

The SC Conference Inclusion Team (CIT) Report to the 2026 Annual Conference

On December 3, 2025, the first meeting of the initial SC Conference Inclusion Team, appointed by Bishop Leonard Fairley, met under the leadership of the Bishop who consecrated our work with spiritual guidance, careful listening and engagement, and directed us to proceed in a posture of grace to all, while guided by The Book of Discipline.

During this meeting we acknowledged the necessity of appointing additional members to the team to fulfill our goals of inclusive representation, particularly more LGBTQIA+ representatives, BIPOC, and more laity. This is a work in progress as we assess how best to identify and invite candidates to this important and sacred work.

The intention of the Inclusion Team is to guide the SC Conference in centering and amplifying voices of our LGBTQIA+ siblings within our churches, boards, committees, and organizations. We undoubtedly acknowledge the suppression of their voices for over half a century and celebrate the renewed opportunity to help facilitate a faithful path to discipleship and full inclusion. We acknowledge the many gifts, talents, means of grace, leadership skills, and callings that have been obstructed over many decades. It is our intention both to help foster recovery and to encourage new opportunities for full participation of all God's people in the ministry of the Body of Christ.

Over five meetings since the 2025 meeting of the SC Annual Conference, the CIT has progressed efficiently with our preparatory work. We have accomplished several initiatives, beginning with defining our goals and objectives, studying best practices, implementing measures for evaluating progress, obtaining and using data, compiling and disseminating information/ educational resources, and communicating more broadly with the Conference.

Specifically, we've generated a *Loving Covenant* of confidentiality, which would translate well into extension ministries and churches beyond the CIT. We have at the direction of the Bishop, designed an evaluative rubric for the Conference Boards of Trustees, Ordained Ministry, and Nominations. This rubric was sent to all three boards in March 2025 to begin the process of self-evaluation for intentional improvement in LGBTQIA+ inclusion. The rubric has been distributed, with plans in mind to offer a template for other Conference organizations and churches during the 2026 conference year. Data from the rubric will be collected and reviewed to assess the state of inclusion and representation in the SC Conference. This data will be disaggregated so that the SC Conference summary and the district-by-district summaries become clear. Data will be used to identify training needs within the Conference and across districts. At this point the CIT will help facilitate the planning and implementation of training opportunities. Further, we have compiled and prepared for publication a collection of 1) mental health resources, and 2) a bibliography of theological, biblical, and autobiographical resources for use in supporting LGBTQIA+ persons and families, as well as educating SC United Methodist congregations, boards, committees, and organizations.

Once initial evaluative measures have been completed and surveyed, the Conference Inclusion Team in cooperation with the Conference Treasurer will propose a budget and request funding beginning in 2028 for the support of full inclusion among churches, districts, and the Conference at large.

The Conference Inclusion Team is grateful for the support of the SC Conference and fully committed to the work set before us on behalf of our LGBTQIA+ siblings and all the people of God.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Meg Wilkes on behalf of the SC Conference Inclusion Team

Rev. Fran Elrod

Rev. Meegian Gossard

Rev. Rachel Headden

Dr. Jim Lane

Rev. Ellis White

Rev Meg Wilkes