

HOLY CONFERENCING IN OUR CHURCHES

GATHERING REFLECTION FOR BELOVED COMMUNITY

*If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day,
“may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!”
To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme,
would be treason most scandalous and shocking,
and would make me a reproach before God and the world.
--from “What to the slave is the 4th of July?” by Frederick Douglass, 1852*

Some or all forms for the church conference must be submitted ahead of time per the specific instructions of the District Superintendent. Also, the District Superintendent must be notified of new candidates for ministry when the church conference schedule is set.

When meeting virtually, a co-host from the leadership of the congregation (lay or clergy) should be assigned to help with the technical aspects like muting, sharing documents on the screen, etc. when possible. If such a person is not available, the presider may bring someone to help with these aspects of the meeting. As the people gather, the presider should instruct them to have bread and juice, or similar items, on hand so that they can participate in holy communion. If people have questions about what to do with leftover juice and bread at the conclusion of the meeting, the leader can instruct them that they may consume the elements or give them back to God’s creation.

CALL TO HOLY CONFERENCING AS BELOVED COMMUNITY

SCRIPTURAL CALL

Psalm 137.1-6

-NIV, adapted and augmented

Presider: By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.

People: **We remember our home.**

Presider: There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

People: **How can we sing?**

Presider: How can we sing the songs of God
while in a foreign land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget its skill.
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.



People: May we never forget the world's greatest suffering and highest joy.
May our songs for God never be forced or silenced.

SONG FOR GOD

'By the Streams of Babylon'

Suggested tune: DIX ("For the Beauty of the Earth")

**By the streams of Babylon we sit weeping bitter tears.
Here so many hopes are gone; now we're filled with countless fears.
Yet, O God, you tell us: "Rise! See the world through faith-filled eyes!"**

**We will rise and seek your way, knowing love will one day win.
We won't let fear rule the day; we will welcome strangers in.
Every day, we'll seek and find countless ways to be more kind.**

Presider: In the spirit of beloved community, I hereby call the Church Conference of [church name] into session and ask for your response.

People: We are here as a United Methodist community of God to account for our ministries, to order our life together, and to resolve that in the year ahead we will answer the call of Jesus Christ to his disciples, leading this church into active ministries of love, truth, and justice.

Presider: Knowing that we are all called to ministry of beloved community together, lay and clergy alike, let us enter into the business of your Church Conference.

WORK FOR GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY

1. Vote to authorize virtual meeting (when applicable)

We move that those who are authorized to participate in the [church/charge] conference of [church name] on [date] hereby agree that we consent to proceed with a virtual meeting using remote technology, and consent that all of our decisions are in accordance with the Constitution of The United Methodist Church (Division Two, Section VI, Article II (¶ 33) and with the laws of the church, and are therefore legal and binding actions of the conference.

Any training for voting should be completed at this time. See 11b.

2. Election of Secretary

A volunteer needs to take handwritten or typed minutes that will be submitted to the district office within one week of the conference.

3. Recording attendance

The elected recording secretary should take attendance in the best way possible. This attendance record is submitted with the minutes to the district office within one week of the conference.

4. Approval of Minutes of 2020 Church Conference

5. Approval of Audit/Fund Balance Report from 2020

6. Trustee Report

- a. Has the congregation received any bequests from a will? Bequests from wills that have been received since the last Church Conference must be accepted by vote.
- b. Has the congregation used any capital/principle from investments/endowments for operating expenses this year? If so, for what purposes and how much?
- c. Has the congregation spent any funds realized from the sale of a parsonage? If so, for what purpose and how much? Was this done with permission from the DS?

7. Staff / Pastor Parish Relations Report

Approval of Compensation for Pastor and Other Staff Appointed by the Bishop

The pastor's base compensation, housing exclusion, and reimbursement amount must be separately included in the vote and should be reported that way by the SPRC chair. If the pastor intends to take a housing exclusion, it should be recorded in the minutes.

8. Finance Report

Update on Year-to-Date Finances and Approval of 2022 Budget if prepared

As needed an update on mission shares will be provided.

9. Lay Leadership / Nominations Report

Election of Church Leaders and Trustees

10. Lay Servants / Lay Speakers / Certified Lay Ministers Reports

Approval and reaffirmation of any in these categories

Each lay servant/speaker/minister should have paperwork completed. The paperwork should include three copies to be signed—1 for the lay person, 2 for the district.

11. Candidates Reports

- a. Reaffirmation of Candidates for Ministry
- b. Examination and Paper Ballot Vote for any New Candidate for Ministry
Those attending the conference via audio/visual will submit their vote privately to the presider via the chat function, the poll feature, or a poll site. Some platforms only allow one vote per log-in. In that case there may need to be a supplementary text, email, or call-in option for multiple users of the same device. Those attending the conference via phone will need to email, mail, or call in their vote to the presider. If virtual voting is not possible, a mail in, written ballot will be taken. The results of the vote may need to be announced at a later date. A copy of the votes must be saved for the record.
- c. Examination and Recommendation of Candidates for Church Related Vocations

12. Clergy Reports

- a. Retired Minister(s) Report
- b. Extension Minister(s) Report
- c. Pastor(s) Report

13. Membership Report and Remembering our Saints

14. Other business and prayers for the people

Questions to consider:

What holds us captive? How are we holding others captive? How are we set free? How are we setting others free? What helps us remember what we cherish from God in the past? What helps us experience God in the present? What helps us embrace God's hopes for our future?

