



**Council of Bishops
United Methodist Church**



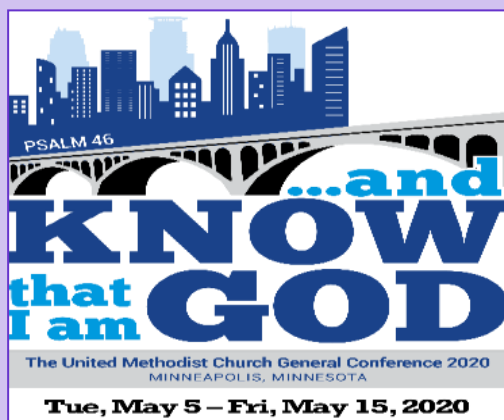
Communion

APRIL 2020

Ecumenical and Interreligious News

Promoting unity and peace through strengthening ecumenical and interreligious relations worldwide

**Council of Bishops' Ecumenical/
Interreligious Ministry
at General Conference 2021**



Ecumenical and interreligious engagement are core to the beliefs of The United Methodist Church. Our Constitution boldly claims: "The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ." (Article IV, *Book of Discipline* 2016, ¶4, p. 26).

Whenever we have the opportunity, United Methodists do our best to give visible witness to this foundational commitment to unity. So, when the General Conference takes place in 2021, the Council of Bishops will be taking the lead in several important, ecumenical events.

"On Ecumenical Day" opening worship in the General Conference plenary will focus on our commitment to church unity and interreligious engagement.

"On Methodist Family Day" our Autonomous Affiliated, Autonomous United and Concordat church partners will be introduced, along with several other Methodist and Wesleyan leaders who will be present with us.

For the first time, the Council of Bishops will have their own booth in the exhibit hall. This will be a place to learn about the Council of Bishops in general and about their ecumenical and interreligious engagements specifically.

And, several important pieces of legislation will be brought forward for consideration by the delegates. A full communion relationship with The Episcopal Church will be considered. And, the new Faith and Order document "Sent in Love" will also be con-

Colossians 3:13-14

(13) Bear with one another and forgive one another if you have any grievance against someone. Forgive as God forgave you. (14) And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all



UMEIT: Updates on United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Trainings

By Rev. Dr. Jean G. Hawxhurst

UMEIT: Global

Every year the Council of Bishops sponsors a United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training (UMEIT: Global) event somewhere in the world. At the invitation of Bishop Ortiz, the 2020 UMEIT: Global will be held in Puerto Rico this coming November 10-12. After the devastating storms hit the island Christians began to work together in new ways to minister to their neighbors. Bishop Ortiz would like to keep that momentum going, so this UMEIT will be led by Methodists but open to Christians in Puerto Rico from several different faith traditions. It will focus on

joint, community ecumenical formation and conversations about how they might continue to be in ministry together in their neighborhoods. The UMEIT will also include an active component, during which participants might engage together in a ministry project.

UMEIT: Young Adult Network

The second cohort of the Council of Bishops United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training: Young Adult Network (UMEIT: YAN) began at the end of 2018 and will continue through the end of 2020. The group of nine young adults from across the Connection have gathered together via two-hour video conference fifteen times, and met face-to-face in Nashville in September of 2019. They are now working on creating ecumenical or interreligious ministries in their home contexts and plan to meet again face-to-face this September at Africa University in Zimbabwe.

The following young adults make up the cohort: Katye Chambers (Illinois), Nick Baird Chrisohon (Tennessee), Michele Chun (California), George Dixon-Gough (Methodist Church in Britain), Mauche Iyashya (Nigeria), Mike Mullin (New York), Chona Panaguitan (Philippines), Shannon Sullivan (Maryland) and Jack Tickle (Pennsylvania).

The next cohort will begin in 2021.





