



Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue Committee



September 2020 Communiqué

The United Methodist – Episcopal Church Dialogue Committee met on July 30, via video conference to consider next steps in bringing our churches into a full-communion relationship. Our hope was to bring the proposal [“A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness”](#) before our two church-wide bodies in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic with its sweeping disruptions has regrettably, but understandably, necessitated a rethinking of this timeline. Our churches and people are responding to unprecedented challenges in their local communities, conferences/dioceses, and at the denominational level. The United Methodist General Conference scheduled for May of 2020 has been postponed until Aug. 29-Sept. 7, of 2021. The Episcopal Church as well, is rethinking the format, timing, and range of issues that might be taken up by the next General Convention.

In light of these disruptions of our official decision-making bodies and forced changes to the original timeline, the United Methodist and Episcopal Church members of the dialogue committee agree that it is prudent for our churches not to press forward with action on full communion next year. Instead, the Committee recommends that both bodies take up the full-communion proposal at their next General Convention/General Conference after 2021.

This realization comes with both disappointment and hope for future possibilities. Our ongoing work toward unity at Christ’s table continues. We do not recommend a delay in action on full communion lightly. This work is an outward and visible sign of the grace that seeks to end all divisions in the human family. Therefore, we call upon our churches to continue deepening our connections in mission, ministry, and worship under the existing [“Interim Eucharistic Sharing Agreement.”](#)

Furthermore, it is our desire that the ongoing work toward unity between our churches be taken up in the wider context of the pressing needs in our world for health and wholeness, racial justice, and the remaking of human community. The Committee is acutely aware that these actions come in a time of multiple pandemics which are exposing the deep divisions and disparities of our current social context in the United States, with its long history of racism and increasing indifference toward the lives and suffering of historically marginalized people.

These issues strike at the core of our work toward unity in the Body of Christ. [“A Gift to the World”](#) places the future unity of our churches within the context of lament that “church divisions in the US have reflected racial and socioeconomic divisions.” Further, this proposal recognizes “the lasting sin of racism in our society and our churches” and affirms “the need for ongoing repentance, truth telling, and work for racial justice and healing.”

It is in this spirit that the United Methodist-Episcopal Church Dialogue Committee calls upon our churches to increase partnerships in the work for racial justice at the local and denominational levels. We commend to all our people the work now being done by The United Methodist Church ([here](#) and [here](#)) and The Episcopal Church ([here](#)) to continue addressing the persistent sin of racism. Now more than ever Christians need to present a unified witness as we tell the truth about the sin of White Supremacy with the violence, suffering, and indifference toward the lives of black and brown persons it causes in our society and as we seek to dismantle the social, political and economic instruments that perpetuate it.

In a time such as this, may we draw strength from the unity we already share in Christ as we work for a world free of the hatred, violence, and sinful divisions that now plague us.

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
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