

First Edition: 2016-2017

# **Ecumenical and Interreligious Handbook:**

**A Resource for Annual Conference Committees  
on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships**

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100 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 300  
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# INTRODUCTION

***“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.***

***Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.”***

John Wesley,  
founder of The  
Methodist Movement  
(1703-1791)

In The United Methodist Church episcopal leaders are called to lead the denomination in ecumenical and interreligious ministry. Paragraph 403.1e) of The United Methodist Book of Discipline states that bishops lead through several important disciplines, one of which is “a passion for the unity of the church.” The paragraph clarifies: “The role of the bishop is to be the shepherd of the whole flock and thereby provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation and unity within the Church - The United Methodist Church and the church universal.”

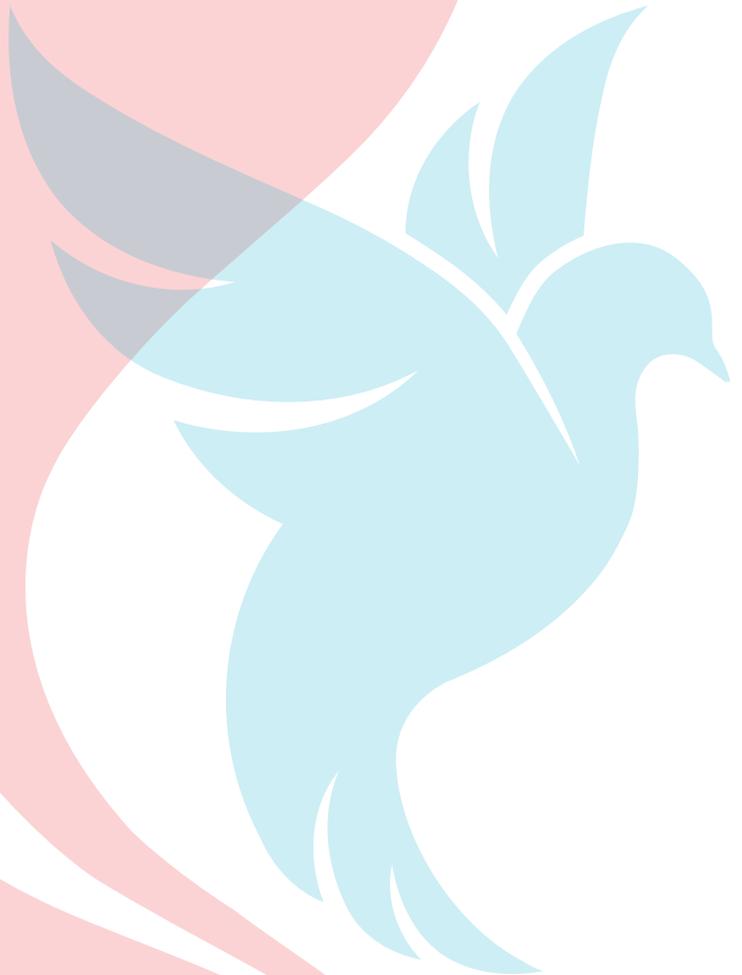
It is not exclusively the role of the bishop, however, to lead in ecumenical and interreligious witness. In our denomination it is the responsibility of every lay person and every clergy person to be in ministry, and one of the foundations of our ministerial witness is that of ecumenical and interreligious relationships.

This ecumenical handbook is designed to help annual conference lay and clergy leaders in local settings coordinate local ministries and assist bishops and district superintendents as we all live out these high callings of ecumenism and witness. It is a resource developed by the Council of Bishops. If, after reading through this publication, questions remain, please contact the office.



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**“It is only when  
our love has grown  
cold do we think  
of schism.”**

John Wesley,  
founder of The  
Methodist Movement  
(1703-1791)

## **Theology of Ecumenical and Interreligious Ministry**

### **Biblical Foundations of United Methodist Leadership in Christian Unity and Interreligious Ministry**

The United Methodist Church claims four sources hold authority in our lives: scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Scripture, we believe, is primary among the four.

The calling to work for Christian unity and to be reconcilers in God’s world is a foundational theme in Judeo-Christian scripture. This calling is at the very heart of the good news and is central to the whole of God’s salvation history.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, a creation of wondrous variety and complexity. In this process of creation, God created human beings. While marked by great diversity, all people bear the image of God and are charged to love God, to keep and enjoy the creation and to live in relationship with one another. From the beginning, this is clear: People cannot be who they are created to be apart from one another.*

With Jesus’ presence in the world, God takes a new initiative to show humanity the way life should be lived by calling people to be a community who lives in covenantal relationship to God. For Christians this community is the church.

United Methodists believe the church is a people not defined by national boundaries, common language or ethnic identity. Neither is it defined by theological bend or ministry preferences. The church is a visible embodiment of the Good News - a sign of God's mighty power to unite.

When teaching about unity and relationship, the following scriptural passages, taken from the NRSV of the Bible, are important passages to review:

**Psalm 133** - *How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.*

**John 17:20-23** - *[Jesus prays:] I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father 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. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

**Acts 2:1-2** - *When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And, suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.*

**1 Corinthians 12:12-13** - *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

**Galatians 3:28** - *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

**Ephesians 1: 9-10** - *... he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

**Ephesians 2:13-14** - *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*

**Ephesians 4:1-6** - *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

**Titus 3:8-9** - *The saying is sure. I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works, these things are excellent and profitable to everyone. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*

**Hebrews 10:23-25** - *Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who as promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**1 John 1:5-7** - *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

**1 John 4:15-17, 21** - *God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in that: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world... The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters.*

## Disciplinary Foundations of United Methodist Leadership in Christian Unity and Interreligious Ministry

United Methodists include basic scriptural principles of unity in the *Book of Discipline*. The *Discipline* organizes how United Methodists express the living out of the calling to unity. Since unity is foundational to Methodist witness, several helpful statements can be found there. To supplement scriptural study, the following Disciplinary paragraphs may also be studied:

**Historical Statement - p.19 (early 1900's)** - *Social problems were... a spur in the movement toward ecumenism and interchurch cooperation. Each of the denominations now included in The United Methodist Church became active in the Federal Council of Churches, the first major ecumenical venture among American Protestants.*

**Historical Statement - p. 20 (1940-1967)** - *...they maintained their concern for ecumenicity and church union. On November 16, 1946, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, The Evangelical Church and The United Brethren Church were united into The Evangelical United Brethren Church, after twenty years of negotiation... The Methodist Church was also interested in closer ties with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies. In 1951 it participated in the formation of the World Methodist Council, successor to the Ecumenical Methodist Conferences that were begun in 1881. As expressions of their wider ecumenical commitment, Methodists and the Evangelical United Brethren became active members of the World Council of Churches, founded in 1948, and the National Council of Churches, founded in 1950... The two churches also cooperated with seven other Protestant denominations in forming the Consultation on Church Union in 1960.*

**The Constitution - Article IV. p. 24, ¶4, "Inclusiveness of the Church"** - *The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ...*

**The Constitution - Article VI, p. 25, ¶6, "Ecumenical Relations"** - *As part of the church universal, The United Methodist Church believes that the Lord of the church is calling Christians everywhere to strive toward unity; and therefore it will seek, and work for, unity at all levels of church life: through world relationships with other Methodist churches and united churches related to The Methodist Church or The Evangelical United Brethren Church, through councils of churches, and through plans of union and covenantal relationships with churches of Methodist or other denominational traditions.*

**Doctrinal Standards - p. 47, ¶102** - *We understand ourselves to be part of Christ's universal church when by adoration, proclamation, and service we become conformed to Christ.*

