[F & O] [Add Table #]: Worldwide Nature Small Group Report

Key Quote:

Part B

1. The United Methodist Church is a worldwide connectional church. Why and in which ways is this relevant in your context?

Input and Perspectives:

- Helps us to stay grounded in Christ
- We can do more/have greater impact together than alone
  - Provides resources & information that we could not have on our own
  - Helps people from our neighborhoods feel they are involved all over the world to know that even if you only have a small amount to give, that your dollars are going to help others all over the world is exciting. To see the cross and flame is to know you are welcome, regardless of where you are in the world
  - Significant impact through UMCOR in times of disaster
  - The connectional system allows for people in a local church to recognize how our ministry experiences go far beyond their walls and that it becomes relationship building.
  - Working together through GBGM and Advance to address global issues like migrant crisis in Europe
  - Sharing and receiving experiences from each other; the church does the best at reaching others in times of needs. That is a powerful statement of itself
- The different ministries are tools that bring many to Christ
  - Ministries are not limited to United Methodists (think UMCOR disaster response) we reach many non-methodist people and make a difference in their lives. We reach people worldwide, always to make disciples for Jesus Christ
- Our connection helps us with our vision and mission
- Benefits of feeling connected to others:
  - Wonderful to be deeply connected to people around the world, including people of other Methodist traditions
  - Attracts young people who appreciate feeling a part of something larger than themselves
  - Helps smaller churches and conferences feel like they are making a greater impact as part of something larger
- Value is created in the diversity (cultural, history, theology, etc.) and shared Wesleyan tradition uniting the church coming together
- Being able to go to places around the world and feel like you are at home
  - Katrina story (where will we go to escape this? Go as North as you can go and then find a cross and flame and they wherever that is, they will help you there)
  - We are all family, we all relate to one another
  - We come from different geographical areas but are united under the umbrella that is the UMC. Feeling that you are still at home when you go to another UMC because we all have the same beliefs.
- The connection is inspiring
• Many refugees in city (amarillo) working to learn languages to connect with our brothers and sisters.
• How do we answer a call is a question that is individual and yet connectional. One may answer a call in one place and serve it in another place. What does call look like? everyone experiences differently, but god calling us is universal
• sacramentally - baptismal faith unites us all and the sacrament of communion does as well
• Connection with migrant and migrant ministries at the southern US border
• Challenges:
  o There is difficulty when issues are not applicable to local context
  o We can have a hard time being willing to reach out and receive the gifts of a global church.
  o Many local churches in the USA don't feel connected to the connection
2. In light of our commitment to be a world-wide connectional church, what is most important for a truly worldwide General Book of Discipline that undergirds and empowers the mission of the entire United Methodist Church?

Response:

- Discipleship: we cannot offer Christ to others if we ourselves have not experienced Him
- What is most important for us is making disciples for Jesus Christ.
- Partnering and connections are important to learn from one another and be in ministry together
- Understand that the church operates differently in different parts of the world unity of purpose. We all come from different cultural settings and backgrounds, but beyond that we are all united by our mission. **There is a ribbon of sameness in our diversity**
- Keep our Wesleyan Theology at the core of who we are
  - Wesleyan Heritage/ John Wesley's understanding of the person: evangelism, social holiness, the least & the lost, what it means to do outreach
  - Blending of personal and social holiness
- History
  - What is our shared history and tradition of the value of our shared history and tradition
- Global Social Principals in Global Book
- General Boards and Agencies that are global centric
- Doctrine
- Mission
  - Common mission
  - Focus on reaching people
  - Definition of what it means to make disciples
  - Our mission and purpose is relevant in every single context.
- Faith & Order Committee
- Standards of our faith
- Our beliefs
- Core theology
- Articles of Faith
- The role of laity and clergy
- Understanding heart of distinctive nature of call but flexibility for how that may be lived out
- Structure: Nurture, outreach, witness
  - Need a lot of flexibility in some structural pieces for regional differences
  - Also need to define what is really global
  - Overall structure of who we are and who our leaders are
  - Agencies and Boards
- Bible-centered gospel not a cultural centered gospel
- Flexibility
  - Build in flexibility
  - to be more relevant in the modern era
  - Caution/Challenge: recognize that we don’t have a common understanding of what flexibility means
  - Education in course of study
  - Staring new churches/why we can’t just start them
  - Working with undocumented persons, LGBTQI, and other marginalized persons
  - Maintain option for central conferences to adapt parts of the book
  - Have a Central Conference Book of Discipline
  - We should not discriminate based on cultural differences
  - Allow response to cultures
  - Define flexibility and adaptability of the rules
- Don’t want to loose the efficiency in the coordination with decentralization
• Enough of the above to be able to have the wisdom to contextualize
• Keep it big picture
  o Don’t put up boundaries: recognize that different cultures have different struggles
  o Don’t micromanage: let the local church make contextual adaptations
  o Keep it simple so it can be easily understood
  o Recognize what is really essential in our definitions and minimize legislation and language used to clarify
• If we are the same family, we should have the same rules
• Each geographic area should have its own Book of Discipline
• Need to not be US-centric
• Emphasize listening: we cannot be a global church without listening to understand different contexts
• Share the good news to all people regardless of who they are.
• We need to make sure everything is translated (at least to Portuguese and French) so all our members can read and understand what we as a denomination have said. We cannot be a global church if only some of our members can read what we believe.
• One group noted that a group member was not sure how he felt about a global Book of Discipline.
• Comment:
  o We recognize that we have common struggles and through conversations like this we can share what we have learned. We have LOTS to share with each other.
1. *The U.M. church is a world wide connectional church. Why and in which ways is this relevant in your context?*

