

# **THE ALDERSGATE COVENANT: A CALL TO SPIRITUAL & MISSIONAL REVIVAL**

## **The Past 20 Years**

A diverse group of laity and clergy came together 20 years ago to celebrate signs of hope in the United Methodist Church, address the loss of membership, resources and confidence in our denomination, and discern how to engage a world increasingly indifferent to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These efforts resulted in the 1996 General Conference's adoption of a mission statement - later amended by the 2008 General Conference - that proclaims, "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."

Since then this statement increasingly has shaped the life of our church. The 2012 General Conference's adoption of legislation arising from the "Call to Action" – even though overturned by the Judicial Council - is indicative of the ongoing efforts to re-invent our connection in light of our mission. But far more importantly, increasing numbers of local churches are taking bold steps to engage their mission field to share the fullness of Christ's love instead of focusing primarily on their own comfort and well-being.

Unfortunately, our best efforts to do this through adaptive learning, re-structuring, bold risks, and hard work have not borne the fruit for which we have prayed. In fact our church continues to decline in vitality, passion and fruitfulness. What is more, we experience intense polarization that literally is driving us farther apart. Recent studies, as well as our own experience, make it clear that our church is increasingly irrelevant to much of the world, particularly the young.

## **Spiritual Problem - Spiritual Revival**

The fractures in our connection are real and increasingly paralyzing. Through institutional and political language we cover up the deeper issue of how far we've moved from our single greatest resource, Jesus Christ. We have a spiritual problem. We need a spiritual revival.

This call for revival is not a nostalgic attempt to recreate a certain kind of spiritual experience from the past. It is not an excuse to step away from the complexities and difficulties of life in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It certainly is not an effort to de-emphasize the importance of seeking justice, peace and healing in our broken world. It is simply a call to fully embrace the reality that everything we do must be built on our relationship with our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Revival will be a challenge because of deep divisions in our church, powerful cultural forces swirling around us and our own desire to avoid change. It will be an uphill battle because we all too often continue to act like we know better than God. But, perhaps most importantly, it will be difficult because we will have to confront the reality that we act as if the future of the church is primarily up to us.

Revival ultimately is a gift that comes from the Holy Spirit. We cannot cause it to occur, regardless of how hard we work. However, we can and must prepare ourselves for it through prayer, worship and watching.

### **A Call to Spiritual Revival**

We see many signs that United Methodists are longing for God to provide spiritual revival in our church. We believe this is the moment to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ who calls us to carry out his mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We are convinced many throughout our global connection sense the Holy Spirit's stirring to seek spiritual and missional revival in our church.

We invite you join us in making a deep commitment to seek this spiritual and missional revival as we pray, confess our sin, worship and watch for revival through the Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!