TABLE FELLOWSHIP IN BELOVED COMMUNITY

SONG FOR GOD

'By the Streams of Babylon'

**We will pray for those who lead even as we take a stand.
We will rise with those in need, seeking justice in the land.
We will learn and listen well from the truth that others tell.**

Presider: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Presider: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Presider: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Presider: You are true to who you are and reveal to us the glories of your presence.
You are a God of love, who speaks against oppression and injustice.
You are a God of grace,
who asks us to forgive those who are blind to their privilege,
even as you invite the world to learn from you.
You are the Creator God,
who weaves the beauty of diversity into something fresh and new-
the garment of understanding and wonder.

You call us to follow you out of the familiar and comfortable and to live by faith,
calling upon your holy name and trusting in the power of your grace.

You invite us to be like Jonah and preach your word in Nineveh,
bringing salvation to our historical oppressors.
You move our hearts to say with Ruth;
"Wherever you live, that is where I will now live. You will be family.
Your God will be mine. I will even die for you, buried next to you."

Because you show your mercy to every nation and people upon the earth;
because you speak every language and delight in every culture;
we join in your praise with all the earth.
Because you have embraced people from every continent,
and have walked with all our ancestors;
because we have continued to hear your praise

even in forgotten languages that are sung around your throne;
we join in endless praise, saying:

***People:* Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Presider: You are holy; and Jesus is Immanuel, God with us.
Leaving all that was familiar in heaven,
Jesus was born into the people and culture of Israel.
Jesus was taught the language and the traditions of his family.
Jesus worshiped in the temple in Jerusalem.
Jesus came first to the lost sheep of Israel, people of his race, people of his culture.
Jesus also shared your grace with Roman oppressors, who lynched his people.
Jesus entered into deep theological discussions with a Samaritan woman,
breaking cultural taboos and stereotypes.
Jesus responded to the needs of a Syro-Phoenician woman,
going against the deeply ingrained prejudices that his society had taught him.
Jesus realized that you, O God, love the world so much
that you wanted everyone to believe, even if it meant personal sacrifice.

When culture dictated that the least important were consigned to wash feet,
Jesus broke with social convention, left the seat of honor, took off his robe,
and with a towel and basin in his hands,
knelt and washed the feet of the one who would betray him;
washed the feet of the one who would deny him not once but three times;
and washed the feet of those who would desert him to save their own lives.
Jesus invites us to do the same.

As an expression of culture,
Jesus took the bread, remembered the historical struggles of his people,
and shared it with everyone, saying:
“Take, eat, this is my body given for you.”

As an expression of culture,
Jesus took the cup, remembered the historical struggles of his people,
and shared it with everyone, saying:
“Drink with me all of you, for this is my blood poured out as a witness
to the divine covenant of forgiveness with you and the whole world.”

Out of specific culture Jesus worked cross-culturally
to bring salvation to the whole world.
Jesus came not just to save his own people but all people.

Jesus came not just to save his own economic class but those of any class.
Jesus came not just to save those of his own gender identity,
but those of every gender identity.

We have testified that this mystery of salvation found in Jesus Christ is for all,
when we say:

***People:* Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Presider: Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change,
use these simple gifts of bread and juice from the vine
to become for us the body and blood of Christ,
source of your transforming power.

Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change,
use the simple gift of our lives, our culture, our faithfulness, and our dreams
to become for the world, the church:
the authentic body and devoted partner of Christ,
source of your transforming power.

Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change,
be with all those called to cross the social boundaries of race and culture
to boldly go where only your grace could send them.
Give them the courage to accept your challenge
to pick up their cross and follow you.

Use their faithfulness to set the captives free,
to restore sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to share the good news of the availability of your grace to all.

Be blessed by the presence of Christ.
Be blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Be blessed by the creativity of the Divine Inspiration,
who will continually receive all our glory, thanks, and praise.

***People:* Amen.**

Presider: Now as those called and empowered by God, let us join with Christ in prayer:

***People:* Our Father* in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom** come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom**, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

**or Mother/Parent **or kin-dom*

BREAKING BREAD AND SHARING CUP

SONG FOR GOD

‘By the Streams of Babylon’

**By your grace, we’ll rise above even in this troubled hour.
Where there’s hate, we’ll choose to love; we will speak your truth to power.
With the poor and refugee we will build community.**

**We will rise and work for peace; we will treasure your good earth.
We will march, that wars may cease; we’ll see every person’s worth.
God, now give us faith-filled lives as we heed your call and rise.**

GOING FORTH IN LOVE

FORMAL MOTION TO ADJOURN THE CHURCH CONFERENCE

Presider: As our time together comes to an end, I declare this Church Conference adjourned.

COMMISSION

Colossians 3.16-17

-The Message, alt.

Presider: Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other.... Cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of Jesus, thanking God every step of the way.

OUR WORSHIP IS OVER. OUR SERVICE BEGINS.

The GATHERING REFLECTION is from Frederick Douglass’s speech entitled ‘What to the slave is the Fourth of July?’ from *Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester on July 5, 1852* (Rochester: Lee, Mann & Co., 1852).

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The COMMUNION LITURGY is a Great Thanksgiving Celebrating Cultural Diversity (Authenticity) written by Rev. Mary Johnson and adapted for our church conferences. This liturgy can be found at r-squared.squarespace.com/library/great-thanksgiving-communion-liturgy-celebrating-cultural-diversity.

The LORD’S PRAYER is the Ecumenical Text, adapted, that can be found in the United Methodist Hymnal #894.

This document was assembled by Rev. Jill Colley Robinson, Superintendent for the Green Mountain District and Dean of the Cabinet.