

1 **Document: 700.02**
 2 **Name: Affirming “A Call to Grace”**
 3 **Author: NIC General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegation**
 4 **CCFA Comment:**
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6 **ACTION:**

7 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference affirms “A Call to Grace” (please see complete text
 8 below, www.acalltoGrace.com), written by a grassroots movement and released November 1,
 9 2021. In support of this affirmation the Northern Illinois Annual Conference:

- 10 • directs its bishop, the Cabinet, and clergy to provide the resources and support
 11 for congregational discernment as described in “A Call to Grace”; and,
- 12 • directs the Conference Secretary to sign “A Call to Grace” on its behalf.

13

14 **RATIONALE:**

15 As the writers posited, “that continued delay in making decisions about the future of The
 16 United Methodist Church hurts our mission and is especially harmful to our central conference
 17 and LGBTQIA+ siblings who are caught up in this conflict.” The Body of Christ is best served
 18 by honoring how people are called to be in ministry. The North Central Jurisdiction, at its
 19 Special Session November 10-11, 2021, affirmed “A Call to Grace” with 80.5% in support.

20

21 **A CALL TO GRACE**

22 “For everything, there is a season.” Ecclesiastes 3:1

23

24 We recognize that COVID 19 continues to spread globally and that many throughout our global
 25 connection continue to suffer from the inequitable distribution of vaccines. Given the safety
 26 considerations that result from this tragedy, it appears likely that the General Conference,
 27 scheduled for August-September 2022, may be postponed again.

28

29 As the writer of Ecclesiastes notes, “For everything there is a season,” and the season for
 30 waiting on General Conference legislative solutions as the only way forward has passed. We
 31 recognize that continued delay in making decisions about the future of The United Methodist
 32 Church hurts our mission and is especially harmful to our central conference and LGBTQIA+
 33 siblings who are caught up in this conflict.

34

35 Therefore:

36

37 - We call the church to a pastoral response to the anxiety generated by having to delay decisions
 38 that impact peoples’ lives and ministries.

39

- 1 - We call on bishops and annual conferences to develop resources to assist local churches in
2 discerning their future, including resources on how to have difficult conversations in ways that
3 reduce harm.
4
- 5 - Honoring the expressed desire of some churches and church leaders to leave The United
6 Methodist Church and participate in other denominations, we call bishops and annual
7 conferences to use existing disciplinary authority to find grace-filled ways for these leaders and
8 churches to follow their call now, allowing them to take their church property with them where
9 appropriate.
10
- 11 - We further call upon churches and leaders who wish to leave and join other denominations to
12 engage their bishops in dialogue about how they can realize their hoped-for future.
13
- 14 - In this time of great transition, we call on our episcopal leaders to continue a grace-filled
15 approach and hold in abeyance any complaints related to ministry with LGBTQIA+ persons
16 and matters concerning the future direction of the church.
17
- 18 Those who have decided to remain in The United Methodist Church wish to begin doing the
19 work now of envisioning the future UMC. To be able to do that requires the ability to graciously
20 release others to their own future. As our Book of Discipline notes, "We make disciples as we...
21 send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ by healing the sick,
22 feeding the hungry, caring for the stranger, freeing the oppressed, being and becoming a
23 compassionate caring presence and working to develop social structures that are consistent
24 with the gospel." (Paragraph 122)

1 **Document: 700.03**

2 **Name: Affirming “A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church”**

3 **Author: NIC General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegation**

4 **CCFA Comment:**

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6 ACTION:

7 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference affirms “A Narrative for the Continuing United
8 Methodist Church” (please see complete text below), released by the Council of Bishops on
9 November 4, 2021.

10

11 RATIONALE:

12 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference experiences ministry in all the ways described below
13 and believes it will be most fruitful if it can continue to do so. The North Central Jurisdiction, at
14 its Special Session November 10-11, 2021, affirmed “A Narrative for the Continuing United
15 Methodist Church” with 80.9% in support.

