



# Council of Bishops

The United Methodist Church



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## **Bishops authorize preparation of legislation on full communion with Episcopal Church**

ST. SIMON'S ISLAND, GA - The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church has authorized the preparation of legislation to deal with the full communion proposal between The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church.

The bishops took the initial action on the proposal, called *A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness*, after receiving the proposal during the recently ended Council of Bishops November meeting held at Epworth By the Sea Methodist Center.

The legislation would be for the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The bishops will review the legislative proposal at its May 2019 meeting and make a final decision regarding the submission of this proposal to the General Conference.

It is the responsibility of the Council of Bishops to act as the “primary liaison for The United Methodist Church” in its “formal relations with other churches” (2016 BOD, ¶431.1) and to oversee the bi-lateral dialogues of the denomination. However, a formal full communion relationship can only be established by the action of the General Conference.

A “full communion” relationship is one in which two or more churches publicly and visibly recognize one another as members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. In such agreements the parties recognize each other’s sacraments, offices of ministry, and Christian mission as fully valid and authentic, while also maintaining the autonomy and distinctive gifts of each church. “A formal ‘full communion’ relationship,” states the *Book of Discipline*, “commits the churches to working together as partners in mission toward fuller visible unity” (¶431.1c).

The Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church each have separate full communion agreements with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Moravian Church in America. An agreement between The UMC and The Episcopal Church would complete this circle, giving the four communions overlapping relationships of full communion.

Additionally, The United Methodist Church is in full communion with the Uniting Church in Sweden and the following member churches of the [Pan-Methodist Commission](#): The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, The African Union Methodist Protestant Church, The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and The Union American Methodist Episcopal Church.

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