

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR ALAN

If you attended my Chapel Talk during the summer, or if you follow any amount of United Methodist News, you will know that February is going to be a significant month in the life of The United Methodist Church. There will be a special session of General Conference in St. Louis, Missouri February 23-26. General Conference is a global gathering of United Methodists, elected by their Annual Conferences to gather and work together towards making changes and additions to *The Book of Discipline*, which is the official book of Church Law for United Methodists. The General Conference is the only body that speaks officially for The United Methodist Church. Normally the General Conference meets every four years, but the 2016 General Conference called for a special General Conference in 2019.

The purpose of this General Conference will center on questions related to the inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) persons in the life of The United Methodist Church. Currently *The Book of Discipline* states that while all people are “of sacred worth,” “the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with the Christian life,” and persons who are “practicing” LGBTQ+ persons are prohibited from being ordained or serving as clergy in United Methodist Churches. The United Methodist Church has struggled with questions around our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters since at least the merging of The Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church to create The United Methodist Church in 1968, and as cultural attitudes and cultural have changed to some degree in our own context, the differences amongst us have become sharper.

As I noted in my Chapel Talk, our conversation around human sexuality is particularly challenging because The United Methodist Church is a global church. When we gather for General Conference, there are delegates from all over the world, from different countries, contexts, and cultures who bring their own understandings and customs to the conversation. So, while many delegates come from nations where it is legal for LGBTQ+ persons to live their lives freely and marry, others come from countries where homosexuality is illegal, and even supporting a family member who is LGBTQ+ can result in imprisonment. On one hand, our global nature is a gift because it enriches us with the diversity of the Body of Christ, but on the other hand it creates significant challenges when we gather together to try to agree on matters that are potentially binding on all United Methodist Churches.

There are at least three families of plans that the 2019 General Conference will consider at this General Conference. I call them “families” because by nature they will likely see a lot of changes once they are considered by General Conference. Once legislation is on the floor, it can be amended and changed in any way the body sees fit, so even if you read all of the legislation (which I will link you to at the end of this article, and which I encourage you to take the time to look at) what gets passed may not look like the original legislation.

There is the “**One Church Plan**,” which would retain our unity in mission and work as United Methodists. Essentially, the One Church Plan is contextual. Churches could *choose* to affirm LGBTQ+ persons, allow for them to be married in the church, and/or have a pastor who is an LGBTQ+ person, but a church is not in any way forced to go against their conscience. Similarly, a pastor would be able to follow his or her conscience in performing wedding ceremonies. It allows us to remain together as church, to benefit from our connection to each other and the structures we have in place, but it also allows churches to determine what is appropriate for their context. The One Church Plan is favored by a majority of United Methodist Bishops.

The second plan is the “**Connectional Conference Plan**.” Currently, The United Methodist Church in The United States is divided into five geographical Jurisdictions. This plan would replace those Jurisdictions with non-geographic “Connectional Conferences” that would fall somewhere along the spectrum from affirming, to moderate, to non-affirming. Annual

Conferences and/or churches could then choose to affiliate based on where they fall in the spectrum. Like the One Church Plan, it would allow us all to remain United Methodist, with the benefits that come from being one global church, but it would allow Annual Conferences and Churches to follow their consciences with regard to inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons.

The third plan is the **“Traditionalist Plan.”** It would retain the current language in *The Book of Discipline*, and it would also add clearer ways of dealing with clergy, churches, or Annual Conferences who stray from the language in the *Discipline*. For example, it creates a system for removing Annual Conferences or churches from the connection for not complying with the *Discipline* in matters related to human sexuality.

The three I have just named are the three that are in the official Commission on a Way Forward report, which was created by the 2016 General Conference to prepare a report for the 2019 General Conference. There is, of course, a variety of legislation headed to the General Conference beyond these three plans. In reality, there is no telling what exactly what will happen when the legislation is taken up by General Conference. It is possible that none of the plans pass, and we end up where we are right now. However, it is likely that there will be some kind of shake-up with regard to the existence of The United Methodist Church as it stands, but it is hard to see what that will be.

