

General Report from the Study Commission on the Readiness of UNYAC

Preamble

During the Upper NY Annual Conference held virtually in June of 2021, the body passed Resolution UNYAC2021.7 which created a Study Commission to examine the readiness in the UNYUMC for the Implementation of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. This commission is composed of the Conference Treasurer, Dean of the Cabinet, Conference Chancellor, Director of Connectional Ministries, Director of Vital Congregations and representatives of the Committee on Finance and Administration, Board of Ordained Ministry, Board of Trustees, Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, General and Jurisdictional Conference Delegations, and up to three persons named by Nominations and Leadership Development.

The Study Commission met via ZOOM several times and created the requested 2 surveys for both Clergy and Congregations. The surveys were transmitted to congregations and clergy via our District Offices and district Administrative Assistants.

The results of the surveys are attached and, as you read them, please keep in mind the following observations made by the Study Commission:

1. The surveys, as presented, assume the passage of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation at General Conference *as presented*. The Commission believes this is unlikely at best.
2. The surveys make no observations about any steps that might be required, after the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation passes General Conference, on the part of our Annual Conference or local congregations.
3. The surveys assume that our clergy and congregations are familiar with the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation and have discussed possible actions and the repercussions of those actions.

The following questions were part of the congregational survey.

1. Has your congregation had any conversation about the future of the UMC?
2. Is your congregation aware of the Protocol?
3. Has your congregation had conversation about the Protocol since it was announced?
4. If the Protocol passes, do you believe that your congregation will remain in the post-separation United Methodist Church?

The following questions were part of the clergy survey.

1. Are you aware of the Protocol?
2. If the Protocol passes, do you believe that you will keep your membership in the post-separation United Methodist Church?

Survey Results

Congregational Survey

Total congregations: 864

Total Responses: 255

Not Staying: 22

Not Sure: 159

Staying: 74

No conversations since Protocol announcement: 119

Congregation not aware of the Protocol: 77

Clergy Survey

Total Number Appointed: 614

Total Clergy Responses: 365

Not Staying: 69

Not Sure: 140 (one did not answer)

Staying: 156

Financial Information

Ministry shares for 2021 paid by churches who report they plan to leave is \$154,245.

Ministry shares for 2021 paid by churches who report they plan to stay is \$1,236,425.

Ministry shares for 2021 paid by churches who report they are unsure is \$1,868,420.

Conclusion

This commission placed great value on confidentiality. Communication was made to both clergy and congregations that anonymity would be of great importance. Therefore, we did not collect clergy names and have not include names of congregations.

All efforts were made to communicate the request to complete the survey, and to distribute the surveys effectively. This included mail in surveys for those not using email. Reminders were given to complete the surveys by the deadline. Deadline extensions were not provided to eliminate confusion and to deliver a timely report. In addition, the Cabinet provided tools for understanding the implications of the decisions on the Protocol.

The commission submits this report with the results from returned surveys. With only 30% return rate from congregations, it is difficult to project the true financial implications of a separated UMC for a two quadrennia forecast, as well as the readiness of the UNYAC for the implementation of the Protocol. With 46% of the responding congregations reporting that they have had no conversations of the Protocol since it was announced, and 29% of those churches reporting they were unaware of the Protocol, it is evident that the UNYAC is not prepared for a separation. Most congregations are either not willing or not ready to discuss the components of the Protocol, their stance of full inclusion of LGBTQIA+, nor the decision to leave or remain in the UMC.

Although the information gleaned from these surveys lacks value or usable information, we believe that the survey has raised awareness of the Protocol, brought attention to clergy and congregations to have conversations, and to continue thinking about the future of the UMC.

This commission makes the following suggestions:

1. Additional discussion is needed before any financial implications can be determined to allow for "scenario planning."
2. Empathizing with the congregations who are in this season, there is a need for education to better understand the implications of the Protocol.
3. There will need to be people ready to help congregations have these conversations.

This commission is grateful for the opportunity to work together, thankful for participation in the surveys and the support of the Cabinet.

Respectfully submitted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, The members of the Study Commission on the Readiness of UNY for Implementation of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation.

January 31, 2022