



AFRICA INITIATIVE SPEAKS: Strategic Planning and Envisioning the Next Methodism in Africa

Desmond Tutu Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, 4-8 September 2023

Introduction

From September 4-8, 2023, the executive leadership of the Africa Initiative, comprising 40 key clergy and lay leaders from the three Central Conferences of Africa, convened a prayer and leadership summit at the Desmond Tutu Conference Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme, “GUIDANCE”, based on Proverbs 3:5-6. The summit was necessitated by the current degraded situation within the United Methodist Church (UMC) and its ripple effects upon annual conferences within the Central Conferences of Africa.

The purpose of the summit was to strategically envision and plan for the next Methodism in the Central Conferences of Africa and the forthcoming 2020 UMC General Conference, scheduled to take place in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, from 23 April to 3 May 2024. In addition to the leadership of the Initiative present at the summit, the event was graced by five partners and friends from UM Action, Good News, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, and the Global Methodist Church. We are continually grateful for their partnership and encouragement.

Resolutions

Following a careful review of the numerous trending issues impacting effective leadership, ministry, and service within the UMC and their adverse consequences to the continued growth and development of the church in Africa, the leadership of the Africa Initiative reiterated its biblically rooted and doctrinally grounded positions by adopting the following resolutions:

1. Enlightened by the Word of God, we remain steadfast in our convictions that marriage is between one man and one woman, that sexual intimacy is rightfully shared in that

context only, and that clergy and all members of the church should either be celibate in singleness or faithful within a heterosexual marriage. We will resist the progressive views of the largely white, relatively rich, and declining church in the U.S. The current illegal practices within the church, evidenced by the ongoing conduct of same-sex marriages, ordination of LGBTQ persons, and the election and consecration of self-avowed homosexuals as bishops within the UMC are reasons why evangelicals/conservatives rightfully seek disaffiliation from the UMC.

2. Consistent with our convictions, we call upon all African United Methodist delegates to the 2020 General Conference to stand firm as one people upon the truths of the undiluted Word of God as we contend for the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 3). We invite all delegates to join our efforts to raise the voice of the church in Africa against all attempts to liberalize the UM Church's sexual ethics and ordination standards at the upcoming 2020 General Conference.
3. We reject the proposed regionalization plan, aimed at silencing the voice of the church in Africa. The effect of that plan would be to compartmentalize sin within the UMC and make the African church complicit in allowing the U.S. church to adopt unscriptural teachings and standards.
4. In the aftermath of the 2020 General Conference, through continued awareness and mobilization, the UMC in Africa will seek its affirmation of a free, self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating and self-theologizing church, that will take its destiny in its own hands. In one spirit, conviction, and purpose, we will commit to preparing our annual conferences for separation from an increasingly progressive UMC that is regrettably leading the denomination to adopt teachings contrary to Scripture and the historic doctrines of the Christian faith.
5. Following our disaffiliation, we will organize ourselves into annual and central conferences and proceed with the elections of new bishops as needed who will lead us and represent us wherever necessary. The choice of whether or not to remain independent or affiliate with another Methodist denomination, including the Global Methodist Church, will be up to each annual conference.

6. We decry the injustice that the existing Paragraph 2553 is not being applied in the Central Conferences, despite the specific language in the paragraph making it effective in 2019. This arbitrary decision by some bishops seeks to prevent African United Methodists from exercising the same right of disaffiliation that our American brothers and sisters have. To correct this injustice, and in view of the above strategic plan, the Africa Initiative has proffered two petitions to the 2020 General Conference for its consideration. These petitions would benefit the UMC in general and the Central Conferences in particular. They include the following:

(A). A new Paragraph 2553, which addresses “*Disaffiliation of Local Churches over Issues Related to Human Sexuality*”. This petition acknowledges the existing conflict of conscience over our fundamental differences regarding our understanding and interpretation of Scripture, our theology, and our practice, particularly as it relates to the level of participation of LGBTQ persons in the life of the Church, and the impasse it has created. It sets a uniform pathway for local church disaffiliation that applies universally across the church.

(B). A new Paragraph 576 that would be applicable only to the Central Conferences in general and the UMC in Africa in particular. While there is an existing Paragraph 572 that may be used by conferences outside the United States that wish to be Autonomous Methodist churches, this new paragraph would enable conferences outside the United States that seek disaffiliation to shift their alignment from United Methodism to another Wesleyan church or denomination in a more streamlined fashion.

In pursuit of this strategic plan, the Africa Initiative therefore resolves to seek God’s guidance, so that the next Methodism in the Central Conferences in general, and in Africa in particular, will remain biblically committed. They will cast a vision, set goals, and mobilize the body of Christ for the continued evangelization of the nations, the revitalization of the church, and the transformation of society.

Done this day, 8 September 2023, in the Desmond Tutu Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya

Rev. Dr. Jerry P. Kulah, General Coordinator

On behalf of The Africa Initiative Executive Leadership