UMEIT: USA (and the National Workshop on Christian Unity)

"UMEIT: USA is held annually in conjunction with the National Workshop on Christian Unity. Sadly, this year both trainings were cancelled. The National Planning Committee is currently in negotiation with the venue in Houston, Texas to try to find a time to reschedule the events later in 2020 or possibly in 2021. As an alternative the Council of Bishops offered their first online group UMEIT training on March 23rd to an eager and engaged group of forty Zoom participants. Bishop Mike Watson (our Ecumenical Officer), Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison (Professor at Perkins School of Theology), Ms. Tura Foster Gillespie (Chair of UMEIT: USA), Dr. Jean Hawxhurst (Ecumenical Staff Officer) and Dr. Kyle Tau (Ecumenical Staff Officer) led a two-hour conversation about what is currently happening in the Ecumenical Movement in the United States of America. Dr. Pope-Levison offered a Bible study with the theme of hospitality and shared about her experience as a participant in the Vatican-World Methodist Council dialogue. Bishop Watson gave an overview of the Council of Bishops ecumenical and interreligious ministries. Dr. Hawxhurst continued that general overview and shared about eight trends she sees in the current Ecumenical Movement. Dr. Tau shared about the bishops' bi-lateral dialogues, the full communion proposal with the Episcopal Church and the new "Sent in Love" document. And, Ms. Foster Gillespie spoke about the UMEIT trainings and where the planning group is with creating the next opportunity. As you will read in a subsequent article this training was such a success plans are being made for future online trainings.

Scholarships from the Council of Bishops to participate in the event were received by: Veronica Russell (California-Nevada), Jack Tickle (Western Pennsylvania), Joe Hopkins (Susquehanna), Elsa Meza (Northern Illinois), Deborah JoAnne Pounds (Louisiana) and Jonathan Speegle (Mississippi).

Next year's UMEIT: USA will be held in Anaheim, California and scholarship applications will be available on the bishops' website (www.unitedmethodistbishops.org) sometime between September and November

UMEIT: Plunge 2020

The second cohort of the United Methodist Ecumenical and Inter-religious Training: Ecumenical and Interreligious Plunge (UMEIT: Plunge) is currently planning to make their ecumenical pilgrimage in July 2020. Tura Foster Gillespie, Sean Lewis, Ben Roberts, and JaNae Swanson will gather in Geneva, Switzerland to have intensive training about the global Ecumenical Movement. They will visit the World Council of Churches headquarters and Ecumenical

Institute, among other important sites. They will also spend a week at Taizé in France in order to put their information gathering into practice in an intentional Christian community. The participants will also covenant to take their own interreligious pilgrimage in 2021, which they will fund themselves. For their first-year pilgrimage they will be accompanied by teachers Fr. Jerry Cappel

from the Episcopal Church and Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst.



UMEIT: Online

The staff of the Council of Bishops is currently working on a new addition to the UMEIT line-up of offerings. UMEIT: Online will be a PowerPoint-driven online course on the basics of ecumenism and interreligious engagement that will be housed on the bishops website www.unitedmethodistbishops.org and available to any individual or small group who would like to learn the basics of the Ecumenical Movement and the bishops' leadership in it. The offerings will also include additional class sessions that will be added as new relationships are formed. For example, one additional class will be centered on the proposal for full communion with the Episcopal Church. Those who complete these courses will contact the COB staff and will receive certificates of completion. The staff hopes to have at least the initial courses up and running by September 2020.

Updates on Scholarships and Grants

By Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst

Bossey Scholarship Recipients

Rachel Callender has completed the five-month graduate school at The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute, known as Bossey. She is now back in the United States where she will begin to pastor her first church this summer. In her required report to the Council of Bishops upon her return she reflected on her global experience and she wrote the following:



"...this program really helped me weed through all sorts of theological convictions, traditions and doctrines, and forced me to define my core values and then go and defend them. I, at times did not feel hopeful for unity, but when I could truly connect with and work with the colleague who I had just been arguing with over, say, a biblical interpretation, I could see how valuable it was to continue to try for unity. This program made me more Methodist and helped me see that that is a step towards unifying."

The Council of Bishops will continue annually to choose a candidate to participate in this life-changing graduate-level formation experience. Hannah Andres of Claremont Seminary will be the United Methodist participant for the 2020 graduate school, and Ericka Jallah, a recent graduate of the Gbarnga School of Theology will be the bishops' 2021 United Methodist participant. As was the case with Ms. Callender, they will both receive a \$10,000 scholarship to help cover the cost of tuition at the Institute.

Local Initiative Grants

Every year the Ecumenical Officer of the Council of Bishops selects recipients of the Council of Bishops' Local Initiative Grants. The three 2019 recipients have completed their projects, and they were excellent! These grants are for \$1,000 US each and are used by groups or organizations who wish to further ecumenism and interreligious relationship-building in local contexts. In 2019 the recipients were:

The Columbia South Carolina Wesley Foundation, who worked with local Jewish and Muslim university campus groups to begin to build relationships and work together in their local context. This photo is of the students coming together to sit in a sukkah in order to share a meal.