For us, what is important to see in the first two plans is that even though some language in the *Discipline* might change, no church or clergyperson is forced to go against their conscience. The first two plans are permissive, but they are not prescriptive. That means for us at First UMC that we would have agency in determining how we would proceed in light of the decisions of General Conference. This is important because I have found our church to be a church with a variety of viewpoints on a variety of questions in our current context. I believe one of the best traits of our church is that we are a gathering of Christians who hold diverse viewpoints, but who commit to Christ and to each other in the midst of our differences. This is not a church where you have to check your brain at the door. Even our youth named it as one of our strengths when they were interviewed by the Deep Water Team back in April.

I have been United Methodist for my entire life, and it pains me to see the potential fractures that could happen with the passage of any particular plan. I am not sure what will happen in February, but I am sure that our past, present, and future continue to be in God’s hands. I want to invite you to pray with me for the General Conference. For me, unity is a critical to the nature of the Church. Christ prays for the unity of the Church in John 17 because that unity is a critical element of the nature of the Church. Jesus says that the degree that we can live and work together is the degree to which the world sees the unity of Father and the Son. That unity is what I will be praying for as we approach the General Conference February 23-26. I also believe, that whether we find ourselves in the affirming, non-affirming, or I’m-not-sure camps, we should also pray for our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters, who will be anxiously watching the General Conference, for the potential hurt they may experience in midst of difficult conversations, and for the questions in their hearts about their place in The United Methodist Church. You may have something different for which you want to pray, but no matter what result you hope for, I want you to join me in praying, especially for our delegates from Virginia, as well as the delegates from all over the world as they gather in St. Louis.

Peace,

Alan

GC2019 and Way Forward Resources

Commission on a Way Forward Website:

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward>

Commission on a Way Forward Report:

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know>

General Conference 2019 Website:

<http://www.umcom.org/news/q-a-2019-special-session-of-the-general-conference>

Judicial Council Decision GC 2019 Legislation:

[http://cdnfiles.umc.org/Website_Properties/JCD_1366_Docket_No._1018-12\).pdf](http://cdnfiles.umc.org/Website_Properties/JCD_1366_Docket_No._1018-12).pdf)

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Tricia Givens, Director

GOD IS LOVE!

What is Love??

It says in I John 4:8 that God is love. They are one in the same. God is perfect love. God is the love that connects each of us. God is the love that threads our hearts spiritually together when we allow His love to do so. But, what is love?

Love is caring about someone more than you care about yourself. Love is putting someone's interest before yours. Love is loving people, who may not love you back. Love is loving people who you do not really like, but you still love them. Love is forgiving and loving instead of hating or hurting. Love is putting yourself in someone's shoes and trying to relate to their situation. Love is caring and looking after someone. Love is protecting. Love is giving when needed and knowing when it is better to guide. Love is wanting the best for others. Love is reaching out. Love is relating and communicating. Love does not insist on its own way. Love is not jealous. Love is kind even when trying to correct a wrong. Love endures much hurt. Love is making others feel loved through words and actions. Love is gracious. Love is unselfish. Love is a hug, a kind word, a random act of kindness. Love is looking for the good in others.

This kind of love is so perfect that we could never live up to it. God can! His love for us endures all things. HE wants what is best for us always. When we turn away from him and hurt him, he still loves us. His love is always there to listen, care, communicate with us and guide us. His love is always the same. We cannot take it away. By Grace, his love is given to us freely every day for ever and ever. We may change. We may turn from him. We may hurt him and even deny him, but He loves us. He loves us with all our faults because he sees the love that is deep within us. The very love that He put in our hearts, when we were born.

May you take time to read I Corinthians chapter 13 with your children. Read it slow and talk about it. Talk about God's Love and how we aspire to love that way. Talk about how you, as their parents, try to love them like that, but you are not perfect either. Let them know that you can only try to follow God's- Christ's perfect example of love and teach them to love others that way too. Teach them that the New Testament of the Bible shares how we are to love and teaches us how to love. Studying God's words helps us to understand how to love.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul and love others as much as you love yourself. This is all that God really asks of us, but this is hard. Our love is just not as perfect as His. We can only try!

