrimination through systemic forms of oppression against all marginalized people both inside the church and in our greater society. We recommit to working for the full inclusion of all people.

Implementation: The Minnesota Annual Conference adopts this resolution.

Outcome: The Minnesota Annual Conference is clear across the Connection that we consider the Traditional Plan to be detrimental to our witness, and the Minnesota Annual Conference will not perpetuate the discrimination and harm caused by it.

Resources Required: No financial impact.