

Homosexuality and The United Methodist Church

A Brief History Lesson

The Social Principles

(Adopted in 1972, General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia)

The Social Principles, **while not to be considered church law**, are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound **biblical and theological foundation** as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are a **call to faithfulness** and are **intended to be instructive and persuasive** in the best of the prophetic spirit. The Social Principles are a call to all members of The United Methodist Church to a **prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice**.

- 1972 – “We do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider it incompatible with Christian teaching” & “We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex.”
- 1976 – add 3 statements banning the use of church funds to promote homosexuality
- 1980 – 1972 and 1976 positions were left intact.
- 1984 – Adopted as the standard for ordained clergy, commitment to “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” and “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”
- 1988 – Added “... we affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”
- 1992 – Delegates voted to retain the church’s stand.

- 1996 – Added a definition of “self-avowed practicing homosexual,” and a declaration that ceremonies to celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by United Methodist clergy or in United Methodist churches.
- 2000 – added “We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends.”
- 2004 – Delegates agreed to a statement of unity: “As United Methodists, we remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement, and affirm our commitment to work together for the common mission of making disciples throughout the world.” Delegates reaffirmed the denominational position.
- 2008 – Delegates approved a new resolution to oppose homophobia and heterosexism.
- 2012 – Two items stating Christians have different opinions about homosexuality were not approved, leaving the current language intact.

2016 - Portland, Oregon



“Bishops, you are our leaders. We need your help.”
May 17, 2016

An Offering For A Way Forward

- ▶ Deep commitment to unity
- ▶ Lead the UMC in a “pause for prayer”
- ▶ Next steps:
 - ▶ The General Conference defer all votes on human sexuality and refer this entire subject to a special Commission, named by the Council of Bishops, to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality.
 - ▶ We will name such a Commission to include persons from every region of our UMC, and will include representation from differing perspectives on the debate.
 - ▶ Bishops will maintain an on-going dialogue with this Commission as they do their work.
 - ▶ Should the Commission complete their work in time for a called General Conference, call a two- to three- day gathering before the 2020 General Conference.

Between May and July:

- ▶ Declarations of non-compliance from several annual conferences
- ▶ Plan to convene a Wesleyan Covenant Association
- ▶ Election by the Western Jurisdiction of Rev. Karen Oliveto as a bishop of the church

¶161F) *Human Sexuality*— We affirm that **sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons**. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

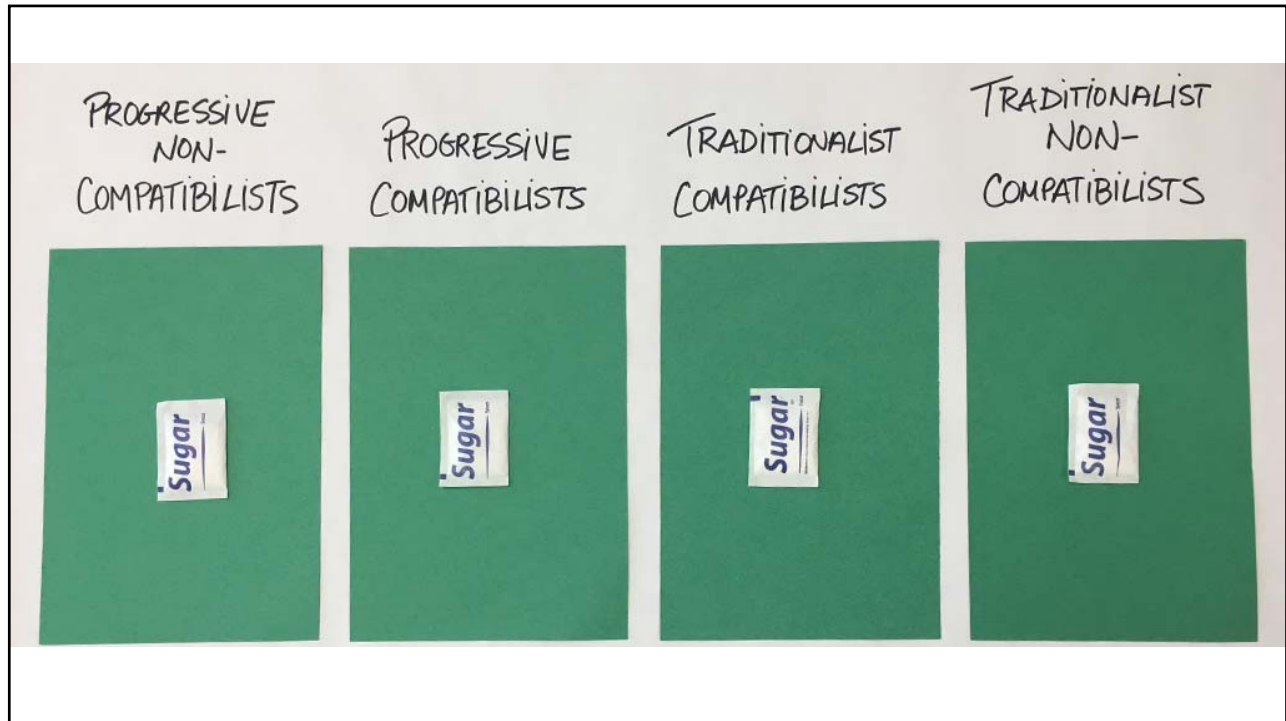
Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, **sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage**.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, **are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence**. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

