

## For the Sake of the Church: Connectional Table Leaders Call for Sustainable Peace

The Connectional Table  
The United Methodist Church

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2019

NASHVILLE, TN – In a statement read before the board at their spring meeting, leaders of the Connectional Table acknowledged the need for denomination-wide conversations to find a path toward sustainable peace in the wake of General Conference 2019. CT Chair Bishop Christian Alsted and Chief Connectional Ministries Officer the Rev. Kennetha J. Bigham-Tsai cited not just differing opinions about same-sex marriage and LGBTQIA+ ordination, but also different understandings of scripture and visions for what it means to be the church in mission.

“We believe that, because of these fundamental differences, we cannot maintain unity as we have understood and practiced it in the past,” said Bishop Alsted as the two read the statement to the board following opening worship on the second day of meeting.

Given the Connectional Table’s purpose to discern and articulate the vision of The United Methodist Church and to be a forum composed of voices from across the worldwide connection, the CT can serve as a conversation partner in conversations already taking place across the connection.

“We want to envision a future for the church that is marked by a sustainable peace,” Bigham-Tsai continued. “A peace that is not built upon clear, broad-based support (no matter which plan would have passed), is not sustainable... We believe that to achieve this kind of future requires that we define a unity that is based in our common Wesleyan tradition and in our common commitment to the mission field, but that is not necessarily defined organizationally, structurally or in our polity. We are not suggesting any specific plan. We are instead pointing to the need to move forward in ways that address the current reality of our church.”

Bishop Alsted and Bigham-Tsai pleaded with the church:

- to enter into confession, repentance for the ways we have wounded each other, and into deep prayer;
- to enter into reflection on our ecclesiology and our missiology, and to ask how we might better define these in ways that free us all for ministry;
- to enter into reflection on the history of the creation of The United Methodist Church and the ending of the Central Jurisdiction, and to ask how our creation, informed by justice, might influence us now as new structures must be born;
- to enter into reflection on our polity, and ask how it might be used in good faith to free us all for the mission fields to which we have been called;

- to enter into conversations with members from across the worldwide connection and encourage participation of LGBTQIA+ persons, young people, people of color and ecumenical partners; and
- to enter into a conversation that is based in the reality of our situation but that ultimately points toward hope.
- “United Methodists in Africa, Asia, Europe and the U.S. share in the same painful experience of division – we are all affected and even worse our witness and our ministry suffer,” Bishop Alsted says about what prompted him to share this message with the Connectional Table. “We cannot come back to the 2020 General Conference and continue to hurt each other. We need to find a way into to future that allows all of us with integrity to devote our full attention to God’s mission.”

The statement can be read in full—in English, French and Portuguese—here.

Bishop Alsted and Bigham-Tsai also delivered a condensed version of the statement on video for public viewing, which can be found here.

The Connectional Table would like to invite anyone interested to participate in these conversations. Use the following Google Form to contact the CT and provide any feedback about this process.

About the Connectional Table: The Connectional Table works to steward the mission, vision and ministries of The United Methodist Church. For more information, please visit [connectionaltable.umc.org](http://connectionaltable.umc.org).

###

Media Contact: Emily Clemons  
Director of Communications  
773-714-1517 x6464  
[eclemons@umc.org](mailto:eclemons@umc.org)