Love to you all and may you feel that wonderful and perfect love of God every day and may you share that love in as many ways as you can.

In His Service,
Tricia Givens

Fellowship Sunday, February 10th

Dinner 6:00—chili cook-off! Bring your best chili recipe to share. The winner will win a gift card to Mac and Bob's!

Program 6:30—Who Knows Their Spouse the Best?!

We will have several couples play and we will see who knows each other the best (like the newly-wed game)! The couple who wins gets a gift card to Mac and Bob's. We may conclude with a quick discussion pertaining to Alan's series on Love and Marriage called "Love to Stay." (There are no perfect spouses!)

Wesley Kids & Tweens

February 10th

We will meet at 5:00 pm in the chapel.

We will make valentine cards to send to many people who help in our church.

We will make a love gift to give to someone we want to show gratitude to, or someone who is lonely or sad. Share the love!

Wesley Tweens

February 11th

Wesley Tweens Grades 3rd through 5th

Meet in the chapel at 6:00 pm we will study I Corinthians chapter 13. (Bring your Bibles) We will take cards to the fire

department along with cookies. We will thank them for their service to our community and look around. We will come back and be ready to be picked up by 7:00 pm.

Sunday School—Third, Fourth, & Fifth Graders

Starting in February you will go to your regular Sunday school class and let your teacher take attendance. After attendance, you will divide into an all boy team and an all girl team each Sunday. You will have class with your team and come back together, as a group, at the end of class. We hope this will help everyone make friends in Sunday school as we Seek and Grow in God, during Sunday School Time.

February Sunday School—Seeking & Growing in God

First Sunday of February, we will end our Sunday School classes with Games that help us seek and grow in God.

Second Sunday of February, we will end the class time at 10:15am for our worship time. We will enjoy a skit by fellow friends.

Third Sunday of February, we will end Sunday school with games that help us seek and grow in God.

Fourth Sunday of February, we will end Sunday school with making ice cream Sundaes. What do you need to make a Sundae no matter what kind you make? Ice Cream! How does that teach us about how we need God in everything????

Kids in the Spotlight

This month First Church recognizes Aubrey Snead. Aubrey is the daughter of Patrick and Jamie Snead. Aubrey sings in the children's choirs and attends Sunday school. Aubrey attends Wesley Kids and VBS and even attends Camp Alta Mons faith camps. She is always helpful and quite the prayer warrior. She cares deeply for others. We thank Aubrey for making a difference here at First Church.

Children's Ministry Volunteers of the Month

This month Children's Ministry recognizes Julie and Shane Blanchard. Julie and Shane teach Sunday school at the third grade level. They are so caring and patient with our children. They are easy to work with and always ready to help whenever they can. They love the children and it shows in the way they work with the kids. Thank you both for making a difference. The book, "What it Means to Be A Christian?" has been added to the children's ministry library. This book is for the Elementary age child.

WESLEYAN PRESCHOOL

Jane Butto, Director

Registration for the 2019-2020 school year will begin in February. Be sure to watch your email if you are a current preschool parent or like our Facebook page (FUMC Wesleyan Preschool) to stay informed!

YOUTH MINISTRIES

Jessica Gehman, Director

Youth Sunday Evenings: Reality Check

- ⇒ February 3rd: SUPERBOWL PARTY
- ⇒ February 17th: A night you don't want to forget! We will watch a short film/speaker and then have a discussion afterward.
- ⇒ February 24th: Theme for this evening will be to be announced. Please check weekly e-mails for updates.

7th Grade Confirmation Begins February 3rd

Confirmation Sunday will begin on February 3rd at 10:00am in the Junior High Sunday School room. The teachers this year will be Chris Russ and Dale Foster. Mentors are welcome and encourage to join their confirmands during the Sunday School Hour. If you have a 7th grader who is NOT signed up, or know a family with a 7th grader who is interested please contact Jessica at jessicak@fumcsalemva.org asap.

Mark your calendars! Save the Date!

VT Wesley will be hosted the Youth (6th-12th Grade) District Retreat on March 1st-3rd. We will spend the weekend hanging out at VT, learning about God, and making new friends. Cost will be under \$20 but still waiting for more information for logistics and sign ups. Please check weekly youth e-mails for up to date information.