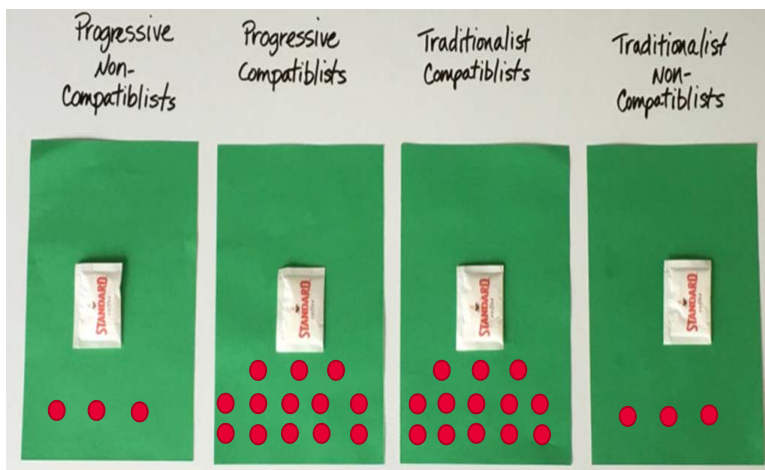
We affirm that **all persons are individuals of sacred worth**, created in the image of God. **All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self.**

The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. **We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.** We commit ourselves to be **in ministry for and with all persons.**

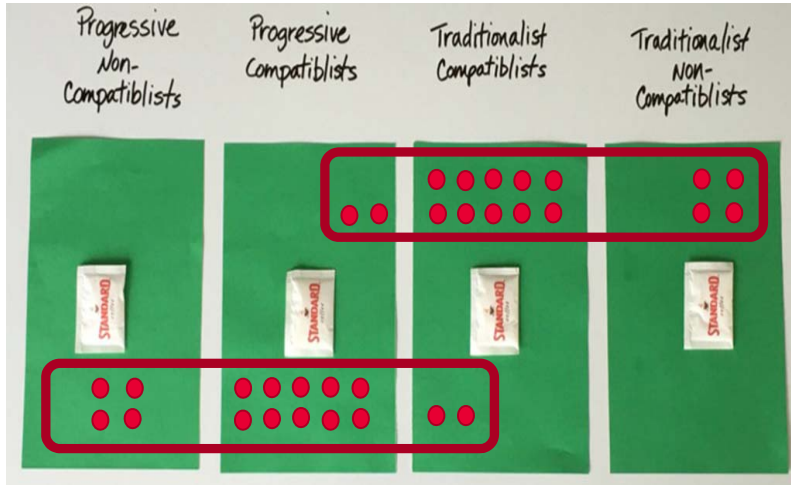
- ¶304.3 Self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.
- ¶341.6 Homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.
- ¶613.19 No annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of the UMC "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.
- ¶2702.1 A bishop, clergy members of an annual conference, local pastor on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged with ... (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual,; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies



Individual UM's range across the spectrum,
but for most, this issue is not their primary
dimension



Local churches have varying "centers of gravity"



Commission on a Way Forward



The Commission on a Way Forward

- 32 members – 8 bishops, 11 laity, 11 elders and 2 deacons
- Full Council of Bishops have called for a special session of the General Conference in early 2019.
- A Professional facilitator has been employed by the Council of Bishops to design and guide the Commission’s work.
- Bishops Ken Carter, Sandra Steiner Ball and David Yemba have been selected to serve as a moderator team.
- Commission’s mission is to “bring together persons deeply committed to the future(s) of The United Methodist Church, with an openness to developing new relationships with each other and exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional, and central conference actions.”

