



BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CHAPTER
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March 8, 2022

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling
Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church
11711 East Market Place
Fulton MD 20759
(via Electronic Mail)

Dear Bishop Easterling,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

We are disappointed that the Commission on General Conference has chosen, again, to delay the scheduled General Conference; the BWC Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, like many, had anticipated an opportunity for open discussion, consideration, and ultimate approval of the *Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation* this year. We are grateful for your personal support for that Protocol, and we are proud that you, our own bishop, are among the signers of that important agreement.

Despite the fact that a General Conference has not been convened, and thus this agreement has not been ratified, the Statement of Principles that you asserted in that document remains true today. Members of the BWC continue to have fundamental differences regarding their understanding and interpretation of Scripture, theology and practice. Those differences have become pronounced and are actively tarnishing our collective witness to Jesus Christ. Faithful members of the BWC continue to have a deep desire to fulfill our long-stated mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Yet we remain at the impasse described by the Protocol.

In 2021, you re-affirmed support of the need for and provisions of the Protocol, as did the BWC Connectional Table, BWC General Conference delegates, and an overwhelming percentage of the Conference itself in a jointly-sponsored resolution. In light of the continued delay, and of the pressing divisions described above, we call for Conference leadership to fulfill the commitment made in those affirmations by providing for a grace-filled pathway for any local church desiring a different affiliation to move to another denomination under a comity agreement, in accordance with Paragraph 2548.2 of the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

We are proud that, in the Protocol, you said that you would use your best efforts to support the Protocol and other such efforts that are consistent with that agreement. While we grieve the UMC's decision to delay discussion of that Protocol, we are encouraged that the ability to support a fair alternative within the BWC is within your purview as our presiding bishop. Numerous local congregations tell us that separation remains the best means to resolve our differences, allowing each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person. We therefore call for the BWC to quickly provide official guidance on the requirements for local churches to request transfer in accordance with Para. 2548.2 and that these requirements should be in the spirit and tenor of the provisions of the Protocol. Since time is of the essence in this matter, we ask that these conditions be announced by the end of March 2022.

All were in agreement that disaffiliation was to be discouraged, pending discussion of the Protocol, but the provisions for exit under Paragraph 2553 are onerous and, for many churches make it impossible to separate. We believe that a transfer to another Methodist expression should not be punitive, but should express the graceful separation envisioned and negotiated by your team.

We look forward to the day when, although in separate Methodist expressions, both the UMC and the Global Methodist Church can jointly offer the grace of Christ and the hope of the Gospel to the world. In this way, each group of constituents can fulfill God's great commission in the way that the Spirit leads us and commands in His word. Our Conference can go a long way to make that collaboration possible.

Respectfully submitted,

The Board of Directors of the Baltimore-Washington Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association.