

**STATEMENT FROM THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS:  
“A CALL FOR UNITY AND LOYALTY TO JESUS CHRIST THROUGH  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH”**

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I also pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me, and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” – John 17:20-23*

We believe that the unity of the Church is in Jesus Christ, and in the mission entrusted to His disciples, to proclaim God’s unconditional love for all people. The unity of the Body of Christ, the Church, is a powerful witness amid hatred, brokenness, and injustice in the world.

We believe in the ministry of The United Methodist Church, in the Philippines and worldwide, as a faithful expression of the Christian faith. God has worked through our denomination in the Philippines for over a century and will continue to bless our future rooted in the mission Jesus Christ entrusted us.

In John Wesley’s sermon “On Schism”, he declared: “To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love... It is only when our love grows cold, that we think of separating from our brethren.” He also challenged us “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.”

We believe that loving one another as God has loved us is the only standard by which our faithfulness is measured.

In response to the prayer of Jesus Christ for unity and John Wesley’s admonition to love more despite our differences, we firmly encourage everyone to seek unity by remaining faithful to Jesus Christ through the United Methodist Church. We respect the initiative by some laypeople to move for outright autonomy, however, as Bishops of the Philippines Central Conference, we see this position as simply a form of secession and would only allow tensions between those who wish to remain in the fold of the UMC and those who want to separate from the UMC.

We value continuing discernment of petitions submitted to the General Conference that should be given priority at this time and work together for the good of the Church by following the order and discipline of the UMC. This shall be considered as our dutiful goal moving forward. Any form of secession during this challenging period would do more harm than good.

We strongly admonish all efforts that sow divisions in the United Methodist Church through disinformation and self-righteous judgment to stop, in particular, those of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and the Global Methodist Church, their affiliates, and supporters in the Philippines. Their disinformation campaign using social media platforms says that the UMC is changing its doctrines and beliefs about Christ and the Scriptures.

These issues have long been refuted by the Restrictive Rules under Section III, ¶17- Article I, and ¶18- Article II of the Book of Discipline, emphasizing that “The General Conference shall not revoke, alter, or change our Articles of Religion or establish any new standards or rules of doctrine contrary to our present existing and established standards of doctrine,” including our Confession of Faith. These groups have been using these made-up doctrinal issues, including that of human sexuality, to gain support to leave the United Methodist Church.

In the last two years, we have witnessed secessions in the three Episcopal Areas of our central conference. Sadly, those who have decided to leave the denomination are adamant in holding on to the properties of The United Methodist Church, with some even resorting to violence to prevent the rightful owners (members who decided to remain) from using the church facilities and resources. As Bishops, we commit to resisting the unwarranted occupation of our church properties by the secessionists.

As we approach a historic General Conference, we join our whole church in prayer and hope that the values of unity, equity, and respect for our missional contexts will be lifted and affirmed as expressions of our love for one another. We fully support the Worldwide Regionalization legislation submitted by the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters as a concrete articulation of these values. Regionalization is so much more than the affiliated autonomy we have been aspiring for, given the connectionalism it provides that unites us in mission.

We, therefore, implore all our General Conference delegates to vote for the Worldwide Regionalization legislation, and for all our annual conferences to ratify its constitutional amendments once they are passed. At the same time, we call for the rejection of all petitions to extend the disaffiliation provision of the Book of Discipline under Par. 2553, as this is inappropriate and will create more confusion and instability among the congregations that opted to remain within the UMC fold.

We pray that as we face seemingly insurmountable challenges as a Church we will remain as a covenant community committed to honor, respect, and love one another despite our differences.

May God continue to bless The United Methodist Church in the Philippines and worldwide.



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