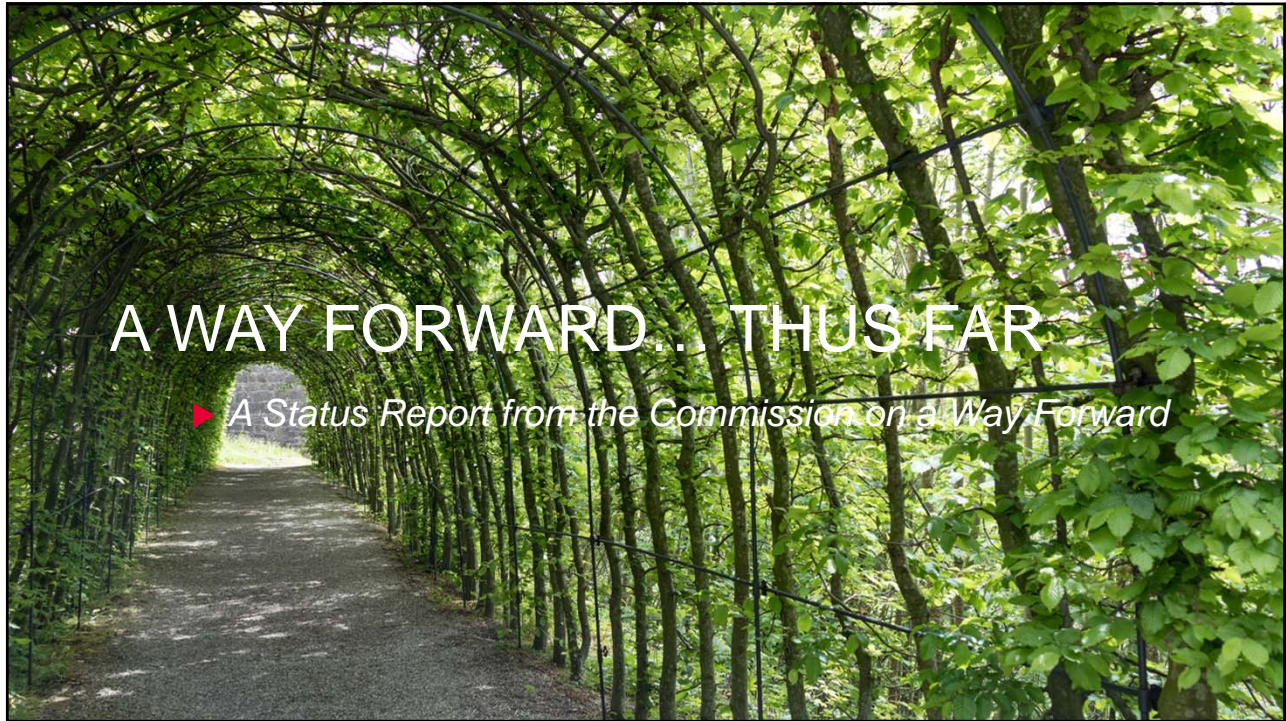
The Commission on a Way Forward Members



Commission on a Way Forward
Council of Bishops



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



A WAY FORWARD... THUS FAR

▶ *A Status Report from the Commission on a Way Forward*



FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS

OUR CHARGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS



MISSION

"Exploring the potential future(s) of our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional, and central conference actions"



