



CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

September 20, 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Thank you for saying yes to this journey. Your presence and participation in the Black Church Initiative are an expression of your love for your congregation, your commitment to The United Methodist Church, and your willingness to listen for what God may be calling forth in this season.

The Black churches of the California-Pacific Annual Conference carry a remarkable legacy. For generations, these congregations have proclaimed the Gospel, formed disciples, raised leaders, nurtured families, pursued justice, served communities, and created places of belonging, dignity, hope, and joy. We honor that legacy. We give thanks for those whose faithfulness built the churches we have inherited and for those of you who continue that witness today.

And because we love our churches, we must also be willing to look honestly at the landscape in which God has called us to serve. Our communities are changing. Our congregations are changing. The resources available to us are changing. The ways people seek community, meaning, spiritual formation, and connection are changing. Yet amid all that change, our calling to Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully and Lead Courageously remains. As *The Faithful Path for Now* reminds us, while the landscape of ministry shifts, the Call and Commission of the Church remains grounded in loving God and neighbor, meeting the real needs of people, and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Over the weeks ahead, I encourage you to engage this study with courage, curiosity, honesty, and hope. Listen deeply to Scripture. Listen to one another. Listen to your neighbors and communities. Celebrate what is bearing fruit. Be honest about what is not. Be willing to imagine possibilities you may not yet have considered.

You are also not making this journey alone. Pastors and laity from Black congregations across this conference as well as District Superintendents and Conference leadership are walking alongside you. We are committed to listening, learning, resourcing, encouraging, and discerning with you. But ultimately, no one outside your congregation can choose its faithful path for you. That work belongs to the people who love your church, know your community, and are willing to listen together for the movement of the Holy Spirit.

I believe deeply in the continuing witness of our Black churches. God has worked through these congregations before, God is working through them now, and I believe God is still calling forth something through them for generations yet to come. So, bring your questions, wisdom, concerns, imagination and love for your church and your community. Most of all, bring an openness to the Spirit.

Thank you again for being willing to choose the faithful path, for now, and to discover together where God leads us next.

Grace y paz,

Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank

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