

## A Proposed Theological Grounding for the California-Pacific Annual Conference

All creation is the incarnate evidence of God's life-giving love. God, in infinite wisdom and abundant grace, ordained that humanity be created in God's own image and created the Church to be the Body of Christ in the world seeking to reflect the life-saving grace of God in Jesus the Christ. This all-inclusive prevenient grace is offered to every person. Therefore, the church shall welcome and receive all people to the table of Christ's communion and to the full life and leadership of the church.

Surrendering to the Lordship of Christ frees us to accept each other and live with our differences as the Holy Spirit moves in and through us to enable us to journey toward greater unity, love and peace. We know the power of justifying grace as our relation with God in Christ transforms us. We stand firmly within the best of our Wesleyan tradition to witness to the wideness of God's grace in a broken world in need of Christ's healing, liberating love. We believe God has called us to witness to the beauty, power and purpose of the Body of Christ.

At Christ's invitation, then, the California-Pacific Conference will live and work together at "One Table", thus reflecting the God-given diversity of our conference and affirming the call to be in communion with ALL God's beloved children. Though we differ and disagree, we will not condemn each other for our differences. We will seek to live and minister together, in tension with our beliefs, but not in rejection of one another. We will sit at the table together, acknowledging our theological diversity, loving each other wholly, rejecting none personally. Sanctifying grace will guide us as we are perfected in love to be love in the world.

Therefore, we affirm and proclaim:

- God's love and grace creates and upholds a church in which all God's beloved children are welcomed and embraced;
- Jesus is the host at the Table of Grace, so we come together in our diversity in a spirit of humility and gratitude;
- A new church will be a vibrant, loving community in which our differences are affirmed as manifestations of God's abundant and holy creation;
- Making disciples for the transformation of the world is best done through welcoming, recognizing and utilizing all the varieties of gifts that the Spirit has called forth;
- A faithful church is one in which the sacraments, the rites of confirmation, ordination and marriage, and all servant ministries are open to those who are called by God and affirmed by the church;
- The value of the foundation provided by our historic doctrine and the Wesleyan ecclesiology of The United Methodist Church, which is marked by covenant and grace, as we become the church God is calling us to be today
- A theological approach that engages Scripture through the lens of tradition, experience and reason, which allows for a breadth of faithful understandings;
- A church born of the living Word of God, open to the leading of the Holy Spirit through scholarship and life itself;
- A connectional church in vital mission to and with the world, for the transformation of the church and the world

Our Lived Response:

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In light of the biblical witness, our baptismal vows and the General Rules of the UMC to do no harm, do good and stay in love with God, and in commitment to the above proposed theological grounding, and

In view of the pervasive historical and current systemic racism, the ongoing impact of colonialism, and decades-long discrimination of our LGBTQIA+ siblings in The UMC, we envision a different world and church where we will do everything in our power:

- To accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they manifest themselves, seeking to do no harm to persons or creation and seeking to do good, living with compassion, equity and mutuality amidst our God-given diversity;
- To claim Jesus Christ as our Savior, and put our whole trust in Christ's grace as we honestly face our individual sins and systemic injustices, engage in meaningful and transformative acts of repentance and actively work toward faithful reconciliation between all neighbors and communities.
- To embrace and celebrate the vital and necessary gifts given in service of Christ's holy Church by those whom God calls to ministry in baptism or ordination, of all ages, nations, races, gender identities, and sexual orientations.
- To work alongside other Christian communions and with our interfaith partners to address the brokenness in our neighborhoods and around the world.

Claiming this gift of God, we vow to stand strong in the practice of our faith and polity, grounded in our Wesleyan Way of Grace—

- To nurture God's call in every person;
- To encourage Boards of Ordained Ministry to examine the content of each candidate's character and the gifts and grace they possess for ministry and not reject a candidate solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- To stand with our bishops as they ordain new generations of clergy for ministry;
- To celebrate the mystery of love that joins two people together and continue the prerogative clergy have always had, to say yes—or no—to join couples in holy matrimony;
- To refuse to submit to or process complaints of pastors who marry same-gender couples or of pastors who are our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

Claiming God's ability to do a new thing in our 21st century context as God has done in every important moment of history, we seek to become the new church God calls us to be through amazing grace—beautiful, global, justice-seeking, faithful, and filled with joy, singing together a new song, echoing the old, old story of Jesus and his love!