

2022 Western Pennsylvania Conference

RS 701 ACTIVELY WAITING TASK FORCE PETITION FOR THE INTENTIONAL MISSIONAL ALIGNMENT PROCESS

(Adopted 06-03-2022)

WHEREAS Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi convened the Actively Waiting Task Force, a theologically diverse team of laity and clergy, to consider proactive responses by the Western PA Conference to:

- On-going discussions
- Possible actions by the General Conference surrounding Human Sexuality, Disaffiliation, and the Protocol
- The Commission on General Conference of The United Methodist Church announced postponement of the 2020 General Conference until 2024.

WHEREAS In *Mark 6:7-11* the gospel records that Jesus sent the disciples two by two into different mission fields. Consequently, the disciples were able to maximize their impact. The disciples needed to maximize their impact because, as Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (*Matthew 9:35-38*).

Further, before Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of God the Father, he commissioned the disciples to go and make disciples by saying: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (*Matthew 28:16-20*)

The apostles followed this command also. As they went to make disciples there were seasons when they intentionally went to different mission fields in order to maximize their mission and ministry. *Galatians 2:9-10* speaks of this process. “And when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.”

At times the apostles intentionally defined separate mission fields because of the needs of the community (*Acts 10*), the gifts of the particular apostles (*Acts 6:1-6*), or because of disagreements among the apostles (*Acts 15:39-41*).

When the apostles intentionally separated to go to different mission fields because they needed space due to a disagreement, they blessed one another, stayed connected, and eventually returned to doing mission and ministry in the same mission field.

“The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company, Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Although, during his first missionary journey Paul needed space from John Mark, they clearly reconnected and continued in mission and ministry in the same fields. By the time Paul wrote to Timothy for the second time, he says this about John Mark, “Only Luke is

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with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.” (2*Timothy* 4:9-11).

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force has discerned:

- That some pastors and congregations may have already defined with whom they will work in mission with respect to perspectives regarding human sexuality.
- The need for the Western PA Conference to develop for those who want to use it, an intentional, clearly defined, and transparent process for pastors, laity, and congregations to discern with whom they will be working in missional fields and to align themselves with those of similar perspectives regarding human sexuality.
- A need for the Western PA Conference to define the nature of relationships among those in different mission fields within The United Methodist Church to:
 - Provide a gracious off-ramp for those who do not believe they can continue working in mission as United Methodist,
 - Provide a gracious on-ramp for those who may eventually want to return to mission work as United Methodist.

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force discerned the following core values as critical to this work which will be called the Intentional Missional Alignment Process:

- Love God and neighbor
- Practice grace, respect, transparency, and openness
- Assist local churches, laity, and clergy to find a healthy landing spot
- Avoid bitter disputes and litigation
- Communicate with transparency and openness
- Include laity and clergy in every aspect of the process
- Exhibit sensitivity to the marginalized
- Minimize chaos and disruption

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force is committed to providing accurate and transparent information throughout the Intentional Missional Alignment Process

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force has discerned a strong ethical value around a sense of family in Western Pennsylvania and recognizes that families generally live in households. In many families, some siblings choose to establish their own households, living separately but related to each other. Therefore, within the Western PA Conference, it may be helpful to establish separate households as part of this process. The household may continue to be related to each other and some may use their household affiliation to serve as launching pads for severing their denominational affiliations.

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force, based upon information shared across The United Methodist Church and included in The Protocol, believes there is a possibility that the following mission and ministry alignment fields might be birthed from the current United Methodist Household. They are described in this section and referenced throughout the remainder of this document.

- The Continuing United Methodist Household will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field with members of differing perspectives on human sexuality. Therefore, this Household would aspire to:
 - Remove sexual orientation as a consideration for fitness for ministry.
 - Allow each clergy person to discern if they will or will not officiate for same gender marriages.

