



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
NORTH GEORGIA EPISCOPAL AREA

SUE HAUPERT-JOHNSON  
RESIDENT BISHOP

JUDY IMIG-BUSH  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

September 16, 2021

**Pastoral Letter to the Korean Church of Atlanta United Methodist Church**

Dear Friends in Christ,

We remember with you today the words of the Apostle Paul, “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” We are eternally grateful for the countless ways you, as servants of Christ, have offered faith, hope and love...especially love to the community in which God has placed you, God’s people, known as the Korean Church of Atlanta UMC.

These last months have been extraordinarily painful for you and for us. None of us desired to walk this process of complaint against Reverend Sei Hwan William Kim. However, for the care of the church and for the accused, we walked through the process as outlined in the 2016 *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. We are grateful to those who brought these issues to our attention. Their courage is to be commended. We are grateful for many others who have prayed, discerned, and sought the truth in these matters of significant concern. To all who continue to help to bring this complaint to a reasonable conclusion, again, we say thank you.

We are pleased to inform you that the North Georgia Conference Committee on Investigation, comprised of laity and clergy, has completed their review of this matter. The Committee did not refer charges for church trial. However, under the provisions of ¶2706.5(c)(2) in *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, they have referred the following matters to me, as Resident Bishop, and to the Cabinet of the North Georgia Conference for “administrative or other action.”

Here are the general areas referred for action:

- ***Financial Mismanagement***

*Based on the findings of the forensic audit conducted by Brooks, McGinnis & Company, LLC, William Kim and the leadership of KCAUMC both failed to report Rev. Kim’s total compensation to the IRS, the Georgia Department of Revenue, or the North Georgia Conference.*

*These excess benefit transactions, consisting of semi-annual bonuses, gifts for vacations, travel expenses for Rev. Kim's family, scholarships for his children, improperly documented credit card expenses, personal medical expenses, and excess UMPIP, Pension Contributions to Wespath (our United Methodist Pension Agency) on Rev. Kim's behalf, total \$248,206.87.*

- **Noncompliant Polity**

*The leadership structure of KCAUMC is out of compliance with the Discipline because the senior pastors of KCAUMC have served as the chairperson of the Administrative Council. This practice creates a conflict of interest for the senior pastor and effectively disempowers the laity of the church.*

*The leadership structure of KCAUMC is also out of compliance with the Discipline by having a Steering Committee. Such a committee undermines the leadership structure mandated by the Discipline by exercising a de facto veto power over decisions made by the committees entrusted with authority in the United Methodist Church.*

- **Disruptive Response**

*During the past months, at the direction of the "lay Elders" of the church and the Counter Measures Committee, also later referred to as a Crisis Response Team, the work of the auditors was seriously hindered, church parking lots were blocked and doors were chained shut, duly-appointed interim pastors were kept from preaching and leading worship, demonstrations were held during services of worship, and staff members were threatened with the loss of their jobs if they cooperated with the Conference or the interim pastors.*

*In addition, during his suspension, William Kim did not fully follow the terms of his suspension by continuing communication with members of the church in person and/or via phone.*

Since it is our desire to assist KCAUMC in moving forward by addressing in detail its financial accounting systems and leadership structures, recommendations from the financial investigation are being shared with Church leadership. This will strengthen the checks and balances of KCAUMC's finances and assist in bringing healthy resolution to these serious concerns.

Our primary goal is to help KCAUMC move to a place of healing and wholeness. The pain and grief of these last months have been heartbreaking. As an Annual Conference, we desire nothing more than to enable this wonderful church to be a beacon of light in the community and to make disciples of Jesus Christ across Gwinnett County.

During the past couple of days, we have been praying, pondering, discerning, and having conversations with your Staff Parish Relationship Committee as to what is needed for proper healing to occur at KCAUMC. How might we, as Bishop and Cabinet, assist KCAUMC to position herself for fruitful ministry once again has been our overriding question.

Experience teaches us that church culture is orchestrated and led by Church leadership. Church culture is empowered and inspired through church leadership and led by the Senior Pastor. We know that healthy pastoral leadership will provide healthy healing which will lead to healthy church culture.

Since we know that these last months have created division and concern among the KCAUMC membership, we acknowledge critical healing is needed. At the forefront of our responsibility as Bishop and Cabinet is to ensure restored ministry is given every possible opportunity at KCAUMC. Therefore, we announce the appointment of Bishop Cho and Rev. Minho Chung as the Co-Interim pastors of KCAUMC. We, as Resident Bishop and the Cabinet of the North Georgia Conference will work closely with your District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Rodrigo Cruz, and your Staff-Parish Relations Committee for the appointment of your next Senior Pastor. Thank you for your prayers as we discern your next Senior Pastor.

Consequently, Rev. Sei Hwan William Kim will receive another appointment to allow for his own healing, ministerial growth, and development of healthier practices of ministry. Thank you for your prayers for Rev. Kim in his new season of ministry.

God's future for you, the people of God at the Korean Church of Atlanta UMC, is bright. You have moved through these months and now can be free to offer an even more strengthened ministry to the Gwinnett County Community and beyond. You are a gift to Kingdom work. May all that has happened prove only to mature each of us as we all seek to bring the Glory of God's saving grace to a broken and hurting world.

The Apostle Paul was correct. "For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1Corinthians 13:12-13, NRSV). Thank you for the love of Jesus you offer to the world.

With the Love of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Hauptert-Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson and

The Cabinet of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church