**Our Theological Task - p. 87, ¶105, "The Present Challenge to Theology in the Church"**  
*In the name of Jesus Christ we are called to work within our diversity while exercising patience and forbearance with one another. Such patience stems neither from indifference toward truth nor from an indulgent tolerance of error but from an awareness that we know only in part and that none of us is able to search the mysteries of God except by the Spirit of God...*

**Our Theological Task - p. 88, ¶105, "Ecumenical Commitment"** - *Christian unity is founded on the theological understanding that through faith in Jesus Christ we are made members-in-common of the one body of Christ. Christian unity is not an option; it is a gift to be received and expressed. United Methodists respond to the theological, biblical, and practical mandates for Christian unity by firmly committing ourselves to the cause of Christian unity at local, national, and world levels... We see the Holy Spirit at work in making the unity among us more visible... Concurrently, we have entered into serious interfaith encounters and explorations between Christians and adherents of other living faiths of the world. Scripture calls us to be both neighbors and witnesses to all peoples... As people bound together on one planet, we see the need for a self-critical view of our own tradition and accurate appreciation for other traditions... We labor together with the help of God toward the salvation, health, and peace of all people. In respectful conversations and in practical cooperation, we confess our Christian faith and strive to display the manner in which Jesus Christ is the life and hope of the world.*

### **Foundational Statements from Other Faith Communities**

Many other Christians also claim as formational statements that emphasize the unity of Christ's universal church. Thomas Campbell, for example, was one of the founders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In his 1809 "Declaration and Address of the Christian Associate of Washington" (Washington, PA, p. 16), he writes the following:

*The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one: consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures. Later, he writes: Division among Christians is a horrid evil that is anti-Christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ; as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself.*

Since its Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church has also done much to uphold and continue an ecumenical perspective of Christ's Church. One of the important quotes from the "Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council" (Vatican City, 1964) is:

*The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian Communion present themselves to men [sic] as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided (cf. 1 Cor. 1:13). Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.*

The Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces) wrote a statement entitled, "The Ground of Unity." It is an official statement of their faith community, adopted in 1995. In part it states:

*It is the Lord's will that Christendom should give evidence of and seek unity in Him with zeal and love. In our own midst we see how such unity has been promised us and laid upon us as a charge. We recognize that through the grace of Christ the different churches have received many gifts. It is our desire that we may learn from each other and rejoice together in the riches of the love of Christ and the manifold wisdom of God.*

And, in the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church a prayer for the Church is offered, which succinctly states that faith community's desire for Christ's Church:

*Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. Amen.*

These are just a few examples of the universal church's desire for unity. United Methodists are a part of that larger congregation and share that deep desire of unity among Christians for the sake of the witness of Christ.

*“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”*

Audre Lorde,  
Caribbean-American  
writer and activist  
(1934-1992)

## **Ecumenical and Interreligious History and Polity**

### **The History of The United Methodist Church in the Ecumenical and Interreligious Movements**

Ecumenical concerns have been a part of the ministry of all of the traditions that have come together to form The United Methodist Church. The Wesley brothers, especially John, maintained conversations with other Evangelical and Pietist Christians throughout the 18th century. While these relationships fluctuated over the decades, Methodists strove to build up a common witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to work fervently for the revival of the church and the spreading of scriptural holiness throughout the land. Early ecumenical connections included those with Moravian Pietists on the European Continent and in Britain and Calvinist Evangelicals in Britain and America.

Similarly early relationships were built across the boundaries of church traditions by leaders of what would become the Evangelical United Brethren Church in America. Bishop Martin Boehm, for instance, regularly invited Evangelical preachers – among them Methodists – to preach to his fellow Mennonites (who are part of the German Reformed family of churches). Some of these contacts led to the formation of what would

become constituents of our present-day church. In 1968, The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in America were united, thus officially incorporating a stream of the Reformed tradition into United Methodism.

At least as vital was the local ecumenical interchange between Methodist preachers traveling the circuits of the early Methodist Episcopal Church at the dawn of the 19th century. In New England, for instance, Reverend Timothy Merritt (1775-1845) engaged in public theological debate with clergy of other traditions – in a kind of ‘shouting ecumenism’ – in which they discussed together the meaning of ‘church’ and of what characterizes a holy Christian life. Such local conversations were not uncommon during the first two decades of the 1800s.

Ecumenical conversations and side-by-side work was undertaken by Methodist and other Christians as the 19th century saw a number of Christian efforts to reform and improve society. Bible and tract societies, Sunday school unions, temperance societies, home and overseas mission organizations, anti-slavery efforts, and many other settings saw Methodists engaged with Christians of other traditions who were working to transform society in line with Christian teachings. Some of these efforts were institutionally ecumenical (accepting participant members from different traditions) and some worked at co-operation with similar ministries across denominational boundaries.

The present-day ecumenical and interreligious ministries, described below, are but the latest chapter in an unbroken history of Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren efforts to bring Christians together in love and labor to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Methodist experiences in mission activities helped make members of our tradition into some of the key innovators in positive engagement of God’s children who belong to other religions. One of the pioneers of both 20th century evangelism and interfaith dialogue was E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973), whose work as a missionary in India gave him the opportunity to shape new approaches to Christian witness and love of non-Christians as well.

It is important to recall that the ecumenical and interreligious ministries of today are actual lines of connection to some of the deepest roots of United Methodist identity.

## The United Methodist Church Organization for Ecumenical and Interreligious Ministry

The United Methodist Church has organized itself in such a way that allows witnessing to the unity of the universal church of Jesus Christ to be encouraged and enabled in many ways. Every area and level of our denominational structure is called to live into Christ's unity and our polity reflects that calling.

Focused ecumenical ministry began in our denomination fifty years ago, when the Methodist Council of Bishops (COB) created an ecumenical committee. Today, with nearly 44,000 different Christian denominations in the world, the ministry is even more vital and crucial to Christ's global witness.

Eventually, the position of Ecumenical Officer of The United Methodist Church was established, as it was clear the denomination needed someone to take the lead in this ministry. The position is filled by a retired bishop who is elected by the Council of Bishops. Paragraph 431 states: ... *In formal relations with other churches and/or ecclesial bodies, the Council of Bishops shall be the primary liaison for The United Methodist Church. The ecumenical officer of the Council of Bishops shall be responsible for these relationships.* His or her duties include: naming representatives to ecumenical organizations, collaborating ministries with the Council of Bishops, overseeing the ministry and staff of the COB, and representing The United Methodist Church at ecumenical and interreligious gatherings.

For years the ecumenical and interreligious ministries of The United Methodist Church were organized by the Ecumenical Officer and lived out by a general agency of the church called The General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns (GCCUIC). However, a few years ago, the commission itself began to explore how best to serve the ecumenical and interreligious commitments of The United Methodist Church. Since our Discipline calls our episcopal and superintending leaders to shepherd the denomination in ecumenical and interreligious ministry, the General Conference of 2012 was petitioned to move the ministry officially under the purview of the Council of Bishops. This passed, and in 2013 that transition began. The office was re-named The Council of Bishops Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious

Relationships (COB OCUIR). All COB staff are now located in the Methodist Center in Washington, DC, and all positions are structured so their goal is to empower and resource the bishops as they lead the denomination in ecumenical and interreligious ministries.

The staff now includes an Ecumenical Staff Officer for Leadership Development and an Ecumenical Staff Officer for Faith and Order and Theological Development. The bishops' Ecumenical Officer oversees the ministry of the two Ecumenical Staff Officers.

The Council of Bishops Leadership Team on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (LTEIR) is the group of elected bishops that gives direct oversight and accountability to the general ministry of the COB ecumenical staff. They meet together twice a year during Council of Bishops gatherings to receive reports and make recommendations.

