

## **Statement from United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church**

Lake Junaluska, North Carolina  
June 20, 2008

As United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church (UMOC), a group consisting of Asian American, African American, Hispanic, Native American and Pacific Islander United Methodists, meeting in conjunction with the Reconciling Ministries Network's Convocation at Lake Junaluska Assembly, we raise our voices lest the mistakes of the past be repeated in the present. We are reminded that at not so long ago African Americans were denied entry into this historic site at the heart of Methodism and based on the remembrance of this tragic legacy, we speak out today so that no other individuals or groups will be similarly denied hospitality at Christ's holy table of fellowship.

As UMOC, we are mindful that then as now, more conservative voices from within this Church that we love have sought to deny access and entry to fellow Christians and United Methodists. And we are concerned that then as now acts of inhospitality have opened the door to expressions of extremism and hatred. In particular, we condemn in the strongest possible terms the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and of other misguided individuals to intimidate and threaten this gathering of faithful United Methodists. Again, as UMOC, we are mindful of the campaign of brutality, violence and terror that the KKK has waged from the past down to the immediate present against African Americans, new immigrants, Catholics, Jews, people of differing political perspectives, the federal government, and many, many others.

Now, in recent weeks, the KKK has made it abundantly clear that they have expanded their circle of hatred and terror to include Reconciling United Methodists, particularly those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people of faith. UMOC utterly rejects the contention that hate-filled groups like the KKK can ever serve as authentic ambassadors of Christ's holy gospel, and we wish to make it abundantly clear to all that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender United Methodists, their families and those who love and support them are beloved of God and dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

Make no mistake; in this moment and time there can be no equivocation about the ways in which expressions of inhospitality have led to acts of extremism and hatred in the past as well as the present. Keeping in mind Martin Luther King, Jr.'s admonition that all that is necessary for evil to triumph "is for good [people] to do nothing," UMOC calls upon other groups of faithful Christians to denounce the statements and activities of the KKK in regards to this Reconciling Ministries Network Convocation. More specifically, we challenge the more conservative voices within the United Methodist Church to make clear to all their disassociation with such expressions of hatred and fear and to be at least as vocal in their repudiations of the KKK as they have been in their expressions of public concern about fellow United Methodists meeting to worship, pray and be inspired in this historic place.

## **Final Statement – For Immediate Release**

We want to offer our deepest appreciation to the SEJ Administrative Offices, the Lake Junaluska Assembly Staff, residents, and security personnel who have worked so hard to make us feel both welcome and safe in this place. We are truly grateful for their efforts. We also give thanks for those Bishops and many other United Methodists, who have brought or sent greetings to this gathering. We are immeasurably strengthened and humbled by your love and support.

As UMOC, we are well aware that the struggle for true equality is not over, even within Christ's Church. In the months and years of challenge and hope that lie before us, we are particularly heartened and encouraged by the examples offered by the lives of Chief Junaluska, Sojourner Truth, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, Cesar Chavez, and many, many others. And thus, surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, "let us run with perseverance the course that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1b)

*For more information about United Methodists for a Fully Inclusive Church, you may contact its current Conveners:*

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