

the Epistle



Melcher-Dallas New Hope UMC &
Pleasantville St. Paul's UMC

There is a calendar of activities on the back of the newsletter.

A Note from Pastor Jess

Back in September, at Charge Conference, the churches set ministry goals for the coming year. The purpose of the goals is not an empty exercise in filling out conference required paperwork but a way for church leadership to prayerfully discern where God is leading us. God is always leading us somewhere to something. Without intentional discernment we will almost always follow our own way and not God's way.

This process of discernment and goal setting, then focuses our attention and energy for the year. The mission of the denomination, *"to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,"* is based on Jesus command to his disciples, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

The goals we set help us live into the mission of the church. The Ministry Goals for St. Paul's United Methodist Church are:

- ◆ Engage more people through a variety of easily accessible small groups, hands on mission activities, and fellowship.
- ◆ Trust in God to provide by moving from a mindset of scarcity to abundance.
- ◆ Spend time as a church focusing upon rest and renewal

The Ministry Goals for New Hope United Methodist Church are:

- ◆ In order to build relationships, offer a variety of small groups and opportunities for Christian fellowship.
- ◆ Go beyond our once a month food delivery ministry.
- ◆ Broaden our music ministry.

Throughout the year as we move toward our goals and live out our mission, let us offer each other and all the people we encounter Christ.

Turn the page for the following:

- ⇒ Spiritual Practice of the Month
- ⇒ Discipleship
- ⇒ UMC News— Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation
- ⇒ What does the Protocol mean for the Local Church?
- ⇒ Thank You Note from Pastor Jess
- ⇒ Scripture & Themes for Worship
- ⇒ Human Relations Day (special offering)
- ⇒ Activity Dates

Go therefore and make disciples...

Spiritual Practice— Reading/ Study

It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.
-John Wesley

Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed in the reading. Read as one awake, one waiting for the beloved. Read with reverence.
-Macrina Wiederkehr

If you have ever seen a statue of John Wesley he is most likely riding a horse. If you have ever seen a painting of John Wesley he is most likely wearing a somber black outfit. But you also may notice that in many depictions of Wesley, he is holding a book.

Whether sitting in a chair or riding a horse it seemed that he was often reading, whether it was the Bible or another book. He once scolded a clergyman for not reading enough saying that one cannot be an effective pastor nor a thorough Christian without constantly reading.

Reading scripture, devotions, biblical commentaries, and/or inspirational books help us experience God. Reading helps us go beyond our own understanding and our own limited experience to encounter God in new and surprising ways.

Here are a few suggestions for the discipline of reading/study:

- ◆ As you begin this year make a reading plan for yourself. Whether you read a set number of books, a specific author, or the entire Bible. Set specific goals for reading and study.
- ◆ Set aside time each morning or evening to let scripture speak to you. Do not rush through your reading but soak it in.
- ◆ Experience sections of scripture through *Lectio Divina*— a four part reading practice. Read the scripture like a love letter. Meditate upon it. Utter a prayer in response to the Word. Spend time in contemplation— demand nothing of God but just resting in God's presence having experienced the Word.

Discipleship

Following and Living like Jesus everyday.

Discipleship— The active living out of the individual Christian in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ, that is, being as effective a disciple of Christ as possible.

Discipleship involves a ministry of outreaching love and witness to others concerning Christ and God's grace.

Discipleship also calls the Christian to ministries of servanthood and service to the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment.

-From www.umc.org

A Dictionary for United Methodists

In his book “Developing an Intentional Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations,” Phil Maynard lists basic characteristics of a disciple. These characters look different as we grow in faith: **Worship, Community, Spiritual Practices, Generosity & Service,** and being **Christ-like.**

Let's see how we are doing in the area of spiritual practices!

If you were going to describe your feelings/participation in spiritual practices, would it be:

- ◆ Wonder about the Bible and ways to experience God.
- ◆ Feel drawn to the story of God's love and begin to explore scripture.
- ◆ Begin to pray and read scripture regularly, open to God.
- ◆ Move to exploring spiritual disciplines; drawn closer to God on a daily basis.
- ◆ Enjoy and practice spiritual disciplines, and begin to show others how to use them to grow in faith and be drawn closer to God.



United Methodist Traditionalists, Centrists, Progressives & Bishops Sign Agreement Aimed at Separation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 3, 2020

(Washington, D.C.) - A diverse group of representatives from United Methodist advocacy groups with contrasting views and bishops from around the world has collaborated on a proposed agreement for the separation of The United Methodist Church (UMC) that has the unanimous support of all the parties involved.

The agreement, the Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation, was achieved on December 17, 2019, and announced today.

The action comes amid heightened tensions in the church over conflicting views related to human sexuality after the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference failed to resolve differences among church members.

Legislation to implement the Protocol statement — an eight-page document detailing the terms of a split of the 13+ million-member denomination — is expected to come before the United Methodist General Conference for a vote at their legislative meeting in Minneapolis, Minn. in May 2020.

The 16-member group came together as an outgrowth of a consultation initiated by bishops from Central Conferences located outside the United States. The parties sought assistance from prominent attorney Kenneth Feinberg, who specializes in mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Feinberg, who served as Special Master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and administrator of the BP Deepwater Horizon Disaster Victim Compensation Fund, along with a number of other complex matters, agreed to provide his services pro bono.

Meeting over several months, the unofficial group reached an agreement by signatories associated with all of the constituencies within the UMC for a mutually supported pathway for separation, bridging differences among other plans to be considered by the General Conference. “The undersigned propose restructuring The United Methodist Church by separation as the best means to resolve our differences, allowing each part of the Church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity, and respect of every person,” says the Protocol Statement.

