

## MISSION/VISION/PRIORITIES TALKING POINTS from BISHOP SAENZ'S FALL 2023 DISTRICT VISIT PRESENTATIONS

### VISION STATEMENT

- In August 2023, the cabinets of the North, Central and Northwest Texas conferences met to define our shared vision and priorities, as we work together to meet the needs of the mission field in Texas.
- Together, we aligned on this statement of vision – the “why” behind our efforts: We are followers of Jesus Seeking the loving, just and free world God imagines for all people.
- The cabinets and communicators carefully selected each word, with an eye toward defining who we are, the future we’re working toward and \*why\*.
- We’re followers of Jesus – we know that we don’t have all the answers and that we’re not blazing a new trail. We’re following Jesus who has gone before us and are modeling our lives and ministries on his.
- Seeking a loving, just and free world – this is the world as it should be, and as we know it \*will\* be. A world without discrimination, without violence, without pain. A world where we all live under God’s will.
- That God imagines for all people – this future is not exclusive, and it’s not a secret. It is on \*us\* to share God’s vision and to make disciples of all nations.

### MISSION STATEMENT

- Our mission remains consistent – “Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”
- The vision statement isn’t intended to replace the mission, but to work with it, to clarify why that mission matters to us and the end state we’re working toward.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES SLIDES

- To guide our work, our combined cabinets talked through five strategic priorities.
- These aren’t just words to make us feel good – these are actions our conferences need to take in the short-term – in the next three to five years – to see The United Methodist Church grow in our region and move us toward that vision
- **The first of our priorities is to Multiply Jesus Followers**
  - This priority will push us to engage with new people and to plant and nurture new faith communities to expand the reach of United Methodism across our region
  - We know this proactive stance and the key results we’re going to set will require us to use new, innovative models.

- Discipleship is more than just church attendance or Bible study. Being a disciple – a follower of Jesus – means doing what He did; living how He lived.
- What we're interested in doing in the North and Central Texas Conferences is *multiplying* Jesus Followers.
- We want to grow disciples who live out their faith and share it in such a way that they're not just bringing a friend on Sunday morning – they're exponentially increasing, multiplying themselves.
- We want to ask what it would take not just to double the number of United Methodists in our region by 2028, but to triple that number. To multiply.
- **Our second strategic priority is Championing Children and Youth.**
  - We read in Scripture that Jesus placed a high value on welcoming and caring for children, and we believe that must continue to be a priority as we think about the church of the future.
  - When we say we champion children and youth, it's a big umbrella ...
  - We support education that provides all children with equal opportunity.
  - We are concerned with the health and well-being of all children and youth, especially in our communities.
  - We advocate for young people's safety and security. We see gun violence in schools as an evil that the church must play a role in eradicating.
  - We value young people in our congregations and are intentional in raising them up in the way that leads to life.
- **Third, we're going to Maximize Care and Healing.**
  - This priority brings both internal and external implications.
  - Internally, we are coming out of a challenging season of disaffiliation. We have congregations that have experienced real pain in this season and will need time to heal relationships with the conference, the connection and with each other.
  - Externally, every one of our churches is situated in a community facing hurt and real needs. Sometimes, we are the ones delivering healing and care around society's ills; other times, we will connect people with partners and trusted third-party resources.
  - According to Mission InSite, the biggest issues people in our region report struggling with include:
    - Depression
    - Guilt
    - Weight and diet
    - Loneliness
    - Stress
    - Social and political tensions
    - The future
    - Finding direction
    - Spiritual issues and religion
  - This is a challenging list with significant needs. But the good news is, we are uniquely equipped to speak into these.
  - Without a doubt, the church should have a role in healing and addressing these hurts.

- For many of these issues, our role will be to deliver care directly, and in others, we'll use our connecting power to put individuals and communities in touch with the resources and organizations that will move them toward wholeness.
- **The Mission InSite data also helped shape our fourth strategic priority – Pursue and Embrace Diversity**
  - In the Central and North Texas Conference, diversity is coming – it's here – but we don't see that reflected in our churches and congregations
  - When we see the demographics of the entire region – it's clear that there are whole communities we're not engaging.
  - The numbers of Black, Hispanic and Asian Americans in our region are so much larger than what we're seeing in our congregations.
  - So while diversity is here, it's a fact of life, it's also something we're going to have to be intentional about pursuing and seeking out.
  - The mission field has grown by more than 1 million people in the past 12 years, and that pace is expected to continue, or even accelerate.
  - we need to pay to growing demographics like the Hispanic and Asian communities, which in this case include South Asian and Indian communities.
- **Our final Strategic Priority is to Tell Our Story**
  - We will focus on proactively telling the United Methodist story – not a narrative of disaffiliation and schism, but of how we are active in our communities, state and world and are living out our Mission and Vision.
  - To work toward our vision of a loving, just and free world for all people, we have to take our message of hope, grace and healing beyond our walls and into the community.
  - This means getting our stories into the news outlets and channels where the members of our communities are active, as well as sharing our story person-to-person.

#### **ALL FIVE PRIORITIES SLIDE**

- Together, these priorities will help focus and guide our conferences and local church ministries and programs, so that everything we're doing is working in support of our Strategic Vision and Mission.