VISION

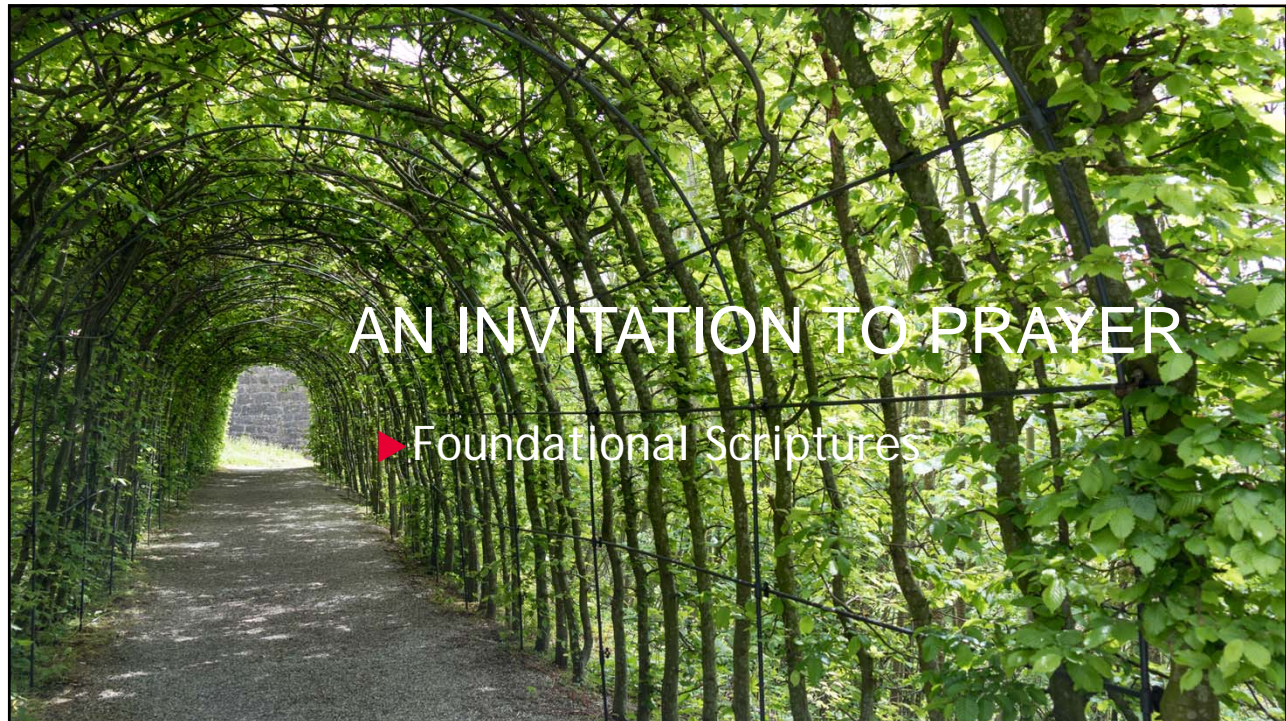
"Maximize the presence of a United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible, that allows for as much contextual differentiation as possible, and that balances an approach to different theological understandings of human sexuality with a desire for as much unity as possible"



SCOPE

"Be open to new ways of embodying unity that moves us beyond where we are in the present impasse and cycle of action and reaction around ministry and human sexuality... Give consideration to greater freedom and flexibility to a future United Methodist Church that will redefine our present connectionality"

[Click here for the full document](#)



AN INVITATION TO PRAYER

▶ Foundational Scriptures



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

BEING LED TO A WAY FORWARD

- ◆ PRAYER: We pray together during the days we meet and covenant to pray for each other when apart.
- ◆ STUDY: We study the Bible together.
- ◆ LISTEN: We hear each other's testimonies.
- ◆ WORSHIP: We have spent time in worship.
- ◆ HOLY CONFERENCING: We engage in Christian conversation throughout our meetings.
- ◆ COVENANT: We have a covenant that creates a Spirit-led structure for mutual accountability in love.

Covenant

We will carefully listen to one another.

We will be careful not to judge one another.

We are not here to change one another's positions. (speak to be understood, not to convince)

We will ask questions.



Covenant

We will speak our truth in love.

We will assume trust not suspicion.

We will protect the confidentiality of the conversation.

Let everyone participate, no one dominate, allow every voice to be heard.



The Principles of a Way Forward




Commission on a Way Forward
 Council of Bishops
 THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

-  Fruitfulness in Mission is First
-  Multiplying Wesleyan Witness
-  Operating out of a "Heart of Peace"
-  Allow for Contextualization of Structure
-  Creating "Space"
-  Simplicity of Proposal
-  Resolution of Impasse
-  Working with the Council of Bishops to prepare for General Conference

Preparing for a Way Forward: Study *The Anatomy of Peace*



Download a sample chapter of
 the new, 2nd edition of
 #AnatomyOfPeace by @arbinger!
<http://bit.ly/AOPmicro>


Commission on a Way Forward
 Council of Bishops
 THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

What Connects Us Now: Our Common Core

Jesus is the Vine; We are the Branches

The Apostle's and Nicene Creeds

Disciplined Engagement with Scripture

Articles of Religion/Confession of Faith

Works of Piety, Mercy and Justice

The General Rules

Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist

The Wesley Hymns

Small Group Accountability and Support
(Class and Band Meetings)



A Connectional Way of Life that includes Superintendency, Itineracy, and Conferencing



- ◆ Driven by values of unity and mission
- ◆ Common theological center
- ◆ A new church will not look like the current church
- ◆ Dynamic, flexible and contextual connectionalism
- ◆ It may mean a way for groups to be in ministry separately while sharing some common ministry
- ◆ Enable people with contradictory convictions to flourish
- ◆ It may mean multiple versions of the Book of Discipline
- ◆ Jesus' call to unity may look like associations or affiliated churches
- ◆ Maintain global connection in loosely configured structure
- ◆ Allowance for those who don't adopt a revised structure

WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

LEARNINGS ABOUT CONTEXTUALIZATION

- ◆ The way forward cannot be an extension of our path of conflict
- ◆ We need to escape our own assumptions about structure and polity
- ◆ When you give people freedom, you get incredible creativity



WHERE WE ARE: THE COMMISSION'S WORK THUS FAR

OUR GLOBAL CONTEXT

- ◆ Concerns and goals related to human sexuality vary widely across the globe.
- ◆ The landscape in our Central Conferences is very different from the U.S. landscape.
- ◆ Conferences are not of one mind on ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons.
- ◆ The global context is complex due to cultural, civic, and legal restrictions and freedoms that differ.
- ◆ Some changes within the U.S. church may pose a potential threat to the vital mission of our Central Conferences.
- ◆ Understanding and honoring the nuances of each central conference is critical.



WE INVITE YOU TO PRAY AS WE CONTINUE THE WORK!

CONNECT WITH THE COMMISSION



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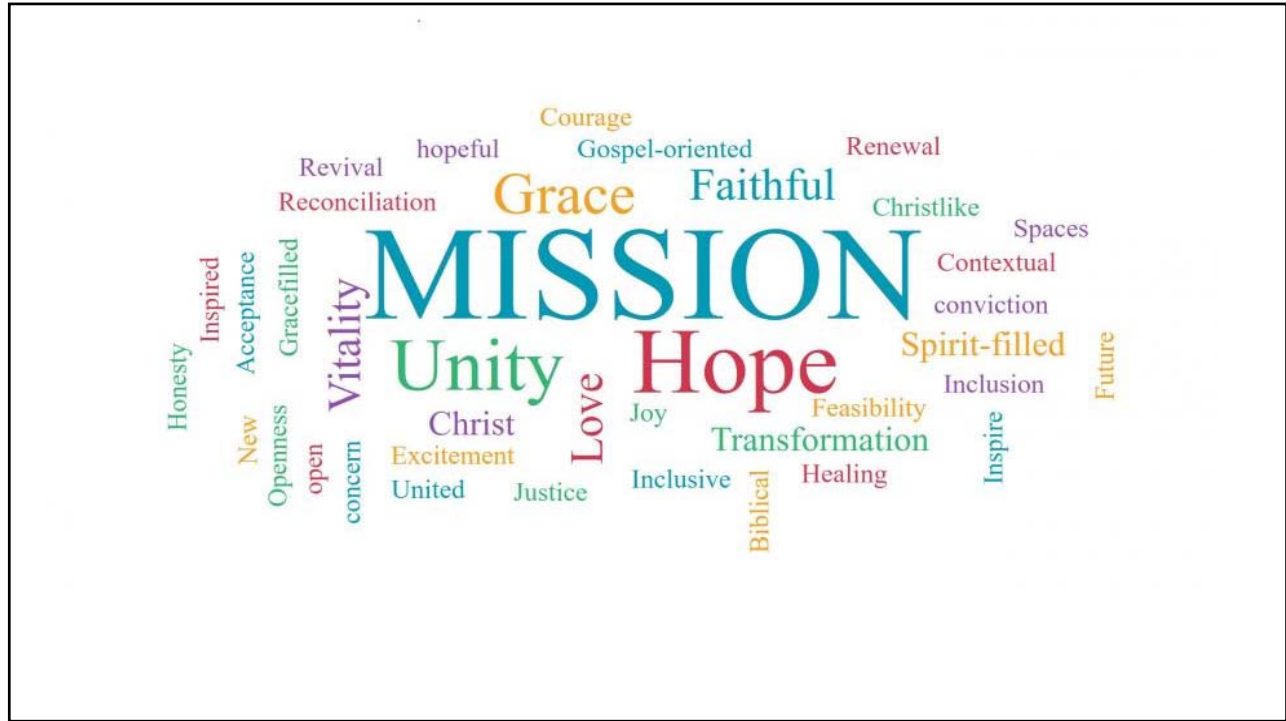


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PROGRESSIVE NON- COMPATIBILISTS	PROGRESSIVE COMPATIBILISTS	TRADITIONALIST COMPATIBILISTS	TRADITIONALIST NON- COMPATIBILISTS

Where is your church's center of gravity on this continuum?

Is diversity within The United Methodist Church a strength or a weakness?

Is diversity within your local church a strength or a weakness?

Are our common commitments more important than our differences?

In what ways does your church's mission statement guide the decisions made within your congregation?

What does it mean that the commission sees "mission" at the heart of the way forward for our denomination?

What is a way forward that would reach the most non-religious and nominally religious (or the “nones” and “dones”) in our communities?

What 3 words would express your prayer for the church in the present moment?