

Recommendation

Affirming our Covenant and Accountability

Rationale: This resolution is presented almost three months BEFORE General Conference. Current Conference Rules prevent a resolution from being presented at Annual Conference AFTER General Conference has adjourned. Annual Conference convenes two days after General Conference adjourns but all legislation must be presented to the Conference Secretary almost ninety days before General Conference even begins. Last year, the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference adopted a resolution that this one uses as a basis. It may be that General Conference will work out a sustainable change to our polity or to our Social Principles and ordination standards as they relate to human sexuality. Many consider it more likely that a majority of delegates in favor of our traditional standards and existing polity will again prevail which leaves some of the clergy and laity in conferences like ours in the Northeastern Jurisdiction with difficult choices. It is not sustainable to have one denomination with one common covenant of doctrine and discipline but allow some to openly disobey that doctrine and discipline while keeping the privileges and benefits provided by the connection as a whole.

Whereas the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference believes that:

1. The United Methodist Church is a global denomination in which churches, clergy, and laypersons are bound together by a common covenant of doctrine and discipline; and
2. The United Methodist Book of Discipline represents and outlines both the privileges and the obligations of that common covenant, and legitimately governs our life together as an annual conference, to which we are accountable; and
3. We have a process that allows changes to be made to that covenant through General Conference which is a representative, democratic and public process that is always open to revisiting questions previously decided; and
4. Clergy within The United Methodist Church have voluntarily promised in ordination to uphold our church's teachings and keep its disciplinary rules;

Be it resolved that the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference:

1. WILL abide by the rules of our common covenant as outlined in the Book of Discipline, and will hold one another accountable to that covenant; and
2. DECLARES that there is no necessary contradiction between love and law; and that holding one another accountable to promises made is not a punitive act, but an act of love, however painful, to maintain both order and unity in the body; and
3. AFFIRMS those among us who seek to change the provisions of our covenant through legitimate channels of "reasoning together," rather than breaking that covenant; and
4. CALLS upon those clergy who feel that they can no longer abide by our common covenant to withdraw themselves from our connection, rather than continue to cause damage to our ministry through ongoing judicial proceedings.

Submitted on behalf of the Evangelical Network for Renewal and Growth by:

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