The COB OCUIR (formerly known as the Steering Committee) is comprised of laity and clergy from across the Connection. Their purpose is to work collaboratively with the bishops to support the ecumenical and interreligious ministries of The United Methodist Church. These groups and individuals work together to help the COB and its ecumenical staff function in the best possible way on behalf of The United Methodist Church.

The denominational level, however, is not the only way The United Methodist Church lives out our ecumenical and interreligious witness. Annual Conferences, districts, and local congregations are the vehicles through which disciples are made and practical theology is lived out.

Per the Discipline, ¶1642, *Each annual conference shall create appropriate structures related to Christian unity and interreligious relationships to provide for these functions and maintain the connective relationships with the Council of Bishops. The Discipline contains a recommended structure and the required duties of this annual conference group. The COB ecumenical staff maintains contact with annual conferences through their corresponding structures, normally referred to as CUIR's (see the appendix for a listing of annual conference representatives).*

Districts have an important role to play as well. It is recommended that the group responsible for annual conference Christian unity and interreligious relationships be comprised, in part, of two representatives from each district. Districts can also be sources of encouragement and support for ecumenical and interreligious ministry and formation. The flow of information both ways is best when the annual conference CUIR and COB ecumenical staff stay in touch with each other.

Most importantly, every local congregation should be encouraged to be in relationship with members and leaders of houses of worship in their areas. Rich ministry can be offered on a local level when those relationships are built. Local congregations should also be connected to their district representatives and annual conference representatives in order to keep in touch with the COB ecumenical staff and for information about local ecumenical and interreligious events. The work of the COB is enlivened by examples of local ecumenical and interreligious ministries. The following chapter gives suggestions on how involvement and witness may happen.



*“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they have not communicated with each other.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
Leader of The Civil  
Rights Movement  
(1929-1968)

## The Work of the Council of Bishops

### Types of Local Ecumenical and Interreligious Involvement

There are many different ways for leaders in The United Methodist Church to encourage ecumenical and Interreligious engagement. Locally, there are often several options. If none of the following exists, however, United Methodist clergy and laity are encouraged to start unity movements. Some ideas to consider include the following:

**Church to Church Connection:** Both laity and clergy can be intentionally involved in Christian unity and interreligious relationships in their contexts and neighborhoods. United Methodists can be catalysts for community mercy and justice ministries; shared worship services; joint Bible studies; visits to each other’s houses of worship; and disaster response ministries. A local pastor or lay leader can get started by simply reaching out to someone in another faith community and asking if they might study together or be in ministry together in some way needed in the area.

**Local Conciliar Bodies:** The United Methodist Church participates fully in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Many of these groups find expression within the areas of our annual conferences and districts. Pastors and lay people can look in their area for

ministerial associations, ecumenical or interfaith covenant groups, study groups, councils of churches, and interfaith communities.

**Opportunities for Study:** There are several, regular events and gatherings in which United Methodists can be engaged. In the United States, for example, there is an annual UMEIT (United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training) event that is held parallel to the National Workshop on Christian Unity. UMEIT USA, led by a team working with the Council of Bishops ecumenical staff, is open to all who wish to register and is an excellent avenue for learning about what is happening in ecumenical in interreligious ministry currently. UMEIT can be held in any annual conference around the world, if there is leadership who would like the COB ecumenical staff to work with them. A bishop or district superintendent would simply need to work with the office to connect the local leadership with the COB staff.

In addition to UMEIT, in the USA for example, the North American Academy of Ecumenists meets annually. The National Council of Churches sponsors Ecumenical Advocacy Days each year. And, Christian Churches Together sponsors an annual themed plenary, part of which is open to all interested.

**Church Re-organizations:** When small congregations shrink to the point of becoming ineffective in making disciples of Jesus Christ, congregations can suggest options to their district superintendents. Our *Book of Discipline* offers options for union and sharing with other local denominations. Paragraph 206 in the *Book of Discipline* explains the organization of “Cooperative Parishes.” Paragraph 207 outlines “Ecumenical Shared Ministries.” Paragraph 208 explains the concepts of “Federated churches,” “union churches,” “merged churches,” and “yoked parishes.”

Most importantly, **prayer and worship** are ways in which United Methodists are called to be involved ecumenically and interreligiously. Local congregations can pray for their neighbor churches and other houses of worship every Sunday during the time of pastoral prayer. Joint worship services can be held on special occasions, such as Thanksgiving in the US, or Epiphany, or Easter.

## The United Methodist Participation in Councils and Other Networks

The United Methodist Church officially participates in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Every time a meeting is held those United Methodists in attendance are representative of all United Methodists across the connection. Among the organizations in which The United Methodist Church participates are the following:

**CUIC/COCU:** In 1962 a conversation on visible union was initiated among four churches in the United States. This conversation was named the Consultation on Church Union (COCU). Quickly growing to include seven denominations, COCU worked through the 1960's to develop a theological foundation. After thirty years of discussions, at the 1996 General Conference, The United Methodist Church became the sixth of nine denominations to sign a pledge to work toward covenantal relationship. In 2002 the form of this relationship changed from an organic merger to mutual recognition, cooperation and ministry support, as the former COCU inaugurated CUIC (Churches Uniting in Christ). A main focus for CUIC has continued from that time to be the eradication of racism in and among the member denominations. ([www.churchesunitinginchrist.org](http://www.churchesunitinginchrist.org))

**Pan-Methodist Commission:** The Pan-Methodist Commission came into existence in 1985. It fosters meaningful cooperation among the African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, African Union Methodist Protestant, Christian Methodist Episcopal, United Methodist, and Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches. Through this cooperation, the Commission strives to bear witness to Methodist principles of Christian formation, service, and social justice. ([www.panmethodist.org](http://www.panmethodist.org))

**NWCU:** In 1963, a group of Roman Catholics, in the context of the Second Vatican Council, met to equip local leadership for the task of ecumenical ministry. In 1969, they invited leaders of other Christian communions to join, and today the national ecumenical officers of the churches continue their oversight of the workshop, which is planned jointly by national and local committees. There are both denominational and ecumenical sessions during the workshop, including the annual UMEIT USA gathering. ([www.nwcu.org](http://www.nwcu.org))

**NCCCUSA:** The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA was organized in 1950, replacing and expanding the former Federal Council of Churches, a Protestant organization that began in 1908. The NCC is comprised today of 38 Protestant,

## Anglican and Orthodox Communions

Church World Service ([www.cwsglobal.org](http://www.cwsglobal.org)) and CROP WALK ([www.crophungerwalk.org](http://www.crophungerwalk.org)) grew out of the NCC. ([www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us](http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us)) Where other national or regional ecumenical bodies exist, United Methodists in that area are encouraged to participate.

