

1 Be it resolved that

- 2 1. The New England Annual Conference shall reduce the number of its Districts from 9 to 7 to
- 3 take effect July 1, 2020.
- 4 2. The bishop is requested, together with the Council on Finance & Administration, Personnel
- 5 Committee, District Superintendency and Ministry Committees, and other stakeholders to
- 6 solicit responses to possible changes resulting from this reduction in number of districts.

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9 **RS – 19 – 210 - UNITED METHODISTS OF NEW ENGLAND OPEN TO THE SPIRIT’S LEADING:**
10 **COMMISSIONING THE OPEN SPIRIT TASK FORCE**

11 (Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen
12 Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Bonnie Marden, Chelmsford, MA, P. Stewart Lanier,
13 Melrose, MA, Kathryn Johnson, Milton, MA, Hope Luckie, Winchester, MA, René A. Perez, Holden, MA, Ralph
14 Howe, Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA, Rene Wilbur, Tinmouth, VT, Nancy Bishoff, Hallowell, ME, Scott
15 Campbell, South Paris, ME, Rev. John H.D. Lucy, Jericho, VT)

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17 Because we in the New England Annual Conference find and model that “while we may not all think
18 alike, we can love alike,” seeing that we hold in common more than would drive us apart;
19 Because we find that our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ as we mutually strive for
20 sanctification through grace, and our ministries seeking transformation in and with God’s world, are
21 stronger because of— not in spite of— our diversity of identity, theology, and practice;

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23 Because the New England Annual Conference has historically championed the fully-inclusive United
24 Methodist movement, which can be surmised from Wesley’s understanding of the catholic spirit, and
25 has been expressed through our ancestors in faith who were leaders in Abolition, the Free Pew
26 movement, Labor Rights, Women’s Rights, and our own 2016 Action of Non-Conformity;

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28 Because the 2019 Called Session of the General Conference enacted legislation that is foreign to the
29 meaning and purpose of the Methodist movement, was deemed largely unconstitutional, widely
30 unconscionable, and in our context practically untenable; and

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32 Because the United Methodist Constitution states that the annual conference is the fundamental or
33 basic body in the Church (see ¶11 and ¶33), and the *Discipline* states that The UMC “as a
34 denominational whole is not an entity, nor does it possess legal capacities and attributes. It does not
35 and cannot hold title to property, nor does it have any officer, agent, employee, office, or location”
36 (141), and that tangible and intangible property is held in trust by the incorporated (annual) conferences
37 of the denomination (see ¶2501.1);

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39 Therefore, we resolve that the New England Annual Conference commissions and empowers an
40 immediate Open Spirit Task Force to examine whether and how United Methodists of New England
41 might align with, create, or form a new church body in the Methodist tradition (independently or in
42 collaboration with others);

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44 The Task Force will be encouraged to reach out to similar individuals and groups in other Annual
45 Conferences or regions who are undertaking similar processes of discernment.

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47 The Task Force will be transparent in their work, adopting a format that includes open meetings, and
48 making regular reports of the activities and outcomes of their discernment.

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2 The Open Spirit Task Force will be made up of no more than 25 people, identified by the Conference
3 Committee on Leadership and Nominations before the close of the 2019 NEAC session, and will include
4 those who express gifts and interests in the areas of:

- 5 · creative openness to the Spirit,
- 6 · intersectional justice,
- 7 · collective organizing,
- 8 · Wesleyan theology,
- 9 · church and civic polity,
- 10 · finance, and
- 11 · constitutionality.

12
13 The Task Force shall include multiple perspectives and identities, and strive for beyond-token
14 representation of persons with respect to:

- 15 · Racial and/or ethnic identities
- 16 · Genders
- 17 · Sexualities
- 18 · Ages and/or longevity in the church
- 19 · Status as laity
- 20 · Types of clergy
- 21 · Urban, suburban, and rural ministry settings
- 22 · Ministry contexts beyond traditional local church models
- 23 · Theological perspectives

24
25 The Task Force is encouraged to consult with and receive input from people beyond their own
26 membership, to include as many perspectives and draw upon as many areas of expertise as possible.

