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Subject: General Conference 2020 Reflections and Resources

I join my Cabinet colleagues in offering a word of encouragement as we remain in prayer for The United Methodist Church and the upcoming General Conference (May 5-15, 2020). I know for some of you this has been a difficult year in ministry. There is much anxiety and uncertainty in our system, and we are navigating this time in the Church while our society is increasingly coarse, angry, divided, and fearful. And yet, I am hopeful because, as I have stated previously...

- The Church is not ours. It belongs to Christ. It is Christ's body and a gift of the Holy Spirit.
- We are connected not by of our institutional polity or because we agree with one another. We are connected by baptism.
- The Church, has a future, not because we are clever, but because God is faithful.
- Our inability, at times, to faithfully navigate conflict and division cannot counter God's work of reconciling all things, including us, making peace through the blood of the cross.

Christ prayed that we might be one. Unity is central to the witness of the Gospel and our division hinders that witness. And yet, it is increasingly evident that we may part ways with some of our brothers and sisters, even if for a season. So, can we do this in a way that bears witness to our world that there is a more excellent way even in disagreement?

As we navigate this season of potential separation and change I encourage us to assume the posture of Wesley who calls us to do no harm; to do all the good we can; and to stay in love with God. I urge us to humbly remain focused on our holy vocation of living and proclaiming the good news that in Christ Jesus there is hope, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and life for people. I pray we remain committed to seeking the thriving of all our neighbors, that we will prophetically speak the truth in love, that we will do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God until that day when we feast together at our Lord's banquet.

The following resources provide information from a variety of voices and perspectives. The list is not exhaustive but hopefully will help you stay informed and in conversation. As we move forward, know

that I am committed to help you and your congregation be as faithful and fruitful in ministry as possible and that you remain in my prayers.

General Conference 2020

Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation, Formal Document:

<https://cdnsc.umc.org/-/media/umc-media/2020/01/03/15/48/Protocol-of-Reconciliation-and-Grace-through-Separation>

Protocol News Report:

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/diverse-leaders-group-offers-separation-plan>

Protocol FAQ document:

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/protocol-of-reconciliation-and-grace-through-separation-faq>

Statement from Bishop Leeland: <https://www.wnccumc.org/newsdetail/13134946>

“U.S. Regional Conference” (Connectional Table):

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/connectional-tables-us-regional-conference-legislation-now-available>

This plan would create a new decision-making body for U.S. matters — a place for United Methodists to address retirement plans, property matters, resolutions and other issues that solely affect the church in the United States.

UMC Resources

The United Methodist Church: <https://www.umc.org/>

United Methodist News Service: <https://umnews.org/>

Western North Carolina Conference: <https://www.wnccumc.org/>

Metro District: <https://www.metrodistrictumc.org/>

Advocacy Resources

Good News Magazine: <https://goodnewsmag.org/>

Since 1967, Good News has been the classical evangelical witness and ministry for renewal and reform within The United Methodist Church. Our mission is to lead all people within The United Methodist Church to the faithful and vibrant practice of orthodox Wesleyan Christianity.

Reconciling Ministries Network: <https://rmnetwork.org/>

The Reconciling Ministries Network is an organization seeking the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in both the policy and practices of United Methodist Church.

The Confessing Movement: <https://confessingumc.org/>

The Confessing Movement exists to help retrieve and celebrate the Church's classic biblical and doctrinal identity and to live it out together as followers of Jesus Christ.

UMCNext: <https://umcnext.com/>

Affirms the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities in the UMC, and works for the elimination of the restrictions and penalties in the Discipline regarding LGBTQ persons.

UM Forward: <https://um-forward.org/>

Centering the voices, wisdom, and experiences of people of color and the LGBTQIA+ community that have far too long been silenced, ignored, or belittled, the people of UMForward invite all into community that is rich in love and deep in commitment to justice for all.

United Methodist Insight: <https://um-insight.net/>

United Methodist Insight seeks to provide information and perspectives for concerned United Methodists and decision-makers that will affect the future of The United Methodist Church.

Wesleyan Covenant Association: <https://wesleyancovenant.org/>

The Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) connects Spirit-filled, orthodox churches, clergy, and laity who hold to Wesleyan theology. It is an association or network of individuals and congregations who share a common understanding of our Wesleyan doctrine and desire to become a vibrant, faithful, growing 21st-century church.