**CCT:** Christian Churches Together began in 2001 among several traditions in the US. It is a gathering of churches that provides a context – marked by prayer, worship and fellowship—in which churches can develop relationships with other churches with whom they presently have little contact. ([www.christianchurchestogether.org](http://www.christianchurchestogether.org))

**WCC:** The World Council of Churches is the largest international council of Christians. Organized in 1948 in Amsterdam with 147 member churches, the WCC is the successor of the International Missionary Council and the World Conference on Faith and Order, among others. The WCC is mainly known for its global relief efforts and programs to combat racism and sexism around the world. Today the WCC has 345 member traditions in more than 110 nations and represents more than 500 million Christians world-wide. ([www.oikoumene.org](http://www.oikoumene.org))

**WMC:** The World Methodist Council formally organized under its current name in 1951. It had its origin in the Ecumenical Methodist Conference of 1881 in London, which was a gathering of representatives of some 30 Wesleyan bodies, primarily in Great Britain and North America. The WMC now is a worldwide association of 80 member churches including over 80.5 million constituents in 133 countries. At worldwide gatherings every 5 years, representative churches name the 500-member policy-making council. The program of the WMC focuses on evangelism, mission and dialogue with other ecumenical bodies. ([www.worldmethodistcouncil.org](http://www.worldmethodistcouncil.org))

**PWR:** The first Parliament of the World's Religions was convened in 1893. It continues today as a way to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. To accomplish this, the PWR invites individuals and communities who are equally invested in attaining this goal. Gatherings are bi-annually and workshops and webinars continue in between. ([www.parliamentofreligions.org](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org))

**GCF:** The Global Christian Forum seeks to create spaces where participants all meet on an equal basis to foster mutual respect and to explore together common concerns. ([www.globalchristianforum.org](http://www.globalchristianforum.org))

**RfP:** Since its founding in 1970, Religions for Peace has been guided by the vision of a world in which religious communities cooperate effectively for peace, by taking concrete common action. Religions for Peace is committed to leading efforts to advance effective multi-religious cooperation for peace on global, regional, national and local levels while ensuring that the religious communities organized on these same levels assume and exercise appropriate leadership and ownership of these efforts. ([www.religionsforpeace.org](http://www.religionsforpeace.org))

## United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training

United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training (UMEIT) is the over-arching name for formation through the COB. Trainings come in various forms, such as:

**UMEIT USA:** This is an annual gathering which, occurs in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity. All annual conference Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships Representatives or Chairs are strongly encouraged to attend, however, all interested Methodists are welcomed. UMEIT USA takes place in a different city throughout the United States every year, and it is an excellent way to learn about unity ministry and network with other local leaders. Scholarships for seminary students are available. Go to [www.nwcu.org](http://www.nwcu.org) for initial information.

**UMEIT Global:** The COB has a goal of helping to coordinate UMEIT events across the Connection. Already, UMEIT sessions have been successful in the Philippines and in Norway. Central and Annual Conferences are encouraged to invite the COB OCUIR to help organize and teach at a UMEIT in their area. A bishop need only work with their COB ecumenical staff to create a UMEIT in her or his annual conference. The only requirement is local leadership to work with the COB staff.

**UMEIT Young Adult Network:** A group of young adults from across the Connection are in process of being trained in ecumenical and interreligious ministry through the COB ecumenical staff. They, in turn, are committed to creating networks of young adults and training them in their own contexts. They meet via video conference every six weeks as they learn, teach each other and develop their ministerial action plans (MAPs).

**UMEIT Ecumenical and Interreligious Plunge:** Every annual conference is encouraged to select one young adult to participate in this formation ministry every other year. The annual conference is invited to sponsor him or her to take an

intensive two-week pilgrimage to ecumenical sites in Europe, while learning about the Ecumenical Movement. The following year the same young adult will raise his or her own funding to take a second pilgrimage to interreligious sites of his or her choosing in order to learn about the Interfaith Movement.

## United Methodist Dialogues

Currently, The United Methodist Church has two active denominational-level Dialogues: 1) with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (begun in 1967) and, 2) with The Episcopal Church (USA) (begun in 2002). A Dialogue with the Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces), conducted in 2013 and 2014, resulted in a full communion agreement that was ratified by the 2016 General Conference and is scheduled to be considered for approval by the two Moravian Provincial Synods in 2018.

The stated goal of both the Dialogue with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Episcopal Church USA is the establishment of a full communion relationship. Substantive differences over the Petrine Office and women's ordination (with Roman Catholics) and the nature of the episcopacy (with Roman Catholics and Episcopalians) remain unresolved and dialogue continues with both ecumenical conversation partners.

Dialogues, through the auspices of the World Methodist Council, are also conducted at the world level with the Vatican, Baptists, and the Anglican Communion. These Dialogues are not authoritative, in that the products of these conversations are not binding upon member churches in the World Methodist Council, but they offer useful insights and resources for dialogues at other levels of the Christian church.

Dialogues also take place at many different national, regional, and local levels of the church. Many ecumenical agreements have resulted from these conversations and ecumenical dialogue is an important part of ministry of congregations, communities, and larger groupings of Christians as they give witness to the transformation possible through common witness to the love of Christ Jesus.

## Full Communion Partners

The United Methodist Church has several full communion partners. We understand a formal full communion relationship as one that exists between two or more Christian churches that:

1. recognize each other as constituent members of the one, holy catholic and apostolic church, the Body of Christ, as described in the Holy Scriptures, and confessed in the church's historic creeds;
2. recognize the authenticity of each other's sacraments and welcome one another to partake in the Eucharist in each other's worship;
3. affirm the authenticity of each church's Christian ministry; and
4. recognize the validity each other's offices of ministry.

At the denominational level The United Methodist Church is in full communion relationship with several churches, including:

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

The African Union Methodist Protestant Church

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces)  
*pending their denominational approvals*

The Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches

The Uniting Church in Sweden

There are also full communion relationships on annual and central conference levels. The community of Protestant Churches in Europe is one example of these.

## Other Partner Relationships

In the *Book of Discipline* special partnerships are described among The United Methodist Church and other Methodist, or Wesleyan, denominations around the world. These are churches outside the bounds of United Methodist jurisdictions but have relationship agreements with The United Methodist Church, as follows:

**Autonomous Methodist Churches** are self-governing churches in the Wesleyan tradition. They may have entered into an Act of Covenanting with The United Methodist Church. They do not send delegates to The United Methodist General Conference.

**Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches** are also self-governing churches. Their establishment was assisted by The United Methodist Church (or one of its predecessors). They have entered into a Covenant of Relationship or an Act of Covenanting with The United Methodist Church. They are entitled to send two delegates (one clergy and one lay) to The United Methodist General Conference.

**Affiliated United Churches** are self-governing churches which were created when two or more denominations united, one of which was related to The United Methodist Church (or one of its predecessors). They are entitled to send two delegates (one clergy and one lay) to The United Methodist General Conference.

**Covenanting Churches** are self-governing churches (which may fall into one of the previously-mentioned categories or are of another Christian denomination) that have entered into a covenanting relationship with The United Methodist Church through an Act of Covenanting. They are entitled to send two delegates (one clergy and one lay) to The United Methodist General Conference.

The COB works to strengthen and explore these relationships. A Pre-General Conference Ministry Consultation among some of these partners was held just prior to the 2016 General Conference in Oregon.

## Interreligious Relationships

Interreligious hospitality has been described as the new leaf that has been inserted into the ecumenical table. God's world has become more and more diverse, mobile and connected, and therefore interreligious relationship-building has become more and more important to The United Methodist Church. This is an area in which The United Methodist Church still has much outreach and learning to do; however, we are in relationship with the following organizations and religions:

**The Parliament of the World's Religions** (PWR) was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world. To accomplish this, they invite individuals and communities who are equally invested in attaining this goal. They now hold a global assembly every other year.

**Religions for Peace** (RfP) is guided by the vision of a world in which religious communities cooperate effectively for peace, by taking concrete common action.

These organizations are committed to leading efforts to advance effective multi-religious cooperation for peace on global, regional, national and local levels while ensuring that the religious communities organized on these same levels assume and exercise appropriate leadership and ownership of these efforts.

The COB ecumenical staff and other United Methodist representatives also actively participate in roundtable dialogues through the National Council of Churches with both Jewish and Muslim organizations, and has several less- formal relationships with other interreligious organizations. The General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society also have some ministry in this area. Additionally, there are numerous vibrant relationships and dialogues taking place across the Connection with persons of other religions. The COB staff can connect you with some of those leaders if there is reason.



