

*Yet Alive!* The Alabama-West Florida 2024 Conference Delegation Calling to Restore and Renew the Connection *DRAFT - Updated 6/24/23*

Through a process of discernment, we, the Alabama-West Florida Conference Delegation to the 2024 General and Jurisdictional Conferences feel that Christ is calling us to the restoration and renewal of connectionalism. We are living in a period of intense unraveling and chaos where we have witnessed the fracturing of society and the foundering of the church. We remember how in 1967 Martin Luther King asked the famous question in a very uncertain time, "Where do we go from here: chaos or community?" We choose community. The Methodist name for the web of relationships and structures that create real community is *connectionalism*. It is the heart of Wesleyanism and is an aspect of the eternal Triune God, whose very nature is connection and love. In Jesus Christ, God is restoring and renewing the world's connection to the Holy Trinity and to each other. Charles Wesley's hymn of thanksgiving for connectionalism, *And Are We Yet Alive?* notes that we receive this connection as grace or gift from God, that we receive in "each other's face." We in the United Methodist Church are connected to each other through bonds of love and a shared mission. The connectional structure and John Wesley's trust clause are evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit bringing God's creative order to the chaos of the world. We seek this restoration and renewal of the connection in Jesus Christ alone who said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." Our delegation feels called by Christ to:

1. **CONNECT:** To seek renewed connection to God in Jesus Christ and to make disciples by inviting others to connect with God through Jesus. (John 15:5)
2. **COLLABORATE:** To build relationships with other delegates and leaders throughout the connection to strengthen our "partnership for the gospel." Through this collaboration, we are asking God to renew the vision of the United Methodist Church as a big tent where everyone is welcomed and has a place at the table. (1 Corinthians 12:18-21)
3. **CO-CREATE**
  - a. To build on the foundation of Jesus Christ and the work of those who have gone before us to co-create with God a church that we are proud to pass down to the next generation of United Methodists. (1 Cor. 3:9-11; Eph. 3:19-22)
  - b. To restore and renew the United Methodist connectional system including the Alabama-West Florida Conference, the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and the General Church with its missions around the world. This includes prayerfully discerning how the connectional structures need to adapt to meet the needs of the world in which we live. (Rom. 8:28)
  - c. To listen with an open mind and heart to the Holy Spirit leading the church through Holy Conferencing. (Gal. 5:22-26)

We invite the Alabama West Florida Conference to join in this mission of restoring and renewing the connection. We ask each of you to pray for us that the Spirit might give us the wisdom and grace we need to lead in this critical time. Let us all celebrate the connection, because, by the grace of God, we are "yet alive!"