

1 **Document: 700.01**

2 **Name: Reaffirming Our Commitment to Connectionalism in the Northern Illinois Conference**

3 **Author(s): Hope Chernich**

4 **CCFA Action:**

6 **ACTION:**

7 In response to our bishop's call to make 2025 a year of grace, we members of the Northern Illinois  
8 Conference reaffirm our commitment to connectionalism. Amid the changes in our denomination and in  
9 our national politics, we gather as United Methodist across Northern Illinois fully aware of the immense  
10 diversity we represent. We are old and young. We are rural, urban, and suburban. We are men and women  
11 and nonbinary. We are cisgender, and transgender; gay and straight. We are from nations all over the  
12 world. We are wealthy and poor. Retired, professionals, home makers, and working class. We are lay and  
13 clergy. We are a people with different types of legal status and those without government documentation.  
14 We are from different races and ethnicities. We speak different languages. We have different political  
15 views.

16 Even with all of these differences that the world says must divide us, we the people of the Northern  
17 Illinois Conference look to our tradition for wisdom. Connectionalism is a gift that enables us to stand in  
18 unity amidst our diversity. Connectionalism means no one can be discarded regardless of their ideology.  
19 In prayer, worship and mission, we are connected by our need for God's grace and our commitment to  
20 share that grace with one another and the world.

21 As an Annual Conference, we do not always agree, yet we reaffirm a commitment to stand in love and act  
22 in grace toward another.

23 We affirm our commitment to connectionalism by:

- 24 ● Recognizing that in our diversity we more fully reflect God's intention for creation. We celebrate  
25 one another and respect differences.
- 26 ● Praying for the flourishing of each of our churches and all of our clergy. We care for each other  
27 and understand that when one part of the body suffers, we all suffer.
- 28 ● Giving our full apportionments to support ministry across our conference, nation, and world.

29 We stand together in Christ as one body made up of many members. In our diversity, we find our  
30 strength. May this affirmation of connectionism be a witness to our communities and to our nation.

32 **RATIONALE:**

33 As the United Methodist Church navigates a season of transition and redefinition, the Northern Illinois  
34 Conference seeks to affirm its identity as a spiritually grounded, mission-driven, and inclusive body  
35 connected by grace, not uniformity. In John 17 Jesus prayed that those who followed him would be one in  
36 the same way that our trinitarian God is one.

1 As United Methodist we live into that oneness through our connection. According to the BOD Paragraph  
2 125- We live out our connection in prayer, mission and worship. Rooted in the Wesleyan tradition of  
3 social holiness, this declaration proclaims that we are not Christians in isolation but disciples together,  
4 working toward the common good in prayer, worship, and service.

5 This statement offers a pastoral word of encouragement to local churches and clergy who may feel  
6 isolated or uncertain, reminding them they are part of a wider body that prays for and supports their  
7 flourishing. By reaffirming our commitment to paying full apportionments, we acknowledge the vital role  
8 of shared financial stewardship in sustaining connectional ministries across the conference and the global  
9 church.

10 By taking this action, we embody the biblical image of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)—  
11 many members, different gifts, united by love and purpose. It reminds us that our differences are not  
12 liabilities but signs of God's creative abundance.

13 This affirmation invites both members within and neighbors beyond the church to witness a  
14 countercultural model of community—one that rejects division and embraces grace as the common  
15 ground.

**Document: 700.07**

**Name: LGBTQIA+ Ministry**

**Author(s): Elisa Gatz, Alka Lyall, and Luis F Reyes, Leadership Team of NIC MFSA and NIC RMN**

**CCFA Action: Budget needed. Recommend referral to ACST for inclusion in budget request process and structure.**

**ACTION:**

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference calls on our Nominations Committee to create a conference-level Committee on Inclusion for the purpose of:

1. Actively supporting the LGBTQ+ laity, clergy, and candidates for licensed/ordained ministry in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference with community-building, faith and leadership development, solidarity, and advocacy.
2. Centering and amplifying the voices and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, especially those who have been marginalized by church and society, most notably, transgender and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) persons.
3. Monitoring Annual Conference committees and policies, as well as the status and needs of candidates and clergy under appointment to ensure justice and equity on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, and to report findings to the Annual Conference.
4. Curating, creating, and sharing resources to equip local churches for:
  1. relationship building and continuing education
  2. meaningful ministry with and for LGBTQ+ church and community members
5. Collaborating with ministry-specific areas, particularly children's ministry, youth ministry, and campus ministry in the desire to safely and most effectively be in ministry with and for LGBTQ+ people of all ages.

The Committee on Inclusion will be established within 3 months of annual conference adjournment, hold its first meeting in 2025, and include:

1. LGBTQ+ persons that make up at least  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total membership
2. Intentional diversity of age
  1. At least 2 members under the age of 25
  2.  $\frac{1}{3}$  membership under 35
  3.  $\frac{1}{3}$  membership 36 to 55
  4.  $\frac{1}{3}$  membership 56 and up
3. Intentional diversity throughout all genders
4. Intentional diversity throughout all races and ethnicities
5. Lay and clergy representatives from each district
6. Members with established leadership in the area of LGBTQ+ justice and inclusion

The Committee on Inclusion shall be fully included in all future annual conference processes related to ensuring an appropriate budget, representation on other committees, reporting to the annual conference, and ongoing membership based on the above criteria.

**RATIONALE:**

The 2020/2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church removed Book of Discipline policies targeting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community and mandating discrimination throughout the denomination.

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2 Dismantling discrimination and harm cannot be realized through legislation alone, but requires ongoing  
3 engagement in the context of relationship, including but not limited to: policy change, story-sharing and  
4 dialogue, education, support, leadership development, solidarity, advocacy, monitoring, and  
5 accountability.

6  
7 The ministry of CCORR and CCOSROW models the importance of having dedicated and empowered  
8 teams who focus on specific areas of injustice and provide conference-wide opportunities for growth.

9  
10 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference seeks to be proactive in building relationships, learning, and  
11 living into all that is now possible for ministry with and for LGBTQ+ persons.  
12