

A COVENANT FOR CONVERSATION & SHARING

Council of Bishops Leadership Gathering | Calgary, October 20–24, 2026

We gather in Calgary to listen, learn, imagine, pray, and discern together for the sake of Christ's Church. The Gathering does not make decisions; it offers reflection for the wider Church. Our presumption is openness. Participants are encouraged to share their experience of the Gathering through conversation, newsletters, blogs, social media, interviews, and other means. This covenant is not a restriction on speaking or sharing; rather it is an invitation to communicate in ways that are trustworthy, safe, generous, and grounded in love.

I. DO NO HARM (Protect people without protecting secrecy.)

Different conversations require different kinds of care:

- **Public & Attributable** (Plenaries, keynotes, official presentations, and publicly released materials)
Share openly, report ideas, quote speakers, and reflect freely unless otherwise announced. Follow any stated recording, livestreaming, licensing, or speaker restrictions.
- **Open & Careful in Attribution** (Covenant groups, breakouts, table conversations, and informal dialogue)
Share what was discussed, but protect who said it. Share themes, questions, tensions, insights, and your own contributions. Do not name, quote, tag, photograph, or otherwise identify another participant in connection with a topic without that person's permission.
- **Confidential & Off-the-Record** (Pastoral, prayer, lament, care, and spaces that explicitly establish confidentiality)
Hold what is entrusted to the group. Any special confidentiality should be clearly named at the beginning of the conversation and honored by everyone present.

Consent Matters. Ask before quoting, tagging, photographing, recording (including AI transcriptions), or livestreaming another participant. Remember that public identification may create risks for colleagues in different cultural, political, ecclesial, or legal contexts.

Be Clear That Nothing Is Final. Say "we explored," "I heard," "our group wondered," or "one possibility raised was..." rather than suggesting that the Council of Bishops or The United Methodist Church has adopted a position or plan.

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II. DO GOOD (Share in ways that help the Church listen, learn, and grow.)

Tell the story of Calgary generously and accurately. Participants are encouraged to:

- **Speak for yourself.** Offer your experience and perspective without claiming to speak for the Council of Bishops, the Gathering, or the whole Church.
- **Share the questions as well as the answers.** Help your congregation, annual conference, and community wrestle with what we are wrestling with here.
- **Make room for many voices.** Amplify perspectives from across our global connection rather than allowing any one region, language, generation, or constituency to become the whole story.
- **Provide context.** Resist turning a sentence, photograph, or unfinished idea into a conclusion it was never intended to carry.
- **Practice gracious correction.** If you discover that something you shared was inaccurate or caused unintended harm, correct it promptly, and repair trust where possible.

The goal is not a controlled, single 'official' story of the Gathering, but a faithful, many-voiced witness to a Church listening for the Holy Spirit.

III. ATTEND UPON ALL THE ORDINANCES OF GOD (Be present to God and to one another.)

Holy conferencing is a way God shapes us. When we worship, read Scripture, pray, share Communion, sit in silence, tell our stories, or talk with one another, these moments are not just things to report. They are places where grace meets us. Take time to receive what is happening before you try to describe or report it. Pay attention. Listen deeply. Stay open to being changed. Notice what cannot be captured in a post or summary. In everything, let curiosity lead you.

Before you share, consider: Is it true? Is it mine to share? Could sharing it cause harm? Does it help the Church understand? Does it reflect the love of Christ?

When in doubt — Ask permission. Protect the person.
Provide context. Tell the truth in love.