***“You can’t shake hands with a clenched fist.”***

Indira Gandhi,  
Prime Minister of India  
(1917-1948)

## **Prayer and Worship**

### **Ecumenical Prayer and Worship**

When Christians of various traditions come together for worship there is often great confusion about how worship should be organized. Basically, there are two options. Each different tradition can take a turn in leading from their context and thus teaching the other Christians present about their style of worship. Alternatively, a combined service, or ecumenical service, can be created. When the latter option is chosen there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Ecumenical worship is an opportunity to witness to the inclusive love and unity of God’s Spirit. Make sure everyone is invited.
2. There should be representation from all traditions who will be involved in the planning of the service of worship. It is better to have clear communication from the start than to make assumptions.
3. An honest conversation about Holy Communion needs to happen. The Eucharist means different things to different traditions. Often, sharing in Communion is not a possibility. However, the brokenness that remains can be highlighted with a careful explanation of why we cannot yet all

partake together. Additionally, all persons can receive blessings from officiants. It is helpful for those not familiar with this practice to make this invitation orally and written with brief instructions.

4. When United Methodists participate in ecumenical worship it is essential they are first well-versed in their own traditions. The order of worship of a United Methodist service can be found in the front of The United Methodist Hymnal. It should be studied and understood.

5. A single, scriptural theme is recommended in order to hold all the parts of the worship service together.

In the appendix to this handbook you will find example liturgies from: Churches Uniting in Christ, The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and The Eucharistic Liturgy of Lima from the World Council of Churches. These may serve as templates in planning ecumenical worship services.

## Christian Sacraments and Special Church Rituals

When Christians of various traditions worship together, special consideration should be given to the sacraments. Attention should be given, also, to the fact that different Christian groups have different sets of sacraments.

**Baptism:** Most denominations now recognize baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those affirming only believers' or adult baptism will question infant baptism. The Triune baptism by water of an individual from another Christian body is accepted and affirmed when that individual comes to join a United Methodist congregation, however, United Methodist polity does not support re-baptism. A renewal of baptismal vows can be offered instead. When a baptism is offered in a United Methodist church it is appropriate to have a clergy person from one of our full communion partners participate as a sign that baptism is into the universal church of Jesus Christ. Likewise, United Methodist clergy are encouraged to participate in baptisms in other Christian churches, when invited.

**Communion:** The United Methodist Church practices an open Communion. This means all persons are invited and welcomed to participate, because we believe the sacrament is a means of grace available to all. When worshipping with another

faith community it is important to learn what their practice is. For example, there is no formal provision for Communion with the Roman Catholic Church. United Methodist worshippers should respect their difference of belief and not assume it is acceptable to receive the elements. Instead they may choose to request a blessing from the officiant.

**Marriage:** In The United Methodist Church it is the responsibility of the pastor officiating to discern whether or not he or she will agree to perform the marriage ceremony. Pre-marital counseling is highly recommended. When the marriage is ecumenical, that is, when it is between two Christians of different traditions, then clergy from both traditions are welcome to participate and to continue in a relationship of support with the couple. When the marriage is interreligious, that is when it is between adherents of two different religions, then great care should be taken to learn what is required by both religions. Basic resources are available from the COB for weddings between Christians and Buddhists, Hindus, Jews or Muslims.

**Funerals:** Again, the preparation and leadership in a funeral is at the discernment of the pastor officiating. Interaction with the family is highly recommended, and joint leadership among ecumenical clergy is welcomed. For interreligious funerals, basic resources are available from the COB for services including Christians and Buddhists, Hindus, Jews or Muslims.

## Interreligious Prayer and Worship

When groups of people from multiple religious traditions gather for worship, hospitality and care need to be shown. At the same time the participants' particular faith expressions should be honored. This can be a delicate balance, but it is one into which we are called as both neighbors and witnesses. These thoughts may add some guidance:

1. All participants should know who they are and what their faith means to them. It may be helpful for United Methodists to study the order of worship found in the front of the UM Hymnal.
2. It would be wise to study the basics of the religions of the others involved in the worship service. This may keep participants from making some easily-avoidable mistakes.

3. A representative of each participating religion and tradition should be on the planning committee.
4. It is recommended there be a pre-determined goal in mind. Why is this worship service being held and why are United Methodists participating?
5. Know ahead of time what each participant's limits are in terms of the names and characteristics of God. For example, is it important to end a prayer in the name Jesus Christ, or is it important to name God as receiver of all prayers?
6. Communication with other participants is essential. Each person needs to know and understand the other's limits, passions and goals.
7. The COB staff has prepared brochures for Christian clergy who are invited to participate in weddings and funerals of joint services with Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and Muslims. They afford basic information on those world religions and advice on entering into worship officiation with their leaders.

*“We must wage peace as vigilantly as we wage war.”*

The Dalai Lama,  
Leader of  
Tibetan Buddhism  
(1950-present))

## Practical Engagement

### Grants, Scholarships and Resources

The COB offers several opportunities throughout the year to receive grants and scholarships. Check the website and Facebook pages for the most up-to-date information on the following opportunities (and other opportunities as they arise):

**Local Initiative Grants:** These grants provide at least three groups within annual conferences working on ecumenical and/or interreligious ministries financial assistance. Applications are due in the late summer; projects are selected in the fall, and funds are forwarded toward the end of the year for use the following year.

**UMEIT Scholarships:** Every year several scholarships are available for seminary students to attend UMEIT USA and the National Workshop on Christian Unity. Applications are available after the first of the year for these spring gatherings.

**The World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute (Bossey):** Every year The Ecumenical Institute in Geneva, Switzerland hosts a five-month educational certificate program for theologians from around the world. The COB sponsors one young adult to attend as a representative of our denomination. Applications are available after the first of the year.

## How Can You Help Churches Be Involved?

There are many ways to be active in ecumenical and interreligious ministry and witness. In addition to those already mentioned, the COB ecumenical staff recommends:

**The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:** This is an effort began in the 19th century to have Christians join in prayer together annually. In the 1930's these efforts were coordinated and expanded when Roman Catholic Priest, Paul Couturier, inaugurated a Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Still today, this week is celebrated each January beginning the third Sunday by millions of Christians around the world, including those in The United Methodist Church. Since the Second Vatican Council, the theme and materials for this prayer week have been prepared by a joint group from the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The suggested worship materials are available from the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute at [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org).

**The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:** This resource to help local congregations, districts or annual conferences engage in prayers of supplication and thanksgiving is available from the World Council of Churches. It can be added to local church, district or conference websites. With All God's People: The New Ecumenical Prayer Cycle is available at [oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle/ecumenical-prayer-cycle](http://oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle/ecumenical-prayer-cycle).

**Annual Conference CUIRs:** Possibly the most effective way to get districts and conferences involved is to encourage local congregations to connect with the Annual Conference CUIR Representative. By *Discipline* each annual conference is required to have a committee, team or group which is responsible for assisting their resident bishop with the living out of ecumenical and interreligious ministries. The annual conferences who have responded to the COB request for those names are listed in the appendix. It is further recommended that each district also have a contact person, who works directly with the annual conference group. Each congregation can, in turn, be connected to that district leader. Each pastor can also seek out, or begin, an ecumenical or interreligious ministerial associate in his or her context.

Finally, all the UMEIT opportunities are available to all clergy and laity. The different forms of The United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training have been outlined previously in this manual. If you have further questions or would like to be more involved with your office, please feel free to contact the COB staff directly.