- It is so helpful for the local church to understand that we are not in this alone and that we are truly a global church.
- This UM church is not U.S. centric – it is global and we are dealing with different cultures, theological understandings.
- We have the world-wide church in our communities. We have the world right at our doorsteps. We need to realize our global connection as a UM church so that we can relate to the people even right outside our doors.
- French people are wary of a very big church- world wide, but on the other side, it’s wonderful to realize we are connected to something much bigger. We are so small, but we are attached to a church that is so much bigger. His job is to communicate this so that the people of France can live into this connection.
- Small communities feel connected to the world through the UMC because of missional opportunities, etc.
- Connection is a gift in a world of fear and violence when the world is putting up walls.
- Our congregation (Columbia, SC) sees the connection as a gift that is very real - as another church came to our rescue – providing space in the midst of a flood and in the aftermath providing worship space.
- Humility is so important as our connection in the world-wide church keeps us humble because it expands our understanding that the way we are is not the way everyone is. It creates a healthier environment.
- In NC: Why don’t we give some of our proceeds from the closed churches over to Africa – when we sold the church and closed the property.
- It is so important –not only how we give but also how we receive from the global connection. Practical, agricultural sustainability.
In light of our commitment to be a world-wide connectional church, what is the most important for a truly worldwide General Book of Discipline that undergirds and empowers the mission of input and perspectives:

- Differences between the regions presents a problem. Fear that eventually those differences in the Book of Discipline will only help us to grow apart.
- Maybe this is why our BOD needs to be more general so that the Book of Discipline can be applied in different circumstances. There are some paragraphs that are uniquely for American issues as there is no need even to translate sections in France.
- Central Conferences do not follow our election of Bishops.
- We need to be able to identify the basics of what is important in the United Methodist Church. What undergirds and empowers the mission of the church?
- We need to focus on our doctrinal standards.
- The BOD is solid...it is the Discipline that holds us together. All churches are under the same Discipline. Constitution is essential. Then there are portions that apply to various parts of the world. Why couldn’t we come up with a Discipline that applies all across the world. Already we have difference is Episcopal structure. Rules for mandating the same discipline everywhere.
- What is essential and what is contextual?
- Good to introduce a general book of discipline and wrestle with this for the next 4 years.
- Do we feel it is realistic to have a world wide book of Discipline? Every context is so particular? How do we agree on what our essentials as a United Methodist?
- Don’t we already have that in our current BOD?
- We have the right to not be in disagreement, but we have the responsibility to dialogue. That is a strength of the UMC that I love. What one is experiencing in CA is a help to us in France.
• Wouldn’t it be good to have something that binds us on a basic level, despite cultural differences. We can all work from the same general document but then we can each have some pieces that apply to general context
• Other countries use their own rules for issues that apply only to their own context
• How do decide that what we re-purpose general conference to deal with truly global matters. It would help to have an American General Conference.
• We can have a general BOD – pull out the beginning of our current BOD – say the rest is US and deal with it separately.
• What if... We had a General Conference Week 1 – we all meet together as a World Wide conference and then the 2nd week we meet as separate conferences/areas to deal with contextual matters. Could we use common time for worship and to talk about how we are to Make Disciples of J.C. for the Transformation of the world

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