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28 Those wanting to serve on the Task Force, or to nominate someone else to serve on the Task Force, will
29 fill out a form describing the perspectives, skills, and experience that the person would bring to the
30 team. Members of the Task Force must be willing to devote a significant amount of time and energy to
31 this endeavor for at least the next 12 months.

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33 Understanding that not everyone is in a position to do this (particularly those whose work is other than
34 full time local church pastoring, or are part of under-represented groups who are called on to provide
35 leadership on large numbers of bodies), the nomination sheet for the Task Force will include an
36 invitation for those who are willing to provide support for others to participate on the Task Force. This
37 might include a willingness to fill in for the member of the Task Force or to provide other services that
38 will free up that person's time and energy.

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40 The Committee on Leadership and Nominations will identify a person to convene the first gathering of
41 the Open Spirit Task Force. At that first gathering, the Task Force will select a chairperson and any other
42 officers they deem necessary to complete their work.

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44 The Task force will be invited to be in further conversation with the NEAC delegation to the 2020
45 General and Jurisdictional Conferences prior to February 1, 2020.

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47 The Task Force may recommend to the Bishop consideration for a Called Session of the New England
48 Annual Conference, should there be Conference-wide action required before the start of the 2020

1 General Conference.

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3 The Task Force and the NEAC Delegation will give a joint report to the 2020 Annual Conference Session
4 with recommendation for further action in the Annual (and if applicable, upcoming Jurisdictional)
5 Conference.

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7 The Annual Conference Session in 2020 will determine whether to continue this Task Force and if so,
8 what changes would be made to its mandate.

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**RS – 19 – 211 - NEW ENGLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROCEDURE FOR LOCAL
12 CHURCH/MINISTRY SETTING DISCERNMENT ABOUT DISAFFILIATION FROM THE UNITED
13 METHODIST CHURCH**

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(Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Bonnie Marden, Chelmsford, MA, Hope Luckie, Winchester, MA, Sean Delmore, White River Junction, VT, René A. Perez, Holden, MA, Ralph Howe, Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA)

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Because the 2019 Called Session of the General Conference approved the minority report for petition 90066, "Minority Report on Disaffiliation," and the Judicial Council ruled in decision 1379 (April 25, 2019) that the petition is constitutional as amended, and

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Because this new paragraph in the *Discipline*, 2553, allows for a local church to disaffiliate from the denomination "over issues related to human sexuality," and states that "annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph," and

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Because such a decision has significant impact on the local church or ministry setting, the community in which the ministry is located, the Annual Conference, and the strategy and witness of the Church of Jesus Christ in contexts local and regional, and therefore must be undertaken with the greatest sensitivity to matters both spiritual and temporal,

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Therefore, the New England Annual Conference approves the following procedure to be included in our Conference Policies and Procedures, governing the process and conditions for churches and ministry settings within New England in discernment about disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church:

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1. Before a District Superintendent may call for a church conference, the local church or ministry setting shall undergo a discernment period of no shorter than eight months.
2. During this discernment period, the local church/ministry setting shall seek assessments of the impact of this action upon the church, community, and Conference from *at least* the NEAC Trustees, Cabinet, Treasurer, Council on Finance and Administration, Chancellor, Benefits Officer, and the Conference Board of Congregational and Community Development evaluating the strategic missional impact of the church/ministry setting. The church/ministry setting shall also develop a statement articulating their theological and missional foundations in seeking disaffiliation for reasons of conscience "related to human sexuality."

3. The local church or ministry setting shall hold a minimum of four listening sessions, advertised to and open to the full professing membership, at least two of which are also advertised to and open to those beyond professing membership, who participate in the ministries of the church/ministry setting. These sessions shall solicit the input of these constituents, and shall report the findings of the assessments named in (2.) above. The sessions shall be facilitated by the District Superintendent or their designee, and may not be facilitated by the pastor, the hired or appointed staff, or any member or constituent of the church/ministry setting.
4. After the discernment period, the church conference, and an affirmative 2/3 vote of the professing members present, the Disaffiliation Agreement may be formulated in accordance with ¶2553, and shall include the recommendations and assessment from the Conference bodies named in (2.) above. It shall also include provision for how the community previously served by the church/ministry setting shall be served by The New England Annual Conference moving forward.
5. When presented to the Annual Conference for a vote, the Disaffiliation Agreement must be accompanied by a full report of the outlined process, the assessments and recommendations named in (2.) above, a summary of the financial and missional impact to the community, conference, and wider Church of the assets and ministries under consideration, and a recommendation for how the community previously served by the church/ministry setting shall be served by The New England Annual Conference moving forward.