***“No matter how thin you slice it, there will always be two sides.”***

Baruch Spinoza,  
Jewish-Dutch  
philosopher  
(1632-1677)

## **A. Glossary**

**I. Ecumenism** - The word “ecumenism” is a noun derived from two Greek words, oikoumene (“the inhabited earth”) and oikos (“house”). Put together, ecumenism could be understood as: “The people of the whole world who live within a common home.” When traced to the teachings and prayers of Christ, ecumenism can be used to describe the worldwide household of those who hold to one Christian faith. It has become a key word for the movement toward greater Christian understanding, appreciation, and visible unity. In its modern usage, ecumenism has come to be associated with Christian unity in general. The word “ecumenical” is an adjective used to describe this 20th century movement and its leadership.

**II. Interreligious** - There are several ways this word and the following word are currently used. For the WCC “interreligious” refers to actions between different Christian denominations, much like the word “ecumenical”. It has also been used to refer to holding formal dialogues. The COB ecumenical staff usually uses “interreligious” to describe interactions among religious institutions or religious organizations, the emphasis being on the institutional relationships among religions, such as Christian, Buddhist and Hindu.

**III. Interfaith** - For the WCC “interfaith” refers to interaction between different faith groups such as Muslim, Christian and Jew. It has also been used to refer to the working together of people of faith to combat social justice issues. The COB ecumenical staff usually uses to “interfaith” to describe interactions among people of different religions, the emphasis being on the personal, spiritual relationships among human beings.

**IV. Dialogue and Conversation** - Dialogue literally means a word between two parties but is more broadly understood as a term for conversation or listening. Within the Ecumenical Movement it has come to be understood as a formal, official and on-going conversation on particular issues of unity between or among denominations or groups of faith. A dialogue between two faith groups is called a bi-lateral dialogue. A dialogue among three or more faith groups is called a multi-lateral dialogue.

## B. Foundational Documents

1. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses* [analyzes the 186 official responses of the churches and needed further work.]
2. *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*, Thomas Best, editor.
3. *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community* [Report of a six-year WCC Faith and Order study.]
4. *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* [Over 600 alphabetic entries dealing with themes, events, organizations and theological discussions.]
5. *The Ecumenical Movement: Key Voices and Texts*, Vol. 2, Michael Kinnamon Editor.
6. *Grace upon Grace: The Mission Statement of The United Methodist Church*, 1990 [official document of the General Conference that defines both mission and ecumenical policies.]
7. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement: Vol. I: 1517-1948*, Ruth Rose and Stephen Charles Neill, Editors. Vol. II: 1948-1968, Harold E. Fey, Editor.
8. *Major Studies and Themes in the Ecumenical Movement*, Ans J. Van der Bent, Editor.

9. *Signs of the Spirit*, Michael Kinnamon, Editor [Official report of the WCC assembly in Canberra, 1991.]

10. *The Truth Shall Make You Free, The Lambeth Conference 1988: The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* [Important conversations from the Episcopal Church.]

11. *Local Ecumenism and Interfaith Cooperation*, Graymoor Ecumenical Institute.

## C. Periodicals

1. The Ecumenical Review

[Quarterly theological journal of the World Council of Churches.]

2. Ecumenical Trends

[Monthly publication of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute.]

3. Mid-Stream

[Quarterly ecumenical journal of the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ.]

## D. Full Communion Agreements

1. The African Methodist Episcopal Church-UMC

2. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church-UMC

3. The African Union Methodist Protestant Church-UMC

4. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church-UMC

5. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America-UMC

6. The Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces) UMC  
*pending Moravian denominational approvals*

7. The Union American Methodist Church-UMC

8. The Uniting Church in Sweden-UMC

## E. CUIC Communion Liturgy

*(This has been revised for local and regional worship services but originated from the National Act of Worship Inaugurating Churches Uniting in Christ. This particular version can be found at [episcopalchurch.org/library/document/cuic-liturgy](http://episcopalchurch.org/library/document/cuic-liturgy), however in response to the 2015 CUIC plenary a section under "Declaration of Purpose" referring to reconciliation of ministry has been removed.)*

## Introductory and Penitential Rites

### Processional Hymn of Praise

#### The Call to Assemble and Response to the Call

*(Calling the Names of Communion and Ecumenical Groups Gathered)*

#### Declaration of Purpose

**Leader:** We gather to praise God who in Christ Jesus chose us before the world was founded. We gather because God has dedicated us to be without blemish and full of love.

**People:** We come to ask God's Holy Spirit to be with us as we seek forgiveness for the sin of division. We come to pray for the full, visible unity of the one Body of Christ.

**Leader:** Led by the Holy Spirit, we have become Churches Uniting in Christ. In this relationship with one another, we can speak the Christian faith more clearly. With fresh courage, we can oppose the powers that divide our churches and oppress the people of our land.

**People:** We ask for wisdom and perseverance as we work to reconcile our separated ministries so that they will be united as one ministry of Jesus Christ.

#### Prayer of Confession

*(Optional- appropriate for penitential seasons and at the discretion of the Presider)*

**Leader:** Let us confess our sins before God and one another, Holy God, we have promised to love you with heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to live our neighbors as we love ourselves.

**People:** We confess to you and to each another that we break the promises and violate this covenant of love. We confess that we are diminished by pride and separation. We acknowledge the sinful divisions of our churches. We admit our failures in mission of justice and love. We confess that we support systems of racism and other oppression that despoil your incarnate image and violate creation. Merciful God, forgive us. In Jesus Christ, transform our hearts to obey your commandments, restore our love for one another, and proclaim your glory. Ever-living God, our Judge and Healer, have mercy on us.

## Lord, Have Mercy (Kyrie Eleison)

### Declaration of Forgiveness

**Leader:** Everyone who is in Christ has become a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come God through Christ, has reconciled the world and gives us the ministry of reconciliation. Friends, believe the Good News that comes from God: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

**People:** Thanks be to God. Amen

### Liturgy of the Word

#### Prayer for the Day

**Leader:** Eternal God: Proclaim your word in the reading of scripture. Speak to us in the meditations of our hearts. Reveal yourself in the faithfulness of our lives. Through Jesus Christ we pray.

**All:** Amen.

#### First reading from the Bible

\* Reader's Introduction: The Word of God from . . .

\* Reader's Conclusion: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

\* People's Response: Thanks be to God.

#### Psalm

#### Second Reading from the Bible

\* As above Hymn

#### A Reading from the Gospel

\* As above

#### Sermon

#### Affirmation of Faith: The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was

crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

### **Prayers of the People:**

*Prayer is offered with intercession for: the Universal Church, its members, and its mission; the Nation and all in authority; the welfare of the local community; those who suffer and those in any trouble; the departed (with commemoration of a saint when appropriate)*

**Leader:** Holy God, the earth you created in beauty now languishes in pain, waiting for its redemption. The peoples of the earth whom you created, to live together in peace and joy, now experience violence and despair. Transform us and our Churches Uniting in Christ that we may become your ministers to this world and its people.

**People:** Make us bold in our struggle against cruelty. Give us courage and endurance to accept no peace where there is oppression, and to work for justice, God's Shalom, and the common good. Help us speak to the conscience of our country and its institutions. Use us to heal the brokenness in life. Renew our joy so that all creation can sing again the glad songs with which the world began.

**Leader:** All this we pray through Jesus Christ through whom you make all things new,

**People:** Amen.

### **Hymn**

**Peace:** The people exchange signs of Christ's peace.

## Liturgy of the Table

### Offering and Preparation of the Table

**Leader:** My sisters and brothers, we have confessed the gospel of Christ and the new life that God has lavished upon us. Let us know glorify God with gifts that we share with one another and with the whole world.

