



A historic call to the Reconciling movement for the next season of our collective work for LGBTQ justice and inclusion in the Church

Rooted & Rising is a call

to the Reconciling movement for the next season of our collective work for LGBTQ justice and inclusion in the Church. It represents our vision for a Church that thirsts for justice and that searches for living water, no matter what the denomination decides when the General Conference meets.

This document details the strategies that will make this vision possible. Let's start by discussing the two foundational pillars of those strategies.

Pillar 1 - RMN's commitment to center intersectional justice and equity

Racism and colonialism pervade our Church and society, and RMN laments its participation and complicity in these spiritual and systemic ills. We intend to do everything possible to help right the wrongs within the Church we love and model justice and equity for the wider world.

RMN is a faith-based, justice-seeking organization. As such, we believe that this process, rooted in truth-telling and honest assessment, must begin with us. Therefore, we elected to begin with a thorough, full-staff examination of the ways in which whiteness has been and continues to be at work within RMN.

We expect this process to bear fruit, resulting in recognition, repentance, and change. Subjects of investigation can include the following elements common to nonprofit organizations: mission, vision, values, leadership structures, hiring and training policies, paid holidays, access to health insurance, daily work routines, communications norms, decision-making processes, complaint procedures, and more.

As our journey continues and we reach important decisions, we will share with the wider movement official improvements to our structures, policies, and ways in which we commit to living out our values together.

Pillar 2 - A renewed focus on and strategic approach to our grassroots work

For 36 years, Reconciling United Methodists (RUMs) have been building a network of Reconciling Churches, Communities, and Campus Ministries (RCs) across the United States and now globally. This network

has played a central role in shifting the conversation about LGBTQ justice and inclusion in The UMC, and we are extremely grateful.

While we remain fully engaged in General Conference-level work, we are now called to renew our focus on you: on the boundless potential of the grassroots. RMN can be most effective for LGBTQ justice by prioritizing collaboration with teams in each Annual Conference to multiply the number of affirming, Reconciling ministries around the world.

We believe that, no matter the outcome of our current denominational struggles, there is life-saving value in continuing to grow the Reconciling movement throughout our connection and into any future expressions of Methodism that may become a part of our story.

These two pillars have been foundational in steering us to focus on the three strategies we will undertake to make the vision they represent a reality.

STRATEGY 1

A required, foundational, intersectional Reconciling statement

RMN is making an immediate shift from *encouraging* to *requiring* intersectional advocacy named in Reconciling statements adopted by groups that affiliate with RMN.

As our work for LGBTQ justice has evolved, so have language requirements for Reconciling statements. In 2009, we added “gender identity.” In 2017, we required a shift from “welcome” to the use of either “affirm” or “celebrate.”

While RMN has always encouraged RCs to advocate with an intersectional lens, we have not *required* this language for Reconciling statements. It’s time for that to change. LGBTQ justice requires intersectional justice. As part of RMN’s ongoing work to live into our values, we believe it’s important to move from encouraging to requiring intersectional language.

Effective September 18, 2020, all new Reconciling Churches, Communities, Campus Ministries, and Colleges must vote to adopt the following statement.

“We celebrate God’s gift of diversity and value the wholeness made possible in community equally shared and shepherded by all. We welcome and affirm people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, who are also of every age, race, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of

education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status, and so much more. We acknowledge that we live in a world of profound social, economic, and political inequities. As followers of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice and pledge to stand in solidarity with all who are marginalized and oppressed.”

Of course, your group is welcome to say even more if you wish. A vote to adopt this statement, as written, will serve as the foundational requirement for affiliating with RMN.

STRATEGY 2

An invitation to existing Reconciling Churches, Communities, and Campus Ministries (RCs) to join RMN’s strengthened commitment to intersectionality and expanded grassroots work

The Rooted & Rising campaign invites all existing RCs to renew their commitment to RMN in three ways.

A. We invite RCs to revisit your Reconciling statement and join our collective endorsement of intersectional language.

RCs are the backbone of our movement, and we are immensely grateful for you and for your work. We've grown together over the decades, with many of you updating your Reconciling statements as we discovered new and better ways to support LGBTQ people and justice.

Now we urge you to revisit both your ministries and your statement, updating anything needed to clarify your intersectional affirmation and advocacy. We hope you will prayerfully consider and decide, by vote or whatever means appropriate for your RC, to renew your commitment to LGBTQ justice and to RMN in ways that include adopting the new required language. Your Organizers will be in touch to provide a process for you to notify us of your work, and we will update our records and celebrate your decision with you. As always, the RMN Organizing Team is ready to support you

B. We invite RCs to renew your commitment to help multiply the Reconciling witness in your church, district, and/or conference.

See Strategy 3 below for more details on new opportunities to create LGBTQ-affirming community where you live.

C. We invite RCs to renew your commitment to the financial support of RMN and its important work.

RMN is also launching a new opportunity for RCs to invest intentionally in this work. Be on the lookout for more information in your inboxes and on our social media.