16

17 **A Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church**

18

19 United Methodists all over the globe are liturgical, contemporary, charismatic, social
20 activists, urban, suburban, small town, rural and much more. We are children, youth,
21 young adults, senior adults, new Christians, and mature Christians. We are present on
22 four continents, in more than 45 countries, and we comprise an unknown number of
23 cultures and languages. We are a holy communion of different races, ethnicities,
24 cultures, and perspectives united by the Holy Spirit, driven by the mission of Christ, and
25 bearing the good news of an unmerited grace that changes lives and transforms
26 communities.

27

28 Christ’s prayer for our unity and command to gather all to the table, to make space for
29 one another, appreciate one another, and look for Christ in each other, prohibit us from
30 creating individual tables only for those who think, act, look, and perceive the world like
31 we do. We cannot be a church that fractures its identity and commitment to Christ by
32 aligning itself with political parties. We cannot be a traditional church or a progressive
33 church or a centrist church. We cannot be a gay or straight church. Our churches must
34 be more than echo chambers made in our own image arguing with each other while
35 neglecting our central purpose. This is the way of the world.

36

37 Instead, we must be one people, rooted in scripture, centered in Christ, serving in love
38 and united in the essentials. It is hard work. It is sacred work. It is the ministry of
39 reconciliation that Christ gave to each of us. Our best witness is to love each other as
40 Christ loves us, to show the world the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to bind us

1 together despite our differences. This is living out the gospel.

2

3 We are a church:

- 4 • Confident in what God has done in Christ Jesus for all humankind
- 5 • Committed to personal and social salvation/transformation
- 6 • Courageous in dismantling the powers of racism, tribalism, and colonialism

7

8 All of our members, clergy, local churches, and annual conferences will
9 continue to have a home in the future United Methodist Church, whether they consider
10 themselves liberal, evangelical, progressive, traditionalist, middle of the road,
11 conservative, centrist, or something else. We hold on to our Wesleyan heritage that “the
12 living core of the Christian faith is revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition,
13 vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason”.

14

15 We are longing for a United Methodist Church that will move towards new forms of
16 being a connectional church, a General Conference focused on global essentials, and an
17 empowerment of regions for contextually relevant forms of living our common mission
18 mandate. Deeply rooted in the Doctrinal Standards of the UMC,
19 we pledge to exercise our episcopal role in ways that enable as many United Methodists,
20 lay and clergy, as are willing to remain in the UMC and – together – to continue in
21 making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And, because we
22 are part of the Church Universal, we seek to be united visibly and in ministries with
23 other parts of the Body of Christ in God’s mission for the human family and creation.

24

25 We are committed to strengthening every local church, where the word is preached and
26 Christ is offered, and where the table is set before all who hunger and thirst for
27 righteousness, confident in the prayer we have learned to say and share:

28

- 29 • Make us one with Christ – this is faithfulness.
- 30 • Make us one with each other – this is unity.
- 31 • Make us one in ministry to all the world – this is fruitfulness.

32

33

34 This is the United Methodist Church we love and serve!

1 **Document: 700.04**

2 **Name: Affirming *Covenant to Build BeLoved Community* passed by the North Central**
3 **Jurisdiction**

4 **Author: NIC General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegation**

5 **CCFA Comment:**

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8 ACTION:

9 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference affirms *Covenant to Build Beloved Community* written
10 and passed by the North Central Jurisdictional Conference. The Northern Illinois Annual
11 Conference:

- 12 • recommends that local congregations use *Covenant to Build BeLoved Community* in
13 ways that are contextually appropriate;
- 14 • receives the challenge of using annual conference resources in ways that counters
15 racism in the world and within our conference;
- 16 • encourages the Bishop and Cabinet to continue to be intentional in their support
17 of clergy and churches that are cross-cultural appointments to ensure their
18 success and strengthen the vitality of our conference; and,
- 19 • affirms sending the Commission on Religion and Race and Anti-Racism Task
20 Force to the Jurisdictional gathering that *Covenant to Build BeLoved Community*
21 creates.

