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Name: Affirmation of Theological Diversity and the One Church Model

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CCFA Comment:

ACTION:

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference urges the specially called 2019 General Conference of the United Methodist Church to make space for unity of the Spirit by:

- resisting schism.
- expressing openness to diverse perspectives in matters of human sexuality.
- removing all language that prevents LGBTQ persons from full participation in the life and leadership of the church.
- challenging in love all that needlessly divides.
- preserving space for clergy and congregations to act within the bounds of their conscience and calling.

Additionally, we make our declaration of gratitude for the work of “The Commission on a Way Forward,” we affirm the Council of Bishop’s recommendation of the “One Church Plan” to the General Conference, and we urge our NIC delegation to support this way forward.

RATIONALE:

Paul wrote to the Galatian church and called upon Judaizers to include all members of Christ’s body in the full life and leadership of the church. In doing so, Paul reminds us of the call to be one in Christ Jesus (ref: Galatians 3).

Jesus prayed earnestly that His disciples would be one even as the Triune God is one, in all relational complexities. We believe the Holy Spirit has accomplished this unity and our challenge is to live into that reality more fully (ref: John 17).

John Wesley preached: “To separate ourselves from a body of living Christian, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren” (ref: Wesley sermon: “On Schism”).

The United Methodist Church “considers its doctrinal affirmations a central feature of its identity and...encourages serious reflection across the theological spectrum.” The Northern Illinois Conference is made stronger by our theological diversity and our connection of ministries throughout the area. Because many of our local congregations have theological diversity in the pews, our churches and our annual conference would be at risk if only a single view is permitted. Therefore, the UMC should embrace all who follow Jesus (ref: *The Book of Discipline 2016* para. 105 “Our Theological Task”).