STRATEGY 3

A more strategic approach to grassroots work in Annual Conferences

Grassroots work incorporates all the ways through which Reconciling United Methodists (RUMs) engage and support LGBTQ justice in The UMC. This includes Annual Conference efforts, organizing within local churches and small groups, and financially supporting RMN.

Here are three *new* ways to make a difference for LGBTQ justice and inclusion.

A. Rooted & Rising Annual Conference teams will work with their RMN organizer to set specific goals for increasing the number of RCs in their Annual Conference, focusing especially on areas with low Reconciling presence.

As you may have guessed, each conference will need both existing and new leaders to say *yes!* to this Rooted & Rising invitation. We hope you see both the need and the potential for this great, collaborative effort.

- ***Why grassroots efforts are particularly important in this season***

While we need General Conference to do its part in changing official polity, and while we continue our work to influence denominational change, we know that neither a change in the Book of Discipline nor an option for traditional churches to leave will instantly produce a denomination that affirms LGBTQ people and practices intersectional justice.

Policy doesn't change hearts and minds. Relationships do that. Study and storytelling do that. Individual RUMs, alongside our family of RCs, are needed to influence this important shift.

The network of RUMs on the ground and throughout the connection is strong and passionate. We're up to this holy work and capable of creating a justice-centered expression of Methodism. Let's utilize this unexpected delay of General Conference as an opportunity to multiply our presence, witness, and impact.

- ***Annual Conference Rooted & Rising Zoom meeting Save-the-Dates***

RMN organizers are spending the rest of September and all of October meeting with RUMs to offer more details about the campaign, share specific data related to each Annual Conference, and invite you to join your Rooted & Rising Team. Save-the-date notices for Annual Conference meetings have been emailed in the last three weeks and can also be found [here](#).

- ***What's ahead for your Rooted & Rising Team***

At your Annual Conference Zoom meeting, we'll talk more about the journey ahead for your Rooted & Rising Team. Join us to learn about:

1. Training and resources focused on team-building, strategy development, and storytelling.

We'll use Marshall Ganz's proven methods to coach RUMs to grow leadership teams, develop personalized strategies for unique challenges, and learn public narrative storytelling.

2. Setting conference-specific goals and strategies

Utilizing the collective wisdom of RUM leaders in each conference, we'll work together to focus our efforts where we're needed most: areas within conferences where no Reconciling ministries currently exist. These include rural areas or districts that consist of mostly traditional churches. Each team will set numeric goals for the number and location of new RCs and RRCs in the needed areas.

3. Creation of implementation plan to start in January 2021.

Once your Rooted & Rising Team's goals and strategies are set, we will work with you to create a plan to implement them and start the outreach process in your Annual Conference.

B. RMN is also adding a new type of Reconciling Community to our list of options for affiliation: a Regional Reconciling Community (RRC).

RUMs connected through an RRC are often members of many different United Methodist churches in the area, but the RRC itself is not attached to any local church. They may meet once a month in a neutral or rotating setting in the area. RRCs are transformative communities that reduce isolation, provide systems for support and study, and establish opportunities for advocacy and growth. RRCs hold enormous potential for RUMs in the United States and Central Conferences alike, and we will work with you to establish them in our many places of great need.

C. Financial gifts are essential to keeping RMN's doors open and our collaborative work moving forward. This keeps our grassroots alive.

The exciting work of Rooted & Rising will need sustenance. Growth comes by regular, ongoing watering. In order to strengthen our grassroots and rise to the needs of the future, our work will need regular, ongoing support. This is the type of support we receive every day from faithful donors across the network.

We are inviting you to be a part of **The Wellspring**: a bountiful current of support for LGBTQ justice and inclusion in the Church. Our recurring donors are a source of unrelenting hope.

Reconciling United Methodists (RUMs) can join The Wellspring by committing to a monthly or quarterly investment in RMN. We are also inviting Reconciling Churches and Communities to make a similar deep investment. The regular and ongoing nature of recurring gifts provides RMN with the ability to be faithful stewards of our resources and plan our work strategically throughout the year.

We hope that 150 generous and visionary RUMs will join The Wellspring this year. We want to thank our first 100 RUMs who join The Wellspring with an RMN ceramic mug. The next 25 donors will receive copies of Bishop Karen Oliveto's two books, *Together at the Table* and *Our Strangely Warmed Hearts*. And the following 25 donors will receive an RMN enamel pin. All existing recurring donors and those who join through The Wellspring will receive a monthly email exclusively for Wellspring community members.

We all share a vision for a bold, courageous, and inclusive Church. At RMN, we're going deep, and we're responding to the dynamic call of the Holy Spirit.

So, jump in! You can join The Wellspring at:
rmnetwork.org/rootedandrising/thewellspring/

Thank you!

Rooted & Rising is a collective call to hope and to endurance. We are inspired by you, Reconciling United Methodists, and we hope you are inspired by the past and present of the Reconciling movement to engage anew, multiply our collective impact, and rise to the challenge of justice and inclusion.

If you'd like to see all of this information online, visit rmnetwork.org/rootedandrising.