22

23 RATIONALE:

24 At its Special Session November 10-11, 2021, the North Central Jurisdiction passed *Covenant to*
25 *Build BeLoved Community* (see complete text below) with 80.8% of voting delegates. This is an
26 aspirational covenant casting a vision for what the future of the United Methodist Church can
27 look like as we live together in relationship with one another. By affirming *Covenant to Build*
28 *BeLoved Community*, we are agreeing to participate with the other annual conferences of the
29 North Central Jurisdiction to create a United Methodist Church that is the work of dismantling
30 racism, welcoming all to the table of Christ, and building a community together that lives into
31 the scriptural call to “draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith gives us,
32 since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with
33 pure water. Let’s hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who
34 made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other carefully for the purpose of
35 sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together with other believers, which some
36 people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see
37 the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10: 22-25)

38

39 **Covenant to Build BeLoved Community**

1 United Methodism is at a crucial inflection point – facing the challenges of a global
 2 pandemic, racial injustice, impacts of climate change, denominational decline, and
 3 interdenominational strife. More than ever, we need to lean into the call of Hebrews 10:22-
 4 25 (CEB): “Therefore, let’s draw near with a genuine heart with the certainty that our faith
 5 gives us, since our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies are
 6 washed with pure water. Let’s hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering,
 7 because the one who made the promises is reliable. And let us consider each other
 8 carefully for the purpose of sparking love and good deeds. Don’t stop meeting together
 9 with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead,
 10 encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.” As the North Central
 11 Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church (NCJ), we covenant to Build BeLoved
 12 Community.

13
 14 Baptism is the foundation of the BeLoved Community, as through it we are called into a
 15 covenantal relationship with God, with each other, and with all of God’s creation. It is in
 16 the spirit of this covenantal relationship that we affirm our baptismal vows ...

17
 18 *Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this*
 19 *world, and repent of your sin?*

20
 21 **We do.** We confess our need for God’s grace as we struggle to renounce and reject the
 22 spiritual forces and evil powers of colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and
 23 heterosexism. We apologize for the ways the NCJ has and continues to harm people who
 24 live in other parts of the world, Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC),
 25 people who live in poverty, and LGBTQIA+ people.

26
 27 Now is the moment to repent of these sins and turn toward the future to which God is
 28 calling the NCJ.

29
 30 *Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and*
 31 *oppression in whatever forms they present themselves?*

32
 33 **We do.** We pray for God’s freedom and power to resist colonialism and racism in all the
 34 forms they present themselves.

35
 36 We stand in solidarity with ongoing efforts of many, who have worked tirelessly to end
 37 racism. We recognize this is a journey; that the work of ending racism is ongoing because
 38 it is a way of being - as the body of Christ. All of our work as a Church should be done in
 39 an anti-racist manner.

40
 41 We request the NCJ Bishops of Color convene all BIPOC delegates to discuss how to
 42 begin to address the trauma in communities of color.

43
 44 We request that the Mission Council, in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops,

1 develop an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in a conversation during the next
 2 session of the NCJ that seeks to understand the impact of white supremacy and Christian
 3 nationalism/white nationalism within The United Methodist Church.

4
 5 We request the Mission Council evaluate their budget and demonstrate, and report at the
 6 next Jurisdictional Conference, how the budget incorporates antiracism work and healing
 7 institutional trauma.

8
 9 The Mission Council must designate sufficient NCJ funds for the purpose of convening
 10 Conference Commissions on Religion and Race and Annual Conference antiracism task
 11 force representatives in 2022 to operationalize and share a report at the next
 12 Jurisdictional Conference:

- 13 • A racial analysis of: local church's total budgets, clergy salaries, new church
 14 starts/revitalizations, church closures, Conference staff, board, task force and
 15 committee members, and delegates to GC/JC.
- 16 • Alignment of Annual Conference budget with antiracism work, creation of
 17 whistleblower policies, on-going training and support for cross racial/cross cultural
 18 appointments, prioritization of new church starts and congregational revitalization
 19 in communities of color, resources to support the recruitment and development for
 20 leaders of color (lay and clergy) and developing programs for youth/young adults
 21 of color.

22
 23 *Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace,*
 24 *and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the Church which Christ*
 25 *has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?*

26
 27 **We do.** We also affirm Christ has opened the Church to people of all sexual orientations
 28 and gender identities. All people are of sacred worth.

