



Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche Gebiet von Mittel- und Südeuropa
Eglise Méthodiste Unie Région de l'Europe du Centre et du Sud
United Methodist Church Area of Central and Southern Europe

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To Leaders in the United Methodist Church
in Central and Southern Europe

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Receiving the mediation protocol with a grateful, yet grieving heart

Dear United Methodists,

At the initiative of central conference bishops, a very diverse group of leaders began to meet in summer 2019. The leaders have come from all sides of the debate on LGBTQ-members in the UMC, as well for as against the Traditional Plan approved by General Conference in February 2019. With the help of a professional mediator, this very diverse group finally came to a unanimous agreement and published a **"Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation"**, on January 3rd, 2019. The protocol and a press release can be found in English at: "[Mediation-Protocol](#)". From Europe, Bishop Christian Alsted was a member of the group and I want to thank him for bringing our European perspective actively into the discussion.

As your Bishop, I have received the mediation protocol with a grateful, but at the same time also grieving heart. At all of the last General Conferences, we as bishops have experienced that narrow margins of vote on issues of deeply held faith convictions will only further more conflict. It will not build up the community of the church for living its mission. Therefore, I am grateful for the mediation protocol as a way out of an impasse into which General Conference has maneuvered itself. I support the mediation protocol for allowing helpful decisions at General Conference 2020. However, I do so with a grieving heart. We have to confess that we will fail to keep the unity in the bond of peace.

The United Methodist Church in Europe is very diverse. Three of the four episcopal areas, ours included, are themselves very diverse, sometimes as a diversity between different countries and their particular legal, cultural and religious contexts, sometimes as a diversity within a country. The Eurasian area is the only one in Europe where there is no such diversity within the same episcopal area.

In the three episcopal areas which are in themselves diverse, we as bishops have engaged in discernment processes with the leadership in our respective areas on how to remain as closely related as possible despite the deeply held diversity of faith convictions with regard to our ministry with LGBTQ persons. I continue in hope and prayer that these processes of dialogue and consensus building lead to maintaining the unity in the bond of peace despite the option of separation offered by the mediation protocol.

All superintendents and bishops in Europe met in early December 2019 for their regular meeting. Two leaders, one from the British and one from the Irish Methodist Church led the reflections and discussions on a much broader topic of "Leadership in a Time of Crisis". Together, we celebrated worship and shared in Holy Communion. With a grieving heart, I am recognizing that it may have been the last time to do so as a unified United Methodist Church.

I do not know what delegates will finally decide at General Conference 2020 and at our forthcoming Central Conference in March 2021 and at Annual Conferences. I will continue the journey with the hope and prayer that we find other solutions than separation. I understand the mediation protocol also as a chance that the "Post-separation United Methodist Church" will acknowledge and put in place a world-wide connectional structure that allows for the contextuality needed for keeping the unity in the bond of peace in a region of multiple diversities like Central and Southern Europe.

At the beginning of this New Year, I greet you, United Methodists in Central and Southern Europe, with a combination of two liturgical calls that rise from my heart: "Come Holy Spirit, come" and "Lord, have mercy on us".


Bishop Patrick Streiff