

Letter from South Carolina Reconciling Ministries Network
Read by Stanton Adams at Annual Conference 2016

Dear Bishop Holston

We write to express gratitude to the Council of Bishops for their leadership at the 2016 General Conference. We are thankful for *A Way Forward*, and the recommendation to defer the consideration of all legislation related to human sexuality that was due to come before the General Conference.

We support the Council of Bishops as they appoint a special Commission “to develop a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality,” and “maintain an on-going dialogue with this Commission.” We express our hope that the Commission will complete their work in a timely manner and report to a called General Conference before the regular 2020 General Conference. We commit to being in continued prayer for the Council of Bishops and the Commission throughout the journey ahead.

We acknowledge the critical importance of carrying out this historic process with the utmost of care, effectiveness, and timing. While we agree that establishing the details and naming the members of the Commission are paramount to success, we must also acknowledge the harm that grows with each passing day and the importance of preserving momentum and collective trust. We urge you to prioritize and proceed without haste, taking care that this new way forward will not ultimately result in failure as similar Commissions have in our past. We must not repeat past mistakes.

In light of all the above, we, the undersigned United Methodists in the South Carolina Annual Conference encourage you and the full Council of Bishops to do the following:

1. Name the members of the *A Way Forward* Commission as soon as possible but no later than August 1, 2016 and require that the first meeting of the Commission be convened within 60 days of the Commission members being appointed;
2. Among the members of the Commission, include out LGBTQI persons so that such voices will be represented in what will otherwise be a conversation about LGBTQI persons by heterosexual, cisgender persons. Such a conversation will lack integrity if LGBTQI voices are not included;
3. Authorize and encourage the Commission to seek out and invite established experts to provide information as needed.

4. Provide a forum for the Commission to receive input from individual churches and members, perhaps through and with the cooperation of the Annual Conferences.
5. Report to the Annual Conferences at least once each quarter on the progress of the work of the Commission;
6. Provide a final report at least two months in advance of any called General Conference that shall take up any necessary legislation to implement the recommendations of the Commission;
7. Provide continued leadership and a commitment to unity during this interim and vulnerable period, agreeing to a moratorium on the processing of any current or future complaints related to Discipline paragraphs having to do with human sexuality until the General Conference is reconvened.

We offer ourselves as partners and active participants in the work that lies ahead.

—Signed by 68 people in attendance at the South Carolina Reconciling Ministries Network breakfast June 6