

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Toska Medlock Lee

Email: toskamedlock@mac.com

Phone: 214.729.6144 (mobile)

UMCNEXT Announces “*UMCNext Proposal*”

NASHVILLE, Tenn. August 16, 2019 /UMCNext/ – The Convening Team of UMCNext announced today the *UMCNext Proposal*, a long-term comprehensive plan that offers a way for a reimagined United Methodist Church to move forward with renewed vision, missional alignment and self-definition.

The plan, developed and supported by the broad UMCNext Coalition that includes Reconciling Ministries Network, Uniting Methodists and Mainstream UMC, provides a pathway to an inclusive United Methodist Church that allows for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be shared fully in transformational ways for all people and for all the days to come.

“*The UMCNext Proposal* allows a creative way for churches to build a new expression of Methodism if desired and a path to create a renewed global United Methodist Church for those who remain, while making best use of shrinking resources,” said Rev. Junius B. Dotson, executive convener of the UMCNext Convening Team. “This proposal is not dissolution by another name,” said Dotson. “It takes seriously the difficult work that must be done to best serve the mission of the church in fresh ways.”

Key components of the plan include:

1. Keeps intact The United Methodist Church as a denomination while allowing for greater regional autonomy across the entire connection.
2. Retains the current doctrinal standards of *The Book of Discipline*.
3. Removes language and policies from *The Book of Discipline* that are harmful to and exclusive of LGBTQ persons.
4. Retains the ability of pastors to determine if a couple is ready for marriage and of annual conferences to determine if a candidate meets the criteria for ordination.
5. Provides a method for groups of churches to form new expressions of Methodism.
6. Creates a Commission on the 21st Century Church to prepare a comprehensive structure and governance plan for consideration at a special General Conference in 2022.

Rev. Adam Hamilton, a member of the UMCNext Convening Team and senior pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City added, “Most United Methodist congregations have people of differing views and convictions regarding same-sex marriage. We’ve learned to live with those differences. *The UMCNext Proposal* seeks to reimagine a United Methodist Church for all people. It removes the language in the Book of

Discipline that is harmful to LGBTQ persons. It provides a gracious exit for those who wish to leave, and it allows pastors and churches to minister according to their convictions,” Hamilton said.

Jan Lawrence, a member of the UMCNext Convening Team and Executive Director of Reconciling Ministries Network, said the plan removes incompatible language and the prohibitions, paving the way for ordination of queer clergy and for same-gender weddings.

“Ministers will have the same ability they do now per the current *Book of Discipline* to determine who is ready for marriage. The plan treats everyone fairly and equitably and allows us to reimagine a United Methodist Church free from the current restriction and welcoming all of God’s children,” Lawrence said.

The UMCNext Proposal acknowledges the severity of current disagreements in the church. It offers greater self-determination for churches within central and jurisdictional conferences in the global connection, as well as the capacity to begin new expressions of Wesleyan expressions of church. It also calls for a future for all parties that invites new birth and reformation in the hope that all will be led to offer Christ and serve in the world for the glory of God.

In this season of reformation, the proposal calls for a Special Session of the General Conference in 2022 to sustain momentum, receive the work of the Commission on the 21st Century Church, and take the next faithful step toward a gracious, just and Spirit-fueled new life for The United Methodist Church.

Note: The full plan is available at UMCNext.org

###