RS – 19 – 212 - ASPIRING TO LIVE INTO NONCONFORMITY

(Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, P. Stewart Lanier, Melrose, MA, Kathryn Johnson, Milton, MA, Hope Luckie, Winchester, MA, Nancy Bischoff, Hallowell, ME, Leigh Goodrich, South Burlington, VT, Ralph Howe, Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA)

The 2016 session of the New England Annual Conference, working as a collaborative body, approved “An Action of Nonconformity” (attached below for informational purposes only). This was later ruled illegal by the Judicial Council (Decision No 1327). The 2019 Called Session of the General Conference, however, passed legislation to strengthen the Book of Discipline’s discriminatory treatment of LGBTQIA+ persons, and the Judicial Council upheld several of these restrictions.

Therefore, the 2019 session of the New England Annual Conference hereby expresses our affirmation of the principles of the 2016 Action of Nonconformity, including: our opposition to legislation or provisions of the *Discipline* which discriminate against LGBTQIA+ persons with respect to marriages and to clergy candidacy and status; our expectation of equal employee benefits for clergy and employees and their families without regard to the sexes or genders of the partners; and our commitment to neither participate in nor fund judicial or punitive procedures pertaining to the *Discipline*’s prohibitions against LGBTQIA+ persons, instead focusing on developing inclusive cultural competency resources.

Further, the New England Annual Conference aspires and continues to live into the principles of the 2016 Action of Nonconformity, and our commitment to being a Methodist body that is inclusive of all persons in the life and ministry of the church.

1 Informational:

2 **Action of Non-Conformity with the General Conference**
 3 **of The United Methodist Church**
 4 *Adopted by the New England Annual Conference, June 17, 2016*

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 6 The New England Annual Conference as a body affirms our commitment to a fully inclusive church.
 7 Therefore:

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 9 The NEAC will not conform or comply with provisions of the *Discipline* which discriminate against
 10 LGBTQIA persons, including marriage (161.B), the incompatibility clause (161.F), ordination and
 11 appointments (304.3), homosexual unions (341.6), AC funding ban (613.19), GCFA funding ban (806.9),
 12 chargeable offenses pertaining to being “a self avowed practicing homosexual” or to officiating at
 13 weddings for couples regardless of the sex of the partners (2702.1b,d).

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 15 The NEAC and its members will not participate in or conduct judicial procedures related to the
 16 *Discipline’s* prohibitions against LGBTQIA persons.

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 18 The NEAC insists that any benefits available to clergy and employees and their families are available to
 19 all clergy and employees and their families, regardless of the sexes or genders of the partners, and
 20 requires the District Superintendents to inform all clergy under their supervision of this right.

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 22 The NEAC will realign its funding to reflect these commitments, using no reserve funds to pay for judicial
 23 procedures related to the *Discipline’s* prohibitions against LGBTQIA persons, and instead request that
 24 the Connectional Table and Conference Council on Finance and Administration develop and fund
 25 programs of cultural competency, anti-racism, anti-ageism, anti-sexism, anti-oppression and anti-
 26 homophobia training at the conference and district levels, as well as for advocacy and implementation
 27 efforts related to the same.