St. John United Methodist Church and Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church, who began to work toward reconciliation between their two congregations. These local Native American and African American congregations separated 175 years ago, but now desire to live more fully into Christian unity. So far, they have shared in talent shows, Bible schools and other ministries that will now be the catalyst for their continued ministry and life together as they continue to work toward visible unity.

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, who gathered university presidents in order to encourage them to include interfaith teaching in their colleges' curricula. The grant was used to purchase the most recent book by Eboo Patel to give to each of the participants, who spent time learning together and discussing possibilities for deeper interreligious engagement in their contexts.



Updates on Ecumenical and Interreligious Events and Groups

By Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst

A General Word on the Ecumenical and Interreligious Groups Financially supported by The United Methodist Church

Through the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund (ICF) The United Methodist Church supports several ecumenical and interreligious organizations. Most of these are chosen and voted upon quadrennially at our General Conference. Additional organizations and ministries are added by the Council of Bishops discernment throughout the quadrennium. Among others, the 2016-2020 quadrennium included the following:

The World Council of Churches, The World Methodist Council, The Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, The Global Christian Forum, The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Other Regional Councils, The Pan-Methodist Commission, The Wesleyan Holiness Connection, Religions for Peace, and Christian Churches Together.

Because giving was down at the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 what was given to some of these organizations had to be reduced. This has affected, and will continue to affect, most significantly the World Council of Churches, the World Methodist Council and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Each of these organizations depends on financial gifts from The UMC in order to function, so there is a “ripple effect” when we cannot give what we thought we could at the beginning of the quadrennium. We apologize to those organizations whose finances have been significantly adversely affected by the current struggles within our denomination.

World Methodist Council



WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL

Rev. Ruth Gee, on behalf of the World Methodist Council, announced in early March that United Methodist Rev. Matthew Lafferty will be the next Executive Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome.

Rev. Lafferty is currently serving as pastor of the English-speaking United Methodist congregations in Vienna, Austria. He will begin his new ministry in Rome September 1, 2020. (The new MEOR brochure will be available at the Council of Bishops' booth in the exhibit hall at the General Conference.)

The World Methodist Council would also like to remind us the next World Methodist Conference will be held August 18-23, 2021 in Gothenburg, Sweden. The theme will be “On the Move” and will look at migration, pilgrimage and spirit-led illumination. Every Annual Conference and Central Conference is invited to send delegates. The Council of Bishops will also send an official delegation. For more information, go to (www.worldmethodistconference.org).



World Council of Churches

The Central Committee meeting that was originally scheduled for March of this year was postponed due to the corona virus and has been rescheduled for August 18-25 of this year. The Central Committee had planned on holding a final vote for, and announcing, the new General Secretary of the WCC. Since that has been postponed, Professor Ion Sauca from the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey will serve as the Interim General Secretary until September 1.

Please remember to uphold Thursdays in Black as a way to continue to create awareness of violence against women worldwide. Pins are available from the World Council.

And, please mark August 8-16, 2021 in your calendars. The next World Council of Churches Assembly will be held in then in Karlsruhe, Germany. The Council of Bishops has selected the following persons to represent The UMC as delegates: Bishop Gaspar Domingos, Bishop Sally Dyck, Rev. Joe May, Rev. Connie Semy Mella, Mr. Byrd Bonner, Mr. Paul Gomez, Rev. Sarah Bach and Ms. Ann Jacob. Please pray for them as they prepare for this historic meeting.

National Council of Churches in the USA

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA continues to work on racial justice and equality in the United States. A report from the Day of Remembrance and Lament in October of 2019 is available at their website (www.nationalcouncilofchurches.us). Plans for a remembrance of the Korean War are currently being formed, and more information will be available soon.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days, which was originally scheduled for April 24-27 in Washington, DC, has been cancelled. The accompanying Governing Board meeting will be held via Zoom on April 28. Meanwhile, the NCCC in the USA is offering daily prayers written by members of the Governing Board. For more information go to the above website.



