



**Council of Bishops**  
The United Methodist Church



### **Finding our Way in a Time of Uncertainty and Opportunity**

November 10, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Jesus Christ,

Ephesians 4:1-2 admonishes us “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

All of us are witnesses to increased animosity and growing conflict over political, religious and justice issues in many places in our world in word and deed. We believe this serves to threaten our safety and security. In antagonistic discussions about our faithful witness in the world, we may encounter verbal abuse, disruptive behavior, harassing emails, letters and phone messages, and confrontations.

As Bishops of your United Methodist Church, we serve a Church which is diverse in its theological understanding of Scripture and Christ’s call in our lives. Conflict and differing opinions, a natural part of the human and faith experience, come in a variety of forms. We are called to address our differences with authenticity and respectful conversations which enrich our understanding of God and of one another.

In recent months, we have experienced these negative behaviors escalating into more aggressive, and violent expressions of hate, prejudice, and anger directed against others. We are hearing of and observing angry words now escalating to actions that are resulting in fear, anxiety, loss of security, and even physical harm. These actions are repugnant to us as your bishops.

We renew our covenant to one another to lead as a council and in our respective residential areas in ways that reflect our commitment to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. We renew this covenant within the Council of Bishops to engage in holy conversation and Christ-like behavior especially when we do not agree with one another. We call upon all United Methodists, even in the midst of disagreement and uncertainty about our future as a church, to do the same, and to love each other as Christ loved us (John 12:34).

In Christ’s shalom,

Bishop Bruce R. Ough, President  
The Council of Bishops