



Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue Committee



For Immediate Release:

May 1, 2019 – Austin, TX

Episcopal Church – United Methodist Dialogue Committee

The members of the Episcopal Church – United Methodist Dialogue Committee met together April 29-30, 2019 at First United Methodist Church, Austin in Austin, TX. Since its beginning in 2002, this dialogue committee has been seeking to discern God’s will regarding how our churches might embody a new kind of public witness to the unity of Christ’s body. These talks have continued for more than 80 years through many national and ecclesial challenges. By confronting serious matters of theological distinction as well as historical challenges related to race, class and the hardening of denominational identities, the members of this dialogue committee in its various rounds have held out hope that the people called Methodists and the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement might embrace one another in the fellowship of communion, publicly acknowledging our mutual sharing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and formally recognizing one another’s members, ordained ministries, and sacraments.

In Austin we decided through deep and honest conversation to continue on this path toward full communion by submitting a resolution to that effect to be considered by the United Methodist Council of Bishops and potentially forwarded to the United Methodist General Conference in May 2020. We do not make this decision naively and are fully cognizant of the hard realities our churches face. We feel the pain and inexpressible weight of discrimination that is the burden of LGBTQ Christians whose lives are so often objectified, debated, dismissed. We acknowledge that the decisions of the 2019 Special Session of the United Methodist General Conference have deepened divisions within The UMC and introduced sharp and as yet unanswered questions about the prospects for full communion between our churches. The road map to unity between our denominations looks different now than it did two years ago when we first introduced “A Gift to the World” to our churches.

And yet, we believe that what we are experiencing in the various crises of our denominational life is the birth pangs of something remarkable, something new. We believe that the forces of polarization, mistrust, and animosity in our society and in our ecclesial life will not have the last word. There is a future with hope for unity in mission and ministry for the Body of Christ that has yet to be revealed. The work of this dialogue committee seeks to heal, in some small way, one division within the context of a whole world in need of healing and reconciliation. We desire as a dialogue committee to take the next faithful step in this journey, trusting in the God who alone holds the future and who may yet be calling us to something bigger and grander than we have imagined.

There are more decisions to come. The dialogue committee is not done discussing the possible futures for United Methodist-Episcopal unity. Yet in this moment we desire to stay on this road together, walking with one another in our joys and triumphs as well as our struggles and imperfections. We hope you will join us in this ongoing journey of discernment and hope.

United Methodist Committee Members:

Bishop Gregory Palmer, co-chair
Rev. Dr. James Howell
Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey
Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli
Rev. Dr. Robert Williams
Rev. Dr. Kyle Tau (staff)

Episcopal Church Committee Members:

Dr. Deirdre Good, co-chair
The Rt. Rev. David Rice
The Rev. Mariclaire Partee Carlsen
The Rev. Dr. Thomas Ferguson
The Rev. Dr. Karen Coleman
The Rev. Margaret Rose (staff)
Mr. Richard Mammana (Staff)