**Gifts are brought forward to the table to be prepared for the Eucharistic Meal.**

**Anthem** (if appropriate)

### Great Thanksgiving Prayer

**Leader:** God be with you,

**People:** And also with you.

**Leader:** Lift up your hearts. **People:** We lift them to God,

**Leader:** Let us give thanks to God most high.

**People:** It is right to give God thanks and praise,

**Leader:** All praise to you, God our Creator, for by your Word and Spirit you made the heavens and the earth, filled them with life and declared everything good. All praise to you, God our Redeemer, for sending prophets, apostles, teachers, and martyrs, inspired by your Spirit to speak the word of life, and when the time was right, for becoming fully human in Jesus Christ. All praise to you, God our Helper; as wisdom, you inspire us to speak the truth; as power, you strengthen us to do justice. With your sons and daughters of faith, in all times and places, and with all the heavenly host, we praise you with joy.

**All:** Holy, holy, holy God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God. Hosanna in the highest!

**Leader:** Loving God, in gratitude we remember that on the night before the crucifixion, Jesus took bread and after giving thanks to you broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." In gratitude for what Christ has done for us, we proclaim our hope.

**All:** Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life, Jesus, come in glory.

**Leader:** Holy God, send your Holy Spirit upon us and these gifts, that all who eat and drink at this table may be one body and one people, a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Through this meal unite us with the risen Christ so that we may give ourselves for the life of the world. Through us bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Give us the power to work for justice that all the world may be filled with peace and joy. This sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we offer you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** With the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

**All:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

### Breaking the Bread

**Leader:** The bread we break is the communion of the body of Christ.

**All:** We who are many are one body for we all share in the one bread.

**Leader:** The cup of blessing for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

**All:** We who are many are one body for we all share in the one cup.

### Communion of the People

As the people make their communion, hymns may be sung.

### Prayer after Communion

**All:** God of glory, you nourish us with bread from heaven. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that through us your light may shine into all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Concluding Rites

#### The Commission and the Blessing

**Leader:** Let us go from this place in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May God bless us with strength to seek justice.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May God bless us with wisdom to care for the earth.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May God bless us with courage to live together in unity.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of god, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

**All:** Amen.

## Recessional Hymn

*(Worship Planners are encouraged to follow local customs and those of the worship leaders in the selections for music and in giving guidance to times appropriate for standing, kneeling, or sitting.)*

## F. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

### Example Service

*(This is an example of the Week of Prayer Service from 2015.)*

*This particular service is posted at:*

*Vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/chrstuni/weeks-prayer-doc/rc-pc\_chrstuni\_doc20140611\_week-prayer-2015\_en.html*

### I. Prelude/Preparation

The candles are to be lit as the service starts.

#### Welcome and Introduction to the Week of Prayer – Theme

*A commentator welcomes people to the celebration introducing the theme of the prayer.*

**L:** Please stand and join in singing the opening hymn as the celebrants enter in procession along the path. Passing near the “well”, each representative of a participating church will slowly pour the water from a jug into the bowl. This water, from different sources, is a symbol of our unity which is real, though still incomplete. When the celebrating group is small, if possible, invite people to say their names and to which church they belong.

### II. Opening

#### Invitation to prayer (3)

**C:** Almighty God, breathe into us the wind of unity that recognizes our diversity,

**A:** Breathe into us tolerance that welcomes and makes us community,

**C:** Breathe into us fire that unites what is torn apart and heals what is ill,

**A:** Breathe into us grace that overcomes hatred and frees us from violence,

**C:** Breathe into us life that faces down and defeats death,

**A:** Blessed be the God of mercy, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and makes all things new. Amen!

### Confession of Sin and Kyrie

**C:** In humility, as children of God and sisters and brothers in Christ, we receive God's mercy and respond to God's call to make new all relationships.

**L:** Merciful Lord, your Spirit hovered over the waters where diversity sprouted and flourished. We confess our difficulty to live with legitimate differences. Forgive us those attitudes of mind, words and actions that do violence to unity in diversity.

**A:** O Lord, have mercy upon us... (sung)

**L:** Merciful Christ, grace and joy of the multitude, listener and teacher, you give birth to new visions of hope and heal the wounds of mind and body. We confess that we have failed to listen to voices different from our own, failed to say words that bring healing and hope, and we have perpetuated exclusive attitudes to those who cry out for solidarity and fellowship.

**A:** O Lord, have mercy upon us... (sung)

**L:** Merciful Lord, you are the source of all creation, the Eternal and life-giving Word. We confess that we do not listen to your creation that groans and cries out for liberation and renewal. Help us to walk together and to hear your voice in all living things that suffer and yearn for healing and care.

**C:** O God, fountain of mercy and grace, pour over us your pardon. May your love transform us into a source of living waters to restore the strength of your people. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

**A:** Amen.

### III. Gospel Proclamation

Proclamation or dramatization of the Gospel of John 4:1-42

Meditation or Sermon

## IV. We Respond in Faith and Unity

### Affirmation of Faith

*(The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Apostles' Creed or another affirmation of faith may be used for example the renewal of baptismal promises.)*

### Intercessory Prayer

*The Congregation may sing the following Indigenous melody Guaicuru Kyrie or choose another.*

**L:** God of eternal compassion, as individuals and as community, we ask for light, so we may become more welcoming and understanding towards others and reduce the suffering in our world.

**A:** Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!... (sung)

**L:** God of eternal compassion, teach your children that charity, hospitality and unity are expressions of your revelation and will for humanity.

**A:** Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!... (sung)

**L:** God of eternal compassion, we beseech you, grant us peace; teach us and guide us to be builders of a tolerant and non-violent world.

**A:** Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!... (sung)

**L:** God of eternal compassion, who spoke to us through creation, then through the prophets and then through your Son Jesus Christ, grant us wisdom to listen to your voice that calls us to unity in our diversity.

**A:** Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!... (sung)

**L:** God of eternal compassion, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord who as a stranger asked for a drink from a Samaritan woman, give us living water, springing up unto eternal life.

**A:** Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!... (sung)

The local community may add other prayers.

### Offering

**C:** We learn from Jesus to offer our lives as a sign of love and compassion. God, may we become living offerings dedicated to the ministry of your Word and grace.

## Offerings are presented to the community.

**C:** God, who are with us and walk in our midst, grant us this day the grace of your light and Spirit so that we may continue our mission and remain faithful to welcoming and listening to all, even those who are different from ourselves. Take away the violence that is in our hearts and the discriminating attitudes that exclude and devalue the human dignity of others. Enable our churches to be welcoming spaces where feast and forgiveness, joy and tenderness, strength and faith become our daily practice, our daily food, our daily movement forward in Jesus Christ.

**A:** Amen.

*Note: Local communities are invited to organize the offerings according to local tradition. We suggest that offerings be brought and placed on top of the colorful cloth before the altar. While the offertory takes place, a song is sung, chosen by the local organizing team.*

## The Lord's Prayer *(said or sung)*

### V. Benediction, Peace and Sending Forth

#### Benediction

**C:** May the Lord God,  
 bless you and protect you,  
 fill your heart with tenderness and your soul with joy,  
 your ears with music and your nostrils with perfume,  
 your tongue with song giving face to hope.  
 May Jesus Christ the living water be  
 behind you to protect you,  
 before you to guide you,  
 by your side to accompany you,  
 within you to console you,  
 above you to bless you.  
 May the life-giving Spirit  
 breathe into you that your thoughts may be holy,  
 act in you so that your work is holy,  
 draw your heart so that you love what is holy,  
 strengthen you that you will defend what is holy.  
 May he make his home in your heart,

water its dryness, and melt its coldness,  
 kindle in your innermost soul the fire of his love  
 and bestow upon you a true faith, and firm hope, and a sincere and perfect love.