Christian Churches Together

Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT) maintains its purpose as being a diverse a group of Christians who: worship together, share their faith stories, discuss a faith issue important to all, and witness to Christian unity in the US. Recently, the Steering Committee of CCT adopted a new "Vision, Mission, Process" statement and has begun putting its updates in place. They also decided to continue working together on the vitally important issue of race as the topic for

the 2020 Forum. More information about that forum will be available soon.

For more information go to www.christianchurchestogether.org.



The Methodist Church in Great Britain and The United Methodist Church Concordat Follow-up

The Methodist Church

We celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the concordat between the Methodist Church in Great Britain (MCGB) and The United Methodist Church in London in August of 2018. Since then a dialogue team selected by the Council of Bishops has been working with a dialogue team from the MCBG to strengthen and renew this covenant. The dialogue teams will continue their work this September with a gathering in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the historic St. George's Church. Specifically, they will continue to work on how to strengthen the relationship between the two faith communions, how we can work better together to combat climate change, and how we can work together with those effected by migration and diaspora. The United Methodist Church is represented by: Bishop Kenneth Carter, Bishop John Yambasu, Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, Bishop Patrick Streiff, Ms. Harriett Olson and Rev. Lisa Lewis.

Religions for Peace International

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace was founded in the 1970's as a vehicle to gather religious leaders for cooperation and the seeking of peace. The World Council of Religions for Peace International met in New York in December of 2019 to finalize their strategic plan for the next five to seven years. The following six priorities were set:

- Peace and security
- Gender equality and justice
- The environment
- Freedom of thought, conscious and religion
- Interreligious partnership-building and collaboration, and
- Interreligious education.

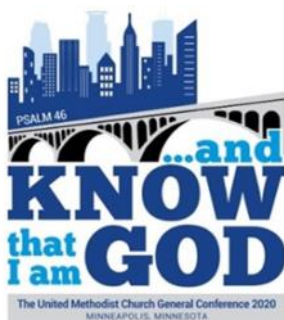
Dr. Azza Karam has been elected to serve as the current General Secretary and has already begun this new ministry. Her leadership will insure a closer working relationship with the United Nations.

For more information about the organization, go to www.rfp.org.



Council of Bishops Legislative Items Relating to Ecumenical and Interreligious Ministries for next General Conference

Rev. Dr. Kyle R. Tau



The Council of Bishops has identified a number of items in the Book of Discipline related to its ecumenical and interreligious ministries that need revision and updating. The COB staff worked collaboratively to identify these items and draft legislation to address the necessary changes. The draft petitions were reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee of the COB and submitted to GC2020 prior to the legislative deadline last fall. All of these items are now available in the *Advanced Daily Christian Advocate*. They are listed below with their corresponding petitions numbers:

- Clarify ecumenical/interreligious responsibilities of Bishops (20303-HS-¶414.6) and District Superintendents (20310-HS-¶419.1)
- Update language regarding full-communion coordinating committees (20324-HS-¶442)
- Change name of “Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches” to “Affiliated Methodist Churches” (20651-HS-¶125-G)
- Remove category “Autonomous Methodist Church” (20645-HS-¶570-G)
- Renew *By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism* (20528-DI-R8031) and Renew *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (20529-DI-R8032)
- Revise and readopt ‘Holocaust Memorial’ resolution (20580-HS-R3125)
- Update the name for the “Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (OCUIR)” to the “Advisory Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationships (ACEIR)” (20658-HS-¶431)
- Amend Interdenominational Cooperation Fund ¶814 to align with ¶¶431-442 (20205-FA-¶814)

Any questions related to these legislative items can be addressed to Kyle Tau at ktau@umc-cob.org. A blog post addressing changes to “Affiliated Autonomous Methodist Churches” and “Autonomous Methodist Churches” has been co-written by Dr. Tau and Dr. David Scott, the mission theologian for GBGM.

That post can be found here: <http://www.umglobal.org/2020/03/renewing-our-relationships-with.html>.

The following two entries are based on Dr. Tau's presentation at the Pre-General Conference Briefing held in Nashville, TN on January 23-24, 2020.

The full presentation can be viewed online at <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/pre-general-conference-presentations>, under the "Our Ecumenical Relationships" section.

