

Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church
100 Maryland Ave. NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 23, 2013

Executive Committee Issues Statement on Same Gender Ceremony Planned by Bishop Talbert

Washington, D.C.: (BACKGROUND: Retired United Methodist Bishop Melvin G. Talbert has announced plans to conduct a same gender marriage ceremony on Saturday, October 26, 2013, in Birmingham, Alabama. The Executive Committee of the United Methodist Council of Bishops has issued the following statement.)

“The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.” (BOD – ¶ 120). This is the core of our self-understanding as The United Methodist Church. We are called to be part of God’s mission movement in all places of the world where our congregations happen to be located.

As a church that serves in four continents, in numerous languages and multiple cultures, we live with different opinions in many issues including human sexuality. Yet we seek ways to walk together in obedience to God’s call, united in Christ who heals the brokenness of the world and of the church. We are committed to organizing our life by following the Book of Discipline which is discussed and decided every four years at General Conference. As bishops, we are called to serve “in special covenant with all other bishops” (¶ 422.1) in order to offer “the oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs of the whole church.”(¶ 422.3)

The bishops of the church are bound together in a covenant and all ordained elders are committed to uphold the Book of Discipline. "Conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies" are chargeable offenses in the United Methodist Church. (¶2702.1.b) The Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops has urged Bishop Melvin Talbert not to perform the same-gender marriage in Birmingham, Alabama. Furthermore, the Resident Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett has requested him not to come to the Birmingham Area for this purpose.

We have taken this action with deep respect for Bishop Talbert’s intention to serve as a pastor for United Methodists who experience themselves as excluded because of decisions of the General Conference. We also know that Bishop Wallace-Padgett is the caring shepherd of all people in the congregations in the North Alabama Conference. We are united in believing in the sacred worth of all people.

We will continue to stay in honest and respectful conversation in the Council of Bishops on how to lead the church to live out the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We commit ourselves to live in loving and respectful relationships with one another and with all United Methodists and all people of faith. Through Christ, we are one in the Spirit even though we are not always of one mind. We ask all United Methodists to pray for one another and for the world, trusting that God who reconciled the world will enable us and all Christians to strive for peace and justice for all.

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About the Council of Bishops

The Council of Bishops provides leadership and helps set the direction of the 12 million-member church and its mission throughout the world. The bishops are the top clergy leaders of The United Methodist Church, the second largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.

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