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- Allow local churches to independently decide whether to host same gender marriages or not.
 - Invite the bishop to use these considerations when making appointments.
- The Traditional Household will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field, only with members having a more traditional perspective on human sexuality. Therefore, this Household would aspire to:
 - Maintain ordination standards pertaining to human sexuality, including prohibition of homosexual practice.
 - Prohibit all clergy and churches from celebrating same-gender marriages.
- The Progressive Household will be available to those who aspire to be working in the mission field only with members who have a progressive perspective on human sexuality: Therefore, this household would aspire to:
 - Have the full inclusion of, full affirmation of, and full participation by all people in all aspects of the life of this household and in the lives of its churches. This would include the ordination and appointment of persons without respect to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
 - Have the celebration of same-gender marriages by all clergy and in all churches in this household.

WHEREAS Full Reunion is hoped-for in any degree of separation. That hope and promise should be integrated into the DNA of the Continuing United Methodist Household.

- Eschatologically we are destined to be one in worship before the throne of God (*Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 5:11-14*).
- Christologically we are destined to be one in Jesus Christ (*John 14:3; John 17:21; Romans 5:17*)
- Historically as a denomination we have experienced reunions after splits:
 - Methodist Episcopal Expression
 - 1884 - Methodist Episcopal Church before the Civil War
 - 1939 - A partial reunion
 - 1968 - Full reunion
 - Evangelical Association Expression
 - 1894 - Evangelical Association Split
 - 1922 - Reunion
- Reason holds that provisions for a reunion should be hoped for and planned for in the Intentional Missional Alignment Process legislation by proactively creating bridging structures as a possible pathway forward.

WHEREAS The Actively Waiting Task Force has discerned that some congregations, clergy, and laity have already determined they are no longer missionally aligned with The United Methodist Church. We urge the Cabinet, Conference Treasurer, Conference Benefits Officer, Director of Connectional Ministries, Conference Chancellor, and Board of Trustees to continue providing a gracious exit for congregations, clergy, and laity, independent of the following legislation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church designates the following phases as elements of the Intentional Missional Alignment Process. Detailed processes will be defined to assist local churches, laity, and

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clergy as they move into households within the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church and as they potentially make decisions to become a part of other expressions of Methodism. From this point forward all references will be to households.

- Phase One - Joint Transitional: Begins when the “Household Alignment” legislation is adopted by the Annual Conference. (Projected June 2023). The Household Alignment legislation would define the process for each pastor, lay person, and congregation to choose a household with which to align. If a local pastor or congregation chose not to make an intentional decision, they would remain in The United Methodist Church household. This phase ends when the “Household Autonomy” legislation adopted by the Annual Conference becomes effective (Projected June 2024).
- Phase Two - Joint Autonomous: Begins when the “Household Autonomy” legislation is adopted by the Annual Conference becomes effective (Projected June 2024). During this phase all households remain under the umbrella of The Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church. However, they would begin to function more independently. The permissiveness and restrictions of that independence would be defined in the “Household Autonomy” legislation. This phase ends when local churches, laity, and clergy are fully integrated into their autonomous kindred households.
- Phase Three - Autonomous: Begins when churches, laity, and clergy have been fully integrated into autonomous households. In this phase congregations and pastors may choose to join other Wesleyan denominations or they may, even if they are in the Traditional or Progressive Households, choose to remain under the umbrella of the Western PA Conference, This phase ends with the movement of local churches, laity, and clergy, toward reunion through bridging structures.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the initial bridging structures would be created to facilitate re-connection and hope for reunion in the future. With hope for reunion, these three additional phases would be projected for future implementation:

- Phase Four - Transitional Joint Reunion: Begins with the movement of local churches, laity, and clergy toward reunion through bridging structures. Leaders from the various households that have remained under Western PA Conference umbrella and those who have become members of other denominations who have a desire to reunite will begin meeting to activate the bridging structures and reunion plans. This phase ends with adoption of reunion plans by appropriate parties.
- Phase Five - Joint Reunion: Starts with adoption of reunion plans by appropriate parties. End ends with the reintegration and reunion of local churches, laity, and clergy.
- Phase Six - Full Reunion: Starts with the reintegration and reunion of local churches, laity, and clergy. During this phase churches, laity, and clergy who have joined other denominations may choose to return to the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED to ensure that the Intentional Missional Alignment Process is handled smoothly and responsibly, The Western PA Conference hereby designates the