Youth Volunteer Hours for Mission Trip and LAUNCHING PAD!

The youth will be heading to the Hermitage to volunteer our time on February 16th. We will meet at 1:30pm and work till about 3:00pm. After we volunteer we will be heading to the Launching Pad for an hour of fun! Make sure to sign up and complete the waiver for the Launching. This is open to all youth, but you must serve at the Hermitage to go to the Launching Pad.

Small Group Info

Group	Day	Time	Location
6 th -8 th Grade	Mondays in February	7:30-8:30pm	Off Site
9 th -12 th Grade	Wednesdays in February	7:30-8:30pm	Off Site

Youth Contact Information

E-mail: jessicak@fumcsalemva.org

Facebook Group: FUMC Impact Youth Ministry

Instagram: fumc_impactyouth

Remind App: Text 81010 with message: @2015impact

NEW Youth Website: youth.fumcsalemva.org

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Circle 9

We will meet on Feb. 13 at 6:45 in room 208. Collection of non-perishable food for the Food Pantry will be donated from this meeting. Please bring your donation for Feb. Guests are invited to join the group and visit with us!

SKY GROUP

SKY News

We are pleased to announce that Susan Kirby has accepted the position of SKY Leader. Please extend a warm welcome to her! We look forward to future meetings and events.

MISSIONS UPDATE

Youth Mission Trip Fundraiser

HEART FOR MISSIONS WALL: The youth will be heading to Indianapolis, IN for a week in June to work in homeless shelters and soup kitchens. This mission trip is a life changing experience for all who attend and support! We are raising support for our mission trip by placing a Heart of Missions Support Wall up. This wall will have 500 envelopes. Each envelope will be marked with a dollar amount between \$1 and \$500, and we are asking those who take the envelope to fill the envelope with the dollar amount on the outside and return to the church office by February 28th. You can return the money by stopping by the church office, dropping it in the church mailbox after hours, or placing the envelope in the offering plate during the service. Inside the envelope will have a brief description of our Mission Trip, who will be going, how you can be praying, and instructions on how to return money. We are so thankful for all who have supported the youth through prayers and financial giving!

FINANCE UPDATE

Debt Elimination

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Building Fund! The note was officially paid in full December 24, 2018. We are waiting for the bank to release the official note and we are looking towards burning the note in April when the weather is more cooperative. It cannot be overstated that this would not have been possible without the faithful support of our congregation!

SPECIAL THANKS

Dear Church Family,

I could not/cannot get through these past, present and future days without your love and support. Please know that I am thankful.

Love,

Debbie Willard

STAFF PARISH NEWS

By mid-January of every year, all Staff/Pastor Parrish Relations Committees in the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church are requested to submit their recommendation(s) as to whether or not their minister(s) should return for another year at their particular church. The season of the Bishop and her Cabinet meeting to discuss appointments officially concludes at Annual Conference in June, when the Bishop fixes the appointments for the next year. On January 8, 2019, our S/PPRC unanimously voted to indicate to Bishop Lewis and her Cabinet that our preference would be that Rev. Alan Combs and Rev. Jeff Dorsey would remain in their present positions at FUMC Salem for another year. PLEASE BE MINDFUL THAT ... the process is consultative, which means we share our preferences in consultation with the Bishop, but it is ultimately Bishop Lewis's decision with the assistance of her Cabinet as to where all ministers are appointed throughout the Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church for the upcoming church year. I know you join our S/PPRC in your expressions of appreciation to Alan and Jeff for their wonderful ministry in/for our church for the past year.

