

United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church

(UMOC) was founded in 2000, at a historic gathering of people of color in the United Methodist church. The gathering represented the first gathering across racial and ethnic lines to enter into dialogue on the church's history of brokenness and exclusion, the intersecting forms of exclusion the church has had to overcome: racism, sexism, heterosexism, and cultural neocolonialism. These dialogues and the common grounds of experience and prophetic dissatisfaction with the United Methodist Church's distance from true diversity resulted in a statement (see reverse), which has been widely distributed and supported by United Methodists in the United States and the Philippines.

The statement, and the organizing that flowered from it, has served as the basis for this new organization committed to advocating for a fully inclusive church.

The church finds itself in an ever diversifying society and world. The church must come to understand that its old way of dominant culture thought neither serves the future of a vibrant church, nor does justice to Christ's call to be in ministry with all people. God's is calling us to be prophetically accountable to our responsibilities as members of a diverse multicultural Creation.

- ☞ *We are dedicated to supporting all efforts to build a church where the gifts of true diversity are embraced and celebrated.*
- ☞ *We seek to be an instrument for drawing attention to divisive ways of thinking that have limited the church from reaching its full potential as the Body of Christ, whole, diverse as God's creation and embodying the biblical mandate to be.*
- ☞ *We seek to create places of healing for those who have suffered at the hands of the church's racism, sexism, and heterosexism and neocolonialism.*
- ☞ *We are committed to the ongoing decolonization of our racial/ethnic churches, that they may become places that honor the multiplicity of God's good creation.*
- ☞ *We seek to create and support all communities that advocate for the dignity and sacred worth of all of God's creation.*

UMOC is an Extension Ministry of the **Reconciling Ministries Network**. **RMN** (www.RMNetwork.org) is a national movement of United Methodist churches, individuals and other communities, which addresses Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender concerns in the church and society. This movement, which began in 1984, seeks to generate a grass roots response to religious intolerance and to support communities and individuals that advocate justice and human rights for all persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

*This **network** of individuals, communities, and congregations, provide a powerful witness. This **witness** celebrating the fullness of all our gifts is lived out through our worship, our work and our lives. This **connection** makes us all disciples of the living Christ that shares God's grace unconditionally, to all.*



UNITED METHODISTS OF COLOR FOR A FULLY INCLUSIVE CHURCH

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UNITED METHODISTS OF COLOR FOR A FULLY INCLUSIVE CHURCH

*...the storehouses
of God's justice
do not run low...*

United Methodists of Color for A Fully Inclusive Church

We are United Methodist men and women, who love God and know that we are loved by God. We are United Methodists who celebrate the God-given gifts of our ethnicity, our gender, and our sexuality. We are United Methodists who not only acknowledge the historic racism of the church, but also the subtler present day forms of racism and division in our midst. We know this to be true, for we have experienced it as people of color in the church we love. Indeed, our love for the promise of the church has placed us on the forefront of moving the United Methodist Church to a more inclusive place. We are people who have experienced the biblical story of the anawim, *"those who have been silenced."* Our struggle has been to claim our voice and to transform the church we love into a place where the silenced are heard. We affirm that it has been through this struggle, when the church has lived out the gospel of love and inclusion, that the realm of God's justice has been made manifest.



We remember all too well those voices who said racism was not present in the church. We remember those voices who wielded scripture as a support for division and inequality. We remember the voices who pled patience to inequality by claiming that justice was gradual. We remember the time when silence in the presence of racism was the church's greatest sin. As persons of color and diverse ethnic backgrounds, we can never forget our long history of struggling to not be erased by a beloved church where silence and spiritual dismemberment were

theologically institutionalized. Scripture is the Word of Life, but we intuitively know the history of its use as the Word of Death, to support the sins of colonialism, slavery, racism, and sexism.

We all know Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. Seen or unseen, they are vital members of our communities. For many of us, they have been our invisible neighbors, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, cherished members in the community of life. Indeed, we recognize that throughout history, our church and our communities have benefited from the gifts of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender people. But in return for their gifts, we have given these brothers and sisters silence or scorn. When they have asked for their name and acknowledgement of their place as worthy members in the family of God, they have been answered with continued overt or subtle forms of spiritual and physical violence.



We can not and will not deny that we recognize in the experiences of our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender brothers and sisters the resonance of our own journeys as people of color in the church. We see the truth in the words of Coretta Scott King when she says that the struggles for inclusion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people are part of the *"continuing justice movement"* for which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his life, a movement that *"thrives on unity and inclusion, not division and exclusion."*



We are called to bear witness to the need for our beloved church to do good by its Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender brothers and sisters. Remembering the voices that told us to be silent or passive, to give up

our culture and history in order to be accepted by the dominant white society and church, we reject the idea that Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,



Transgender people need to reshape themselves or be *"cured"* in order to fit in to the dominant heterosexual society and church. Our own experience of silence and erasure has taught us that abandoning identity is spiritual violence.

Remembering the voices who have told us to wait on justice, we dispute the notion that issues of race and nationality are so overwhelming that to fight for another issue of injustice is to water down the movement. For the storehouses of God's justice do not run low, and we must recognize the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression if we are ever to achieve the Kingdom. The realm of God is at hand.

We acknowledge that there may be differences of opinion among us, but this does not require that we wait on justice.

We will not wait on racism.
We will not wait on sexism.
We will not wait on neo-colonialism.
We will not wait on heterosexism.

Inaction is impossible. For in the current climate, where difference is often answered with death, the church is either an instrument of peace, or an instrument of violence. The United Methodist Church must act boldly to end further injury to the Body of Christ.

In the spirit of Justice that has historically called us to move towards wholeness, we prayerfully call the church to accountability.