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following functions as ones which will specifically need to be active throughout this entire process:

- Lead, plan, coordinate, and manage the Intentional Missional Alignment Process
- Provide vision and supervision for the ongoing mission and ministry of the annual conference
- Lead and nurture the WPA Conference, districts, local churches, laity, and clergy
- Appoint, deploy, and supervise clergy
- Manage Conference staff
- Track and support churches, clergy, and laity transitions
- Manage pension liabilities, assets, participation, and payments
- Manage medical liabilities, assets, participation, and payments
- Manage finances
- Maintain effective connections with all entities that are currently affiliated with the Western PA Conference of The United Methodist Church
- Inform local churches, laity, and clergy about their options
- Provide timely and relevant updates to local churches, laity, and clergy
- Anticipate and facilitate future district and local church strategies
- Analyze and address contracts, endowments, and legal relationships.
- Train, equip, commission, transfer, retire and attend to ongoing needs of clergy

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Western PA Conference hereby establishes the Intentional Missional Alignment Process Task Force which will be named in the 2022 WPA Nominating Committee report, after joint consultation and agreement among the Bishop, Cabinet, and Executive Committee of the Connectional Leadership Table and which will:

- Lead, plan, coordinate, and manage all aspects of the Intentional Missional Alignment Process
- Report to the Annual Conference and to the Conference Connectional Leadership Team (CCLT)
- Ensure that the process is developed and implemented for local churches, clergy, and laity to choose the household with which to align
- Provide frequent updates to the CCLT, Cabinet and other Annual Conference groups
- Partner with, provide guidance to, meet with, and monitor all teams and individuals of the Annual Conference, with roles associated with the Intentional Missional Alignment Process to ensure goals and timelines are achieved

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that the Western PA Conference directs that the Connectional Leadership Table, Conference Council on Finance and Administration, Board of Trustees, Board for Pensions and Health Benefits, Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Laity, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Communications Committee, Personnel Team, Conference Secretary, Executive Committee of the Connectional Leadership Table, and any other conference leaders or agencies deemed appropriate by the Bishop and Executive Committee of the Connectional Leadership Table to take responsibility for ensuring that:

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- Plans and action are to be defined, documented, and shared with the Intentional Missional Alignment Process Task Force by January 31, 2023:
 - How their ministries and agencies will fulfill their disciplinary functions regarding the intent of Phases One, Two, and Three.
 - Any other considerations as determined by the Intentional Missional Alignment Process Task Force.
- Legislation and reports regarding these functions are prepared for presentation and adoption at the 2023 Western PA Conference,
- Preliminary consideration of plans and action steps (including possible by-law changes and bridging agreements) associated with the intent of Phases Four, Five and Six of the Intentional Missional Alignment Process, with the expectation that plans and action steps will need to be shared with the Intentional Missional Alignment Process Task Force by January 31, 2024 and that legislation and progress reports regarding all six Phases will need to be submitted to the 2024 Annual Conference.

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED that any legal fees and other out-of-pocket expenses associated with the Intentional Missional Alignment Process from July 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023 are considered to be incremental in nature and can be cared for from existing and proposed Connectional Apportionment budgets, and /or discretionary funds managed by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A). As such the Western PA Conference directs the Conference Treasurer and the agencies /individuals with responsibilities to support the Intentional Missional Alignment Process to care for these expenses accordingly, and to include estimated expenses in their budgets for 2024 and beyond.

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Keith Mcilwain, Seth McPherson, Tracy Merrick, Reneé Mikell, Tom Parkinson,
Jay Pendleton, Ross Pryor, Jeff Sterling, Roger White, Bob Zilhaver