29
 30 LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity are a gift to the Church. We implore all in the NCJ to do no
 31 harm and to create a culture in which abundance and diversity can be celebrated and
 32 lived. Therefore, we urge all members of the NCJ to avoid pursuing charges for
 33 LGBTQIA+ clergy and allies, and request our episcopal leaders dismiss charges related
 34 to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same gender weddings. Because we are all beloved
 35 children of God, we, in the NCJ, implore all our conference leaders, boards and agencies,
 36 to bring no harm to LGBTQIA+ people. We will not restrict God's calling based solely on
 37 a candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity. We commit to doing good by pursuing
 38 healing and reconciliation with all who have experienced harm and exclusion related to
 39 sexual orientation and gender identity.

40
 41 We request the Mission Council in conjunction with the NCJ College of Bishops develop
 42 an exercise for the NCJ delegates to engage in conversation to understand the impact of
 43 homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism within United Methodist Churches during the
 44 next meeting of the jurisdiction.

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According to the grace given to you, will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

We will. We who will remain and continue to be faithful members of The United Methodist Church, commit to leading the NCJ through this difficult moment. We remain committed to our continuing call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and by sharing and living the Gospel.

We value episcopal leadership and commit to electing bishops as soon as possible. If and only if the 2020 General Conference, currently scheduled for August 29-September 6, 2022, is postponed or canceled, and the regular session of the jurisdictional conference is subsequently proposed to be postponed or canceled, this special session of the NCJ Conference authorizes the duly elected heads of the conference delegations and the NCJ College of Bishops to work together to call a special session of the jurisdictional conference for November 2-5, 2022, the time currently scheduled for the regular session of the jurisdictional conference, for the purpose of the election of bishops, acting on nominations for jurisdictional committees and general agencies, budgeting and other necessary matters.

We encourage conferences and local churches to strive for reconciliation and understanding. However, some congregations and clergy may feel called to a different future in the faith. We respect our siblings who depart and desire to do no harm as we anticipate cooperative ecumenical efforts in the future. We grieve each separation. NCJ annual conferences should use existing disciplinary and conference provisions to accommodate local congregations and clergy seeking disaffiliation.

We stand in solidarity with United Methodists around the world who long for a world-wide contextual and regional denominational structure.

We call on the NCJ College of Bishops and Mission Council to immediately begin working with other Jurisdictions, Central Conferences, and the Connectional Table to make regional equity and contextualization a reality. We fully support polity changes, such as the Christmas Covenant or Connectional Table's US Regional Conference proposals, that will lead to regional equity and contextualization.

We recommend Annual Conferences engage in conversations about regional equity and contextualization.

Covenanting to Build the BeLoved Community, we look to 2024 with promise. We pledge ourselves to God's call upon our lives, to each other, and to the future of The United Methodist Church.

With God's help we will proclaim the good news

1 *and live according to the example of Christ.*
2 *We will surround each other*
3 *with a community of love and forgiveness,*
4 *that we may grow in our trust of God,*
5 *and be found faithful in our service to others.*
6 *We will pray for each other,*
7 *that we may be true disciples*
8 *who walk in the way that leads to life.*

1 **Document: 700.11**

2 **Name: Support of the Christmas Covenant legislation**

3 **Author: NIC General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegation**

4 **CCFA Comment:**

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6 **ACTION:**

7 The Northern Illinois Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church recognizes,
8 supports, and celebrates the leadership of our Central Conferences in the creation of the
9 Christmas Covenant (please see www.christmascovenant.com) and endorses its legislative
10 language, including the creation of a U.S. Regional Conference along with the Central
11 Conferences as Regional Conferences.

12

13

14 **RATIONALE:**

15 The Christmas Covenant legislation was written primarily by United Methodists from Africa,
16 Europe and the Philippines. In February, 2020, it was passed by the Philippines Annual
17 Conference - Cavite and submitted to the next General Conference. The Connectional Table
18 (CT) affirms the Christmas Covenant as an “expression of the CT’s commitment to institutional
19 equity and to dismantling historic, systemic colonialism.” (CT press release, Nov. 3, 2020) It
20 calls on The United Methodist Church to structure itself into Regions, with local autonomy, to
21 address issues particular to their own unique contexts, at the same time, continuing its structure
22 as a global connection. This allows us to address common global issues and give cross-regional
23 help to each region so that we may be more effective in dealing with the unique challenges that
24 we face in our own regions of the world.

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