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Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Resurrected Savior Jesus Christ.

We are living in a threshold time: a time of great spiritual hunger and a changing context for ministry. The challenges of poverty, sickness, violence, and greed are present all over the world. Alongside those challenges are thousands of people engaged in risk-taking mission and service.

The United Methodist Church is a movement of God. In glimpse after glimpse of the reign of God, I see a UMC that is guided more by a clear vision and mission than by rules and regulations. That vision and mission unites us. It is generous enough and large enough to make a kingdom difference in the world. It offers a holistic vision of salvation: body, mind, and spirit.

Movements enter most frequently from the margins of culture rather than from the centers of power. Their mission is to change the way that things are in the dominant culture. Movements are not neat and clean. In fact, they are downright chaotic and messy.

The United Methodist movement invites belief in Jesus Christ over the cultural gods, the practice of forgiveness over hate, and peace over violence and poverty. This vision starts with a few people. It grows through prayer, study of Scripture, worship, holy conversation, and practices of mercy and justice. This vision and mission connects more and diverse people as disciples of Jesus Christ. Finally, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ starts to move—together.

A movement: that's how The United Methodist Church began with and a handful of highly disciplined disciples of Jesus determined to live as Jesus had taught. Responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the Wesleys sought to help people become the whole persons that God intended. They made Christian faith simple and practical. "Do no harm. Do good. Attend the ordinances of God." A movement called "methodist" was born.

In the 37 years since my ordination as a deacon, only in the rarest of instances have I experienced a UMC guided by such a powerful sense of mission and vision that people were galvanized into one unified Body of Christ. But something is happening now and we're ready to loosen up a little. We're ready to move. We're ready to follow Jesus. We're ready for The United Methodist Church to rise up and dance before the Lord.

I urge all the people of our Church to pray, look, listen, and talk together about how the United Methodist movement is alive locally and beyond. Where you see it, join in. Where you don't, perhaps God is calling you to make the first moves! Surely God's great and mighty United Methodist Church is moving—all over the world—ready to step forward into God's reign on earth as it is in heaven.

Janice Huie
President, Council of Bishops