Tommy Barber
Chairman SPRC

CALENDAR INFORMATION

Please note the following weekly calendar items are not represented due to space constraints:

Weekly Choir & Bell Schedule

Sunday

Heavenly Bells	3:00pm
Cherub Choir	3:30pm
Chorister Choir	4:00pm
JuBELLation	4:00pm
Youth Choir	5:00pm

Tuesday

GENESIS Praise Band	7:00pm
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Thursday

Resounding Joy	6:00pm
Sanctuary Choir	7:30pm

FEBRUARY 2019



Calendar information is as of January 7th. Please check with group leaders for more information.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 8:00pm - AA 8:00pm - AI-Anon	2
3 4:00 - Journey 101 6:00 - Youth Superbowl Party	4 7:00pm - Boy & Girl Scouts 7:00pm - SPRC 7:30pm - 6-8 Small Group 8:00pm - AA	5 10:00am - SKY Board 6:30pm - Cub Scouts	6 6:30am - Men's Bible Study 12:00pm - Bulletin Deadline 5:30pm - Girl Scouts 6:00pm - God & Life 6:00pm - Communications 7:30pm - 9-12 Small Group	7 6:30pm - God & Family	8 10:00am - Parliamentarians 8:00pm - AA Program 8:00pm - AI-Anon	9 Cub Scout Derby
10 4:00pm - Journey 101 5:00pm - Coffee w/ Pastor 5:00pm - Wesley Kids & Tweenes 6:00pm - Fellowship Dinner	11 6:00pm - Wesley Tweenes 7:00pm - Boy & Girl Scouts 7:30pm - 6-8 Small Group 8:00pm - AA	12 10:00am - Circle 5 6:30pm - Girls on the Run 6:30pm - Venturing Crew 6:30pm - Cub Scouts	13 6:30am - Men's Bible Study 12:00pm - Bulletin Deadline 6:00pm - God & Life 6:45pm - Circle 9 7:30pm - 9-12 Small Group	14 6:00pm - Girl Scouts 6:30pm - God & Family	15 8:00pm - AA 8:00pm - AI-Anon	16 Youth - Hermitage/ Launching Pad
17 10:15am - Acolyte Training 4:00pm - Journey 101 6:00pm - Reality Check 6:00pm - Troop 51 Meeting	18 7:00pm - Boy & Girl Scouts 7:30pm - 6-8 Small Group 8:00pm - AA	19 6:30pm - Cub Scouts 7:00pm - Finance Meeting	20 6:30am - Men's Bible Study 12:00pm - Bulletin Deadline 5:30pm - Girl Scouts 6:00pm - God & Life 7:00pm - Shawl Ministry 7:30pm - 9-12 Small Group	21 10:30am - Roanoke District Clergy Day of Prayer 11:30am - SKY Group 6:30pm - God & Family	22 6:00pm - Lions Club Bland Music Competition 8:00pm - AA 8:00pm - AI-Anon	23
24 10:15am - Acolyte Training 4:00pm - Journey 101 6:00pm - Reality Check	25 7:00pm - Boy & Girl Scouts 7:30pm - 6-8 Small Group 8:00pm - AA	26 9:30am - DCOM 6:30pm - Cub Scouts 7:00pm - Cracked Pots	27 6:30am - Men's Bible Study 12:00pm - Bulletin Deadline 12:15pm - Staff Meeting 6:00pm - God & Life 7:30pm - 9-12 Small Group	28 6:00pm - Girl Scouts 6:30pm - God & Family		

First United Methodist Church

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First United Methodist Church Staff

- ◆ Lead Pastor, **Rev. Alan Combs** (alancombs@fumcsalemva.org)
- ◆ Associate Minister, **The Rev^d Jeffrey Dorsey** (jeff@dorseylawfirm.com)
- ◆ Pastor In Residence, **Rev. Dr. Michael Houff**
- ◆ Director of Children's Ministries & Children's Choirs, **Tricia Givens** (triciag@fumcsalemva.org)
- ◆ Youth Ministries Director, **Jessica Gehman** (jessicak@fumcsalemva.org)
- ◆ Director of Wesleyan Preschool, **Jane Butto** (jbutto@fumcsalemva.org)
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- ◆ Organist, **Judith Snyder** (jsnyder@hollins.edu)
- ◆ Piano Accompanist for Children & Youth, **London Reinhard**
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- ◆ Sextons, **Butch & Genia Johnson** (winhoos1@hotmail.com)

Roanoke District and VA Annual Conference

Bishop, **Sharma Lewis** District Superintendent, **Kathleen Overby-Webster**

First Connections (USPS693-120) is published monthly by First United Methodist Church

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