Sent in Love: A United Methodist Understanding of the Church – The Process and the New Draft Teaching Statement from the United Methodist Committee on Faith and Order

By Rev. Dr. Kyle Tau

The Committee on Faith and Order was formed in 2008 to be "a visible expression of the commitment of The United Methodist Church to carry on informed theological reflection" (2016 BOD, ¶1444). It is made up of 16 members, and includes pastors, lay people, scholars, bishops and members who represent the major geographical areas in our global connection. From 2012-2016 the work of the Committee included the production of the document "*Wonder, Love and Praise: Sharing a Vision of the Church*." This draft study document was received by the General Conference in 2016 and commended to the whole church for study and feedback. In the current quadrennium, after a period of study and feedback, the Committee responded to the input it received by drafting the current statement *Sent in Love*. This new draft includes some materials that are drawn directly from *WLP*, but also includes a lot of new material and a substantial revision of this previous text.



As the CFO drafted the revised text its members wanted to highlight several areas of emphasis that emerged in the feedback process and in the Committee's own review of the text: the centrality of mission, the trinitarian grounding for the church, and an ecumenical perspective. Thus, the first major section of the document after the introduction, lays out a Trinitarian framework for understanding the nature of the Church. It describes how the Church is established, grounded and empowered by the saving work of the "missionary God." God's very identity is expressed in the going out of Christ and the Spirit in a saving mission of love to the world. This going forth in mission, then, is also essential for the life and being of the Church, which is itself *sent in love* by God for mission and service.



The document then highlights four distinctive Wesleyan/Methodist theological commitments and describes how these commitments connect a United Methodist understanding of the church to the classical creedal marks of the church. These core Wesleyan/Methodist convictions relate to the saving love of God and are as follows: The saving love of God...

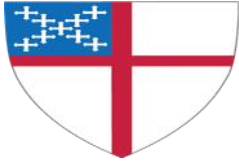
- ...empowers a missional community (the church is apostolic)
- ...is meant for all people, not just a favored few (the church is catholic)
- ...is transformative (the church is holy)
- ...creates community (the church is one)

Sent in Love retains the bottom three commitments from *WLP* which received strong affirmation in the feedback process, and adds a significant focus on mission and ministry that many wished to see more of in the previous text.

A resolution to adopt *Sent in Love* as an official doctrinal teaching statement of The UMC has been submitted to the 2020 General Conference. This resolution also commissions the Committee on Faith & Order to produce a study and leader's guide for the text, and places *Sent in Love* alongside *By Water and the Spirit* and *This Holy Mystery* in the *Book of Resolutions*. You can find the document online at www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/resources. The full text of the document is also included in the *Advanced Daily Christian Advocate* as a report from the Committee on Faith & Order on pages 589-615.



Reflecting on the Prospects of Full Communion Between The UMC and The Episcopal Church

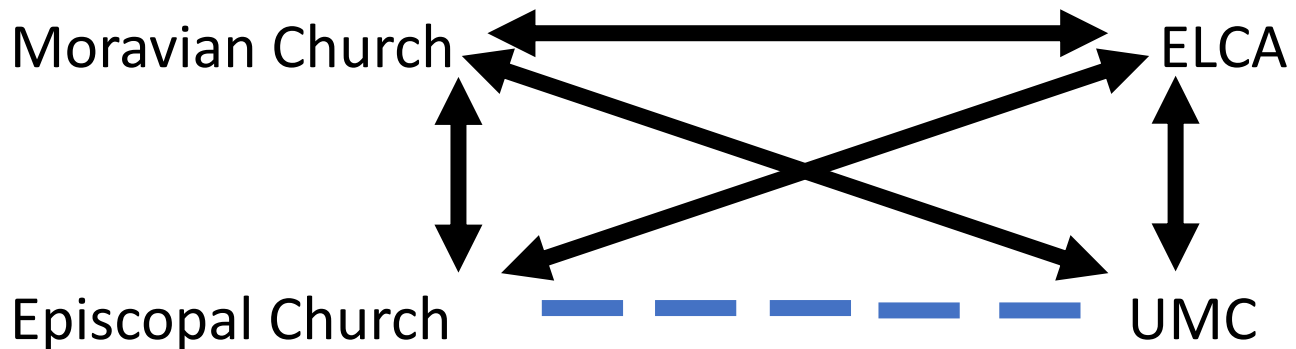


The United Methodist – Episcopal Church Dialogue committee has been working since 2002 to establish a relationship of full communion between our churches. This committee is co-chaired on the United Methodist side by Bishop Gregory Palmer. The Council of Bishops received the recommendations of the committee in 2019 and has submitted a resolution to establish full communion between our churches to the 2020 General Conference. The document from the dialogue committee upon which this proposal is based is entitled *A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness*, the



full text of which can be found online at: www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/resources. The associated resolution is petition number 20644 -HS-R9999-G and can be found in the *Advanced Daily Christian Advocate* on pages 1000-1001.

