



Wilkesboro United Methodist Church
309 West Main Street, Post Office Box 197
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PASTOR'S NOTE

February 2019

*"For I know the plans I have for you,"
declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11*

On February 23-26, 2019, The United Methodist Church will begin a Special Session of General Conference for the purpose of voting on a plan for a way forward for our denomination. It is an anxious time for many as this vote has the potential to be divisive and polemic, reflecting the tension of the world rather than the peace of Christ.

The issues are far more complex than I can express in a one-page article but in its simplest form we are seeking to resolve decades of struggle with the language of our Book of Discipline (the governing book of polity for our denomination) in regards to human sexuality and the exclusion of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters. This language first appeared in our Discipline in 1972 and while altered over the years has remained intact despite many attempts to have it amended or eliminated in order to be more inclusive to all. As our churches have welcomed more diversity and openness in the understanding of human sexuality many have pushed back against this language and have advocated for a more open and inclusive language and practice within the Church. Others have argued for acceptance of the language and punishment for those who do not adhere.

At our 2016 General Conference, a special task force (The Commission on a Way Forward) was formed to study the issue and return in February 2019 with a recommendation for the future. They have proposed three plans, which will be voted on at the Special Session. You can see the proposed plans in the insert in your newsletter.

While this has a potential for great division, I continue to pray and believe in the promise God delivered through the prophet Jeremiah: God's plans to prosper and do no harm, to give us hope and a future. I invite you to join me in prayer for that future for

The United Methodist Church, that God will guide our General Conference on a way forward that is within God's will and plan for a future of hope and prosperity for the body of Christ.

What more can we do?

1. Pray daily for the delegates and leaders of our General Conference body. The United Methodist Women offer a "40 Days of Prayer" guide at the following link:
www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/40-days-of-prayer-for-general-conference
2. Be educated about the process:
 - a. Join me on Sunday, February 17 at 3pm in the Sanctuary for a time of prayer and understanding. I will attempt to answer your questions and invite you to join together in prayer as the delegates gather for this important decision.
 - b. Explore our Western North Carolina Conference webpage, which has a great array of resources in which to better understand this issue. You can find this information at www.wnccumc.org/commissiononawayforwardresources
3. Seek understanding rather than division – there are groups on both sides of this debate who are distorting or offering misleading information on the 3 proposals that will be brought before General Conference. Take time to seek the facts and hear with a compassionate ear the stories of those on both sides of the issue.

Let us pray as we seek understanding and faithfulness to God's will in the days to come. I have faith in God's promises and trust that Wilkesboro United Methodist Church will continue to serve God in love and peace.

In Christ,

Pastor Karen