**A:** Amen.

### Sharing Peace

**C:** May God, who teaches us to welcome each other and calls us to practice hospitality, grant us peace and serenity as we move forward on the path of Christian Unity. As we go in the peace of Christ let us share with each other the sign of peace.

### Postlude

## G. The Lima Liturgy

*This example comes from the Reformed Churches of America and can be found at: [rca.org/resources/occasional-liturgies](http://rca.org/resources/occasional-liturgies).*

### Preparation

**O:** Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you are the giver of this bread, fruit of the earth and of human labour, let it become the bread of Life.

**C:** Blessed be God, now and for ever!

**O:** Blessed are you, Lord God of the universe, you are the giver of this wine, fruit of the vine and of human labour, let it become the wine of the eternal Kingdom.

**C:** Blessed be God, now and for ever!

**O:** As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillside are now reunited on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole Church soon be gathered together from the corners of the earth into your Kingdom.

**C:** Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

### Dialogue

**P:** The Lord be with you.

**C:** And also with you.

**P:** Lift up your hearts.

**C:** We lift them to the Lord.

**P:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C:** It is right to give him thanks and praise.

## Preface

**P:** Truly it is right and good to glorify you, at all times and in all places, to offer you our thanksgiving O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God. Through your living Word you created all things, and pronounced them good. You made human beings in your own image, to share your life and reflect your glory. When the time had fully come, you gave Christ to us as the Way, the Truth and the Life. He accepted baptism and consecration as your Servant to announce the good news to the poor. At the last supper Christ bequeathed to us the eucharist, that we should celebrate the memorial of the cross and resurrection, and receive his presence as food. To all the redeemed Christ gave the royal priesthood and, in loving his brothers and sisters, chooses those who share in the ministry, that they may feed the Church with your Word and enable it to live by your Sacraments. Wherefore, Lord, with the angels and all the saints, we proclaim and sing your glory:

## Sanctus

**C:** Holy, Holy, Holy...

## Epiclesis I

**P:** O God, Lord of the universe, you are holy and your glory is beyond measure. Upon your eucharist send the life-giving Spirit, who spoke by Moses and the prophets, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary with grace, who descended upon Jesus in the river Jordan and upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. May the outpouring of this Spirit of Fire transfigure this thanksgiving meal that this bread and wine may become for us the body and blood of Christ.

**C:** Veni Creator Spiritus!

## Institution

**P:** May this Creator Spirit accomplish the words of your beloved Son, who, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks to you, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat: this is my body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. After supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you: this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for

you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this for the remembrance of me. Great is the mystery of faith.

**C:** Your death, Lord Jesus, we proclaim!  
Your resurrection we celebrate!  
Your coming in glory we await!

### Anamnesis

**P:** Wherefore, Lord, we celebrate today the memorial of our redemption: we recall the birth and life of your Son among us, his baptism by John, his last meal with the apostles, his death and descent to the abode of the dead; we proclaim Christ's resurrection and ascension in glory, where as our Great High Priest he ever intercedes for all people; and we look for his coming at the last. United in Christ's priesthood, we present to you this memorial: Remember the sacrifice of your Son and grant to people everywhere the benefits of Christ's redemptive work.

**C:** Maranatha, the Lord comes!

### Epiclesis II

**P:** Behold, Lord, this eucharist which you yourself gave to the Church and graciously receive it, as you accept the offering of your Son whereby we are reinstated in your Covenant. As we partake of Christ's body and blood, fill us with the Holy Spirit that we may be one single body and one single spirit in Christ, a living sacrifice to the praise of your glory.

**C:** Veni Creator Spiritus

### Commemorations

**O:** Remember, Lord, your one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, redeemed by the blood of Christ. Reveal its unity, guard its faith, and preserve it in peace. Remember, Lord, all the servants of your Church: bishops, presbyters, deacons, and all to whom you have given special gifts of ministry.

(Remember especially...)

Remember also all our sisters and brothers who have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone: guide them to the joyful feast prepared for all peoples in your presence, with the blessed Virgin Mary, with the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs... and all the

saints for whom your friendship was life. With all these we sing your praise and await the happiness of your Kingdom where with the whole creation, finally delivered from sin and death, we shall be enabled to glorify you through Christ our Lord;

**C:** Maranatha, the Lord comes!

### Conclusion

**P:** Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God and Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

**C:** Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

**O:** United by one baptism in the same Holy Spirit and the same Body of Christ, we pray as God's sons and daughters:

**C:** Our Father,...

### The Peace

**O:** Lord Jesus Christ, you told your apostles: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church; in order that your will be done, grant us always this peace and guide us toward the perfect unity of your Kingdom for ever.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**C:** And also with you.

**O:** Let us give one another a sign of reconciliation and peace.

### The Breaking Of The Bread

**P:** The bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ, the cup of blessing for which we give thanks is the communion in the Blood of Christ.

### Lamb Of God

**C:** Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

### Communion

## Thanksgiving Prayer

**P:** In peace let us pray to the Lord: O Lord our God, we give you thanks for uniting us by baptism in the Body of Christ and for filling us with joy in the eucharist. Lead us towards the full visible unity of your Church and help us to treasure all the signs of reconciliation you have granted us. Now that we have tasted of the banquet you have prepared for us in the world to come, may we all one day share together the inheritance of the saints in the life of your heavenly city, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

**C:** Amen.

## Final Hymn

## Word Of Mission

## Blessing

**P:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**C:** Amen.

## H. COB Resources: *Available from the COB*

***Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses:*** (statement)

A statement of The United Methodist Church on interreligious relations approved by the 2016 General Conference.

***Building a Relationship—UMC-ELCA: Best Practices***

A guide to starting grassroots conversations between The United Methodist Church and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations.

***Confessing Our Faith Together:*** (study guide)

A study guide for local The United Methodist Church congregations and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations to discuss the possibility of full communion between the denominations.

***Guidelines for Civility in The United Methodist Church:***

A list of practical principles for discussion within United Methodist groups when the topic is controversial.

***GEMS: God's Ecumenical Ministry Shared:***

A workbook for congregations considering a closer, organic relationship.

***Truth and Wholeness: Replacing White Privilege with God's Promise***

A study guide for the leader of a group discussion on white privilege to be used with the DVD (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdSSp3XXkEU>)

***Methodist-Catholic Dialogues—Thirty Years of Mission and Witness:***

(booklet) An overview of 30 years of dialogue between the UMC and the USCCB, printed in 2001.

***The Holocaust: A Christian Reckoning of the Soul—A Commentary and Study Guide on the United Methodist Statement on Holocaust Recognition:***

Rabbi Leon Klenicki and Rev. Betty Gamble

***Make Us One With Christ: The Study Guide Version:***

A study guide of the report on the bilateral dialogue between UMC and the Episcopal Church as we live in the period of Interim Eucharistic Sharing inaugurated in 2006. ISBN: 9780979239106

***Steps Toward Wholeness: Learning and Repentance* (study guide)**

A study guide for United Methodist congregations in preparation for an Act of Repentance for racism and Pan Methodist conversations on union  
ISBN: 9782995200108

***Basic Facts About Islam (brochure)***

An introduction to Islam with suggested resources for study.

***Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue (brochure)******Living and Growing Into Full Communion***

A model for local celebration, formation and theological reflection as prepared by ELCA-UMC Coordinating Committee

## I. Annual Conference and Central Conference Episcopal Area Representatives as Reported to the COB (as of August 31, 2016):

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**Zimbabwe EA -**

*(Annual Conferences with no named representative did not respond to the COB request for information, or they reported that they do not have one.)*



*You are called to guard the faith, to seek the unity, and to exercise the discipline of the whole church; and to supervise and support the church's life, work and mission throughout the world.*