This particular proposal, at this particular time, is a significant one for United Methodists. There is a unique historical significance in this proposal. Methodism, of course, was birthed out of the Anglican Church, a church that remained John Wesley's ecclesial home until his death. Establishing this relationship of full communion with the Episcopal Church, is a step toward healing the division between Anglicans and Methodists and one which expresses our deeply rooted historical, practical, and theological connections. This proposal has unique ecumenical significance. With this relationship we have the opportunity to close the final link in a chain of full communion between four denominations.



These arrows represent existing full communion relationships between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Moravian Church, The Episcopal Church, and The UMC. The current proposal would create mutual and overlapping relationships of full communion across this whole grouping. This could present our churches with new possibilities for multi-lateral coordination, shared mission, and witness to the unity of the Church.

Finally, this proposal has significance for our current situation in The United Methodist Church. It is not lost on those who labor in ecumenical work on behalf of The UMC that there are pressing and weighty matters coming before the General Conference in a few months. The conflict and uncertainty in our own house has at times raised questions about how we ought to move forward in our ecumenical relationships in light of these challenges. Is now really the best time to be entering new ecumenical agreements, to be engaging in new enterprises of Christian unity?

I believe the answer to these questions is a resounding yes. We are stronger because of our ecumenical relationships. We have received incredible support, prayers, and encouragement from many of our ecumenical partners during this time. Our partners care about The United Methodist Church. They are invested in the future of our church and want to see it thrive. No matter how we move forward into the future, we will be better off by heading into that future hand-in-hand with our partners.

I believe this is the right time for an agreement like this because we have the opportunity to send a message about who we are as United Methodists, about the kind of church we aspire to be. In spite of our imperfections and failings, we are still a church which is constitutionally committed to "pray, seek, and work for unity at all levels of church life." More importantly we are implored by Christ himself to seek this unity. Even as our own seemingly irreconcilable differences are leading us in the direction of some kind of separation within The UMC, affirming this full communion proposal, which is the fruit of decades of dialogue, sends the message that The United Methodist Church will not abandon its commitment to seek unity across the whole household of God. This work does not stop because some things are hard right now. It must and will continue. This, I believe, is a message worth sending.

Upcoming Events

- * March 31: UM-USCCB Publication Sub-Committee Meeting, Zoom (10am-11am EST)
- *April 17: UM-Moravian Coordinating Committee Meeting
- April 20, 11:00 - 11:30 a.m. EST - UM-Episcopal Dialogue Committee Check-in
- April 23, 2:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m. EST - NCC F&O Convening Table Meeting
- May 28, 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. EST (probable) - UM-ELCA Coordinating Committee Meeting
- *May 28-30: ELCA-UMC Coordinating Committee meeting

- *June 12-13: CUIC Coordinating Council meeting in Wisconsin
- *June 20-27: PCUSA General Assembly in Baltimore, Maryland
- *June 25-July 2: Methodist Church in Great Britain Conference in Telford, England

- *July 6-8: WMC Migrant Consultation between UCC and UMC in Canada
- *July 8-15: African Methodist Episcopal Church Conference in Orlando, Florida
- *July 13-29: UMEIT: Plunge in Switzerland and France
- *July 22-28: African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion Conference in Atlanta, Georgia

- *August 10-11: CCT Steering Committee meeting
- *August 18-25: World Council of Churches Central Committee meeting in Geneva
- *August 19-22: World Methodist Council Steering Committee in Sweden

- *September 2-3: Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome Forum in Italy
- *September 14-19: UMEIT: YAN at Africa University in Zimbabwe
- *September 24 or 25: COB ecumenical and interreligious representative training (Zoom)
- *September 30-October 2: MCGB-UMC Concordat Group meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- *October 6-9: Christian Churches Together Annual Forum in a place TBA

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