

## ***Our commitment to the unity of the church***

As we gather for General Conference in Charlotte North Carolina, we are at a defining moment in the life and history of the United Methodist Church. Through church history, Christians numerous times have engaged in theological debates and had strong disagreements over doctrine and ethics, at times this has led to reforms and even schisms. For almost five decades, United Methodists have disagreed over the understanding of human sexuality, which has caused immense pain and hurt to many people. Our inability to solve the impasse caused by our disagreement has led to a significant number of disaffiliations across the connection including, also in Europe.



United Methodists all over the globe are liturgical, contemporary, charismatic, social activists, low church, high church, urban, suburban, small town, rural and much more. We are children, youth, young adults, adults, senior adults, new Christians and mature Christians. We are a melting pot of different ethnicities and cultures – we are present on four continents, in more than 45 countries, and we are made up of an unknown number of diverse cultures and languages. Nevertheless, we are one United Methodist Church, and with all the challenges this entails, we, as your bishops, are committed to be shepherds of the whole flock, and thereby provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation and unity in the body of Christ.

We are committed to the unity of the United Methodist Church, and we are longing for a United Methodist Church that will move towards new forms of being a connectional church, a General Conference focused on global essentials, and an empowerment of regions for contextually relevant forms of living our common mission mandate. Deeply rooted in the Doctrinal Standards of the UMC, we pledge to exercise our episcopal role in ways that will enable local churches, clergy and lay to carry out their ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world with the utmost integrity.

Despite disaffiliation, the United Methodist Church will remain a faithful witness to the Christian gospel. We are committed to pursue the calling of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

We, the signing bishops, are serving or served in the past episcopal areas with vast diversities in Northern, Western and Central Eastern Europe, and beyond.

Charlotte, NC, USA, April 2024

### *Active Bishops:*

*Bishop Christian Alsted*

*Bishop Harald Rückert*

*Bishop Stefan Zürcher*

### *Retired Bishops:*

*Bishop Heinrich Bolleter*

*Bishop Walter Klaiber*

*Bishop Øystein Olsen*

*Bishop Patrick Streiff*

*Bishop Hans Växby*

*Bishop Rosemarie Wenner*