



**Office for
Communications**
Germany Central Conference

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For immediate use

Welcoming all and offering Christ's love to all The United Methodist Church in Germany opens itself to the full LGBTQI+ inclusion and holds space for traditional views and convictions by forming a Community Federation.

FRANKFURT/Main (Germany) – November 30, 2022 – The Germany Central Conference held its special session last week November 24 to 26 in Chemnitz (Saxonia, Germany). As a called session, the 76 delegates discussed only two topics. First topic was the worldwide struggle over full LGBTQI+ inclusion within the United Methodist Church. In Germany the prepared documents focused on being a church in unity and diversity, welcoming all and offering Christ's love to all. The other topic was a reform of the Church organization on all levels of the Central Conference, the three Annual Conferences, and the charges to lead the Church to being more vital and missional instead of being formal and working in meetings and commissions.

Way forward into the future for the Germany UMC

Unanimously, with four abstentions, the delegates adopted the package of resolutions presented. With the resolution now passed, the Germany United Methodist Church opens itself to the full LGBTQI+ inclusion into the life of the Church. This opens the possibility of same-sex marriages as well as the ordination of LGBTQI+ persons for pastoral ministry. Combined with that decision the Germany UMC forms a Community Federation for those in the Church who want to preserve their traditional view in this respect. The Community Federation is fully integrated with rights and duties into the church structure of the UMC in Germany.

That decision enables a way forward into the future for United Methodists in Germany. Formally the CC used the right to make changes and adaptations as the special conditions and the mission of the Church in Germany requires.

Rather than inserting new wording in the UM »Book of Discipline« only discriminatory, prohibitive language was removed. So, the »silence« in the BOD leads to new opportunities to fully include LBTGQ+ persons and at the same time holds space for traditional views and understandings.

A three-and-a-half-year journey

This amicable solution was prepared and discussed for more than three years within the whole Germany UMC. A so-called »Round Table« with people from »the whole spectrum« with twenty-five members started a spiritual journey in May 2019. After several meetings within one and a half years the roundtable unanimously provided suggestions for the Church in Germany to stay united and live together the mission of the Church although there are fundamental different convictions. This led to the preliminary decisions of the Church Council (Executive Committee of the Germany CC) in November 2020 which now are approved by the called session of the Germany CC.

Bishop Rückert: »We experienced a miracle or even more«

»On our very challenging journey over three and a half years with the roundtable discussions, conversations in the Church Council, and including broad discussion and hearings in all three German Annual Conferences and almost any local church we experienced a miracle or even more than one«, said the German bishop Harald Rückert. »The unity despite of conflicting convictions is a very, very precious gift! Yet it is vulnerable.« he concludes.

The »Guidelines for the Round Table discussions« as a tool that the roundtable developed for its discussions turned out to be fundamental for the success of the whole journey. Seven rules like »We believe each other's faith«, or »We endeavor to break the winner-loser model«, and »We may argue with each other, but not in ways that lead to public polarization« helped all parties to discuss in convicted humility with the goal of unity for the German Church. On this basis the question of disaffiliation has been no issue at all. The UMC in Germany with its three Annual Conferences will remain as a vital part of the worldwide UMC connection. The decision of the CC to be in mission as a Church in unity and diversity already reflects what the »Narrative for the Continuing United Methodist Church« issued by the Council of Bishops November 2021 sketches for the future of the Church.

»It was a special experience«, Rückert said, »that the CC delegates, as decision-makers, succeeded during the CC meeting in doing what the roundtable members had previously practiced: thinking for the other, listening well, and looking for solutions together«. The bishop was »deeply moved and touched« by this. He particularly emphasized the silence after the resolution

was passed: »There was no jubilation of victory of any kind, but deep emotion in the face of the gift of unity in the midst of our diversity.«

The journey continues

With the adoption of the resolution, »an important point in our common journey has been reached.« But the »common journey as a Church« continues. For this, there is a need for »places and opportunities where the wounds of the past decades among ›conservatives‹, ›progressives‹, and ›queers‹ can heal and reconciliation can take place.« Moreover, Rückert emphasizes, »it still takes time to deepen the trust that has grown and to find even more self-evidence in our togetherness.«

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Attachment: »Guidelines for the Round Table discussions«

Offer: Bishop Harald Rückert is available for interviews. Email inquiries to communications@emk.de.