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 30 **RS – 19 – 213 - GATHERING THE NORTHEASTERN JURISDICTION OF THE UNITED METHODIST**
 31 **CHURCH**

32 (Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen
 33 Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Kathryn Johnson, Milton, MA, Hope Luckie,
 34 Winchester, MA’ Sean Delmore, White River Junction, VT, Leigh Goodrich, South Burlington, VT, Rene A. Perez,
 35 Holden, MA, Ralph Howe, Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA)

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 37 Whereas vast information and discernment are needed to process the outcomes of the 2019 Called
 38 Session of the General Conference and prepare for the 2020 General Conference, and

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 40 Whereas some of this processing and discernment may be most effective in the context of the regional
 41 bodies of the church, where ministry and mission may share commonalities, and where mutual
 42 relationships of trust and collegiality may be stronger, and

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 44 Whereas the *Book of Discipline* allows for the College of Bishops to call a special session (see ¶1521), and
 45 the Northeastern Jurisdiction Vision Table has previously called for a gathering of the delegates in the
 46 Jurisdiction outside of an official session,

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 48 Therefore, the 2019 session of the New England Annual Conference hereby requests that the

1 Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops consider calling a special session of the Northeastern
 2 Jurisdiction prior to the 2020 General Conference, for the purpose of exploring how to organize our
 3 ministry as a Jurisdiction, given the theological, missional, and temporal divisions in denomination.
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5 Further, the 2019 session of the New England Annual Conference requests that the Northeastern
 6 Jurisdiction Vision Table call a gathering of the 2020 delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference, after
 7 their elections, but prior to the start of the 2020 General Conference, regardless of whether the College
 8 of Bishops decides to call a special session.
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10 The NEAC requests that the Conference Secretary send a copy of this resolution to the chair(s) of the
 11 Northeastern Jurisdiction Vision Table, and to Bishop Johnson, President of the NEJ College of Bishops.
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14 **RS – 19 – 214 - MAINTAINING CONFERENCE RESERVE FUNDS**

15 (Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen
 16 Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, P. Stewart Lanier, Melrose, MA, Kathryn Johnson,
 17 Milton, MA, Ralph Howe, Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA, Rev. John H.D. Lucy, Jericho, VT)
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19 The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation
 20 of the world. While we are united in mission, our worldwide denomination is diverse in the ways we
 21 equip and live out this mission. The New England Annual Conference seeks to align our resources with
 22 our mission more effectively.
 23

24 Hindering this aspiration, The United Methodist denomination spent an estimated \$1.5 million on the
 25 Commission on the Way Forward and an estimated \$3.6 million on the 2019 Called Session, without
 26 resolving the division and harm across our global connection.
 27

28 In addition, in 2018, the New England Annual Conference Mission Share Fund Reserves were decreased
 29 by \$275,000 in order to meet our expenses and obligations to the denomination.
 30

31 At the same time, local churches and communities across New England struggle to engage in
 32 transformational ministry in our secularized context, amid widespread uncertainty and confusion about
 33 the denomination, while stewarding precious financial resources.
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35 Therefore be it resolved that, compelled by both conscience and responsible stewardship, it is the will of
 36 the 2019 session of the New England Annual Conference that the New England Annual Conference
 37 Council on Finance and Administration assure no NEAC reserve funds are used in the payment of
 38 General Church apportionments.
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41 **RS – 19 – 215 - ASPIRING TO “DO NO HARM”**

42 (Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon, NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit, ME, Vicki Woods, Newport, ME, Allen
 43 Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland, ME, P. Stewart Lanier, Melrose, MA, Ralph Howe,
 44 Pittsfield, MA)
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46 The first of John Wesley’s simple rules of faith can be summarized: “first, do no harm.”
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1 Yet, for nearly 50 years, The United Methodist Church has done harm to LGBTQIA+ persons and their
 2 friends, families, and allies, through words and actions that undermine the full sacred worth and dignity
 3 of all people.

4
 5 Recently, this harm has increased, at great personal, spiritual, and financial cost, harming LGBTQIA+
 6 persons and dramatically undermining the witness, mission, and relationship of The United Methodist
 7 Church in communities all over the world. Our denomination is implementing discriminatory policies
 8 akin to the harm we did in the creation of the segregationist Central Jurisdiction.

9
 10 Meanwhile, ministries in our own communities across New England, struggling to mend relationships
 11 and outreach, also find themselves short on the necessary financial resources to “do all the good we
 12 can” in service to God and God’s people.

13
 14 We can no longer be complicit in this harm. We cannot agree, however, where the harm resides, and
 15 how best to live out of our conviction and calling to be a fully inclusive church.

