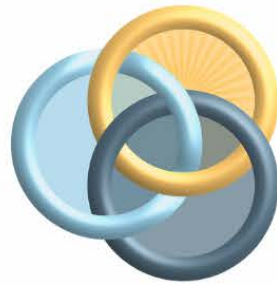


Theological Task

As the Task Force reflected on “three interrelated households,” we struggled with the meaning of unity, especially a unified Church. How does unity look when we organize around three separate yet connected households as envisioned in RS701? As we prayed about this, we saw the symbol of the Trinity on an altar parament in the room. In that moment, we felt the Spirit signaling that the key theological meaning of unity is grounded in the meaning of the Trinity.

- We worship a triune God - One God in three persons. The theological term for the relationship between the three persons as one God in the Greek language is **perichoresis** which literally means "to go around or rotate."
- Theologically it casts the image of the process of the dance of these three persons in relationship around one another. We say this dance includes the meaning that **the Father is the Son is the Holy Spirit and each person in the Trinity fully experiences their life together in unity**, normally represented by the solid lines of the triangle on the symbol of the Trinity.
- We also say this dance includes the meaning that **the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit**, normally represented by the arcs between the points of the Triangle on the symbol of the Trinity. This dance has the Father experience the Son dying on the cross, but it is the Son who dies on the cross not the Father.
- The focus of the Task Force is grounded in the theological task of describing the dance of how separate households rotate around Jesus as one Church.
- The task will be to describe the dance where the separate households are one and to describe the dance where the separate households are acting autonomously..
- Our hope is to be theologically grounded in the reality of the Trinity, focusing upon its nature, we may **“affirm our unity in Christ, and take faithful steps to live more fully into what it means to be a worldwide church in mission for the transformation of the world.”** (¶125 BOD)



Three Households

Initial descriptions found in RS701; all would function under the Book of Discipline.

Centrist Household: aspires to be working in the mission field with members of differing perspectives on human sexuality. This household aspires to: remove sexual orientation as a consideration for fitness for ministry; allow each clergy to discern if they will or will not officiate for same gender marriages; allow local churches to independently decide whether to host same gender marriages or not; and invite the bishop to use these considerations when making appointments.

Traditional Household: aspires to be working in the mission field with members having a more traditional perspective on human sexuality. This Household would aspire to: maintain current ordination standards pertaining to human sexuality, including prohibition of homosexual practice, and prohibit all clergy and churches from celebrating same-gender marriages.

Progressive Household: aspires to be working in the mission field with members who have a progressive perspective on human sexuality. This household would aspire to have the full inclusion, affirmation and participation by all people in all aspects of the life of this household and in the lives of its churches, including the ordination and appointment of persons without respect to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, it would have the celebration of same-gender marriages by all clergy and in all churches in this household.

IMAP Task Force

The Task Force is a living laboratory for the “three households”.

We are a diverse group of people:

- ~ we are a mixture of clergy and laity
- ~ we are theologically diverse
- ~ we have different levels of experience in the church
- ~ we are different ages from different places around the Conference.

Yet, we share a common love of Jesus Christ and desire for the Church to embrace a new expression of unity in our Conference. As we work and share this moment of life and ministry together, we have hope that the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church can be a safe and productive place for all – and that we can remain connected even though we will align with 3 different households.



First row, l-r: Bob Zilhaver, Mallory Miles, Alyce Weaver Dunn, Leah Walls.
Second Row, l-r: Paul Huey, Renee' Mikell, Roger White, Tracy Merrick

Who We Are

Background

At the June 2022 session of Annual Conference, an “Intentional Missional Alignment Process” was adopted for the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church. This legislation was offered as a way for our Conference to take agency over and play a more active role in its future within the United Methodist Church. Knowing that the General Conference is now scheduled for May 2024, RS701 provides an alternative path for Western Pennsylvania clergy and laity to honor our varied theological perspectives while remaining united as we wait together. As we organize and move into three “households,” (traditional, continuing UM and progressive) we can focus on the shared mission and ministry to which we have all been called as United Methodists.



Vision Statement

“As the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church continues to work together, we will discern our potential future. Keeping God at the center, we will envision, create and live into three interrelated households in which local churches, clergy and laity can affiliate where they best can be in mission and ministry in Christ. Throughout this process, the WPAUMC will hold sacred love of neighbor, respect, grace, transparency and frequent communication.”

What can I do?

Please read frequent communications from the Task Force updating their work. Share the information with members in your church. Be ready to give feedback to the Task Force when invited to do so.

Pray for the Task Force, the WPA Conference, and ALL of the clergy, laity and churches in the Conference!

We invite you to daily use the following "breakthrough prayer:"

Gracious God, we invite you to break through and open doors to new hopes and possibilities for the Western PA Conference of the United Methodist Church as we anticipate the creation of “three households.” Throughout this process, we will call upon the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to lead us into a new future. May your will be done! Amen.

Contact Us

Email address:
missional.alignment@wpaumc.org

For updated information and to read the full version of RS701, please go to:
wpaumc.org/imap-task-force

Intentional Missional Alignment Process



Western
Pennsylvania
Conference of
the United
Methodist
Church

Fall 2022