16 Therefore, be it resolved that it is the will and desire of the 2019 session of the New England Annual
 17 Conference permit that

- 18
 19 1. The Annual Conference Council on Finance and Administration provide local churches
 20 information about the uses and organizations in United Methodism to which the Mission Share
 21 Fund 1 (General Church Apportionments) are sent, and
 22
- 23 2. The Council on Finance and Administration request and receive communication from local
 24 churches concerning Fund 1 remittances or refusals to remit, explaining the intentions of the
 25 local churches for the use of those remittances and/or the reasons for not remitting, and that
 26 the Council summarize these responses for distribution via the Catalyst and send them to the
 27 UMC General Council on Finance and Administration prior to the 2020 General Conference, and
 28
- 29 3. Local churches will be encouraged to support our shared ministry and Mission Shares (especially
 30 Funds 2 and 3), through both the gifts of financial remittance and principled witness in
 31 communicating intentions for remittances and/or reasons for not remitting.
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34 **RS – 19 – 216 - RESPONDING TO EMERGING EXPRESSIONS OF METHODISM**

35 (Submitted by: Rebecca Girrell, Lebanon NH, Effie McAvoy, York-Ogunquit ME, Vicki Woods, Newport ME, Allen
 36 Ewing-Merrill, Portland ME, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Portland ME, P. Stewart Lanier, Melrose MA, Ralph Howe,
 37 Pittsfield, MA, Pat MacHugh, Weston, MA)
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39 Because we know that the time has come to listen for God’s direction in shaping the future of the
 40 Methodist movement,
 41

42 Because we are still a global and interconnected church, with skill and leadership manifest across the
 43 connection,
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45 Because “United Methodists for a Way Forward” hosted a Summit on May 17-18, centering the voices of
 46 People of Color + Queer + Trans people of faith and allies (lay and clergy), seeking to shape a future for

1 the church,

2

3 Because “UM-Next” centrist and progressive leaders met at the Church of the Resurrection on May 20-
4 21 to envision next steps for the denomination,

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6 Therefore, the New England Annual Conference *responds* to the recommendations of the United
7 Methodists for a Way Forward, and responds to those of the gathering at the Church of the
8 Resurrection.

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11 **RS – 19 – 217 - A RESOLUTION TO BOYCOTT GENERAL CONFERENCE 2020**

12 (Submitted by: Linda Brewster, Sean Delmore, Allen Ewing-Merrill, Sara Ewing-Merrill, Will Green, Ross Johnson,
13 Mimi Magee)

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15 Whereas the General Conference of the United Methodist Church continues to do harm by explicitly
16 targeting for punishment lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA)
17 people, and those who are associated with LGBTQIA people, and

18

19 Whereas the New England Annual Conference has consented to this harm by participating in a system
20 that rejects the gospel of Jesus Christ, rejects the spirit of a Wesleyan social witness and rejects a
21 commonly held understanding of basic decency that affirms discrimination is wrong, by sending
22 delegates and directing significant resources of time, energy and money to General Conference, and

23

24 Whereas experience has taught us to no longer invest our faith in outcomes from General Conference,

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26 Therefore be it resolved that the New England Annual Conference formally withdraw its consent to
27 participate in this process by refusing to send delegates to General Conference 2020 of the United
28 Methodist Church. Delegates elected at the New England Annual Conference will serve as delegates to
29 the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

30

31 And be it further resolved that the New England Annual Conference call for its members to invest our
32 energy and imagination in multiple, local, creative alternatives to General Conference 2020 that express
33 the good news revealed to us in Jesus Christ, such as, but not limited to: community based conferences
34 that seek to educate, enlighten, and bless people of all sexual orientations and gender identities;
35 supporting efforts to promote justice for LGBTQIA people in our local contexts; spiritual and liturgical
36 acts of repentance for people who have tolerated discrimination, including United Methodists; and
37 other expressions of hope and good will.

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39 These actions serve as a public affirmation of our Action of Non-Conformity with the General
40 Conference of the United Methodist Church, adopted at the 2016 session of the New England Annual
41 Conference.

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