The document’s signers include representatives from Europe, Africa, the Philippines, and the United States, and include persons representing UMCNext; Mainstream UMC; Uniting Methodists; The Confessing Movement; Good News; The Institute on Religion & Democracy; the Wesleyan Covenant Association; Affirmation; Methodist Federation for Social Action; Reconciling Ministries Network; and the United Methodist Queer Clergy Caucus; as well as bishops from the United States and across the world. The representatives have pledged to work together to support the proposal and develop legislation to implement it.

The Protocol anticipates the formation of a new traditionalist Methodist denomination. Once formed, the new church would receive \$25 million over the next four years and give up further claim to the UMC’s assets. An additional \$2 million would be allocated for potential additional new Methodist denominations which may emerge from the UMC. Acknowledging the historical role of the Methodist movement in systematic racial violence, exploitation and discrimination, the Protocol would allocate \$39 million to ensure there is no disruption in supporting ministries for communities historically marginalized by racism.

Under the Protocol, conferences and local congregations could vote to separate from The United Methodist Church to affiliate with new Methodist denominations created under the agreement within a certain time frame. Churches wishing to stay within the UMC would not be required to conduct a vote. Provisions exist for entities that choose to separate to retain their assets and liabilities. All current clergy and lay employees would keep their pensions regardless of the Methodist denomination with which they affiliate.

Under the Protocol, all administrative or judicial processes addressing restrictions in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist related to self-avowed practicing homosexuals or same-sex weddings, as well as actions to close churches, would be held in abeyance until the separation is completed. The Protocol also references a plan which calls for a special general conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church. The purpose of the Special Session would be to create regional conferences, remove the current prohibitions against LGBTQ persons, and to repeal the Traditional Plan.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Bishop John Yambasu (Sierra Leone) stated, “All of us are servants of the church and realize that we are not the primary decision makers on these matters. Instead, we humbly offer to the delegates of the 2020 General Conference the work which we have accomplished in the hopes that it will help heal the harms and conflicts within the body of Christ and free us to be more effective witnesses to God’s Kingdom.”

The signatories to the Protocol have provided a FAQ document to provide additional information about the agreement. Comments and questions may be directed to the signatories at mediationprotocol@outlook.com.

A livestream event will take place on Monday, January 13, to provide further clarity and explanations of the plan by members of the Mediation Team.

This statement is being released by the Council of Bishops Office on behalf of the Mediation Team members.

Members of the Mediation Team

Bishop Christian Alsted Nordic-Baltic Episcopal Area

Rev. Thomas Berlin representing UMCNext, Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists

Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton New York Episcopal Area

Rev. Keith Boyette —The Confessing Movement, Good News, IRD/UM Action, & the Wesleyan Covenant Association

Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Florida Episcopal Area

Rev. Junius Dotson representing UMCNext, Mainstream UMC, United Methodists

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling Washington Episcopal Area

Rev. Egmedio “Jun” Equila, Jr. Philippines Central Conference

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey Louisiana Episcopal Area

Bishop Rodolfo Rudy Juan Davao Episcopal Area, Philippines

Janet Lawrence representing Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Reconciling Ministries Network

Rev. David Meredith Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, and Reconciling Ministries Network, member of UM Queer Clergy Caucus

Patricia Miller The Confessing Movement, Good News, IRD/UM Action, and the Wesleyan Covenant Association

Dr. Randall Miller Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, **and** Reconciling Ministries Network

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer Ohio West Episcopal Area

Bishop John K. Yambasu Sierra Leone Episcopal Area

Scripture & Themes for Worship

Jan 5	John 1:1-18	Who is this Jesus: The Word
Jan 12	Matthew 3:13-17	Who is this Jesus: The Beloved Son
Jan 19	John 1:29-42	Who is this Jesus: The Lamb
Jan 26	1 Corinthians 1:10-18	



Who is Jesus? This was a question asked by those who heard Jesus preach and witnessed the miracles of Jesus. This is a question asked by those who have never had an encounter with Jesus and by those who are close to him. Who is this Jesus— a nice guy? Savior of the world? A good example for us to follow? ***How do you answer the question?***

Thank You

Tim and I would like to thank the churches for the generous gifts at Christmas time. We appreciate all the cards, food, monetary gifts, gift cards for pizza, and your kind words...but most of all we appreciate you! We truly believe God has blessed us by leading us here to serve God and these communities with you.

Thank you for sharing the light and love of Jesus Christ!

-Pastor Jess

Human Relations Day Special Offering January 19

Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. -Romans 12:10

On Jan 19, across the United Methodist connection, we come together to help bridge the gap between church and community. We do this by participating in an offering set aside for Human Relations Day. For more than half a century, United Methodists have observed this churchwide special Sunday in recognition of the message Jesus demonstrated during his life: every one of God's children is important.

This offering supports neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services and works with at-risk youth through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program. Such ministries give us the opportunity to walk in the margins and continue the work of Jesus.

What does Protocol about separation mean for the local church?

As of right now, the protocol is just a proposal. It, along with a number of other proposals, will go before General Conference in May.

If this proposal is passed as is— it seems that the Wesleyan Covenant Association (or Traditional Methodists) will split away from The United Methodist Church. The post-separation UMC will retain the boards and agencies. Restructuring will likely need to take place.

Annual Conferences who wish to join the WCA or start a new Methodist denomination can vote to do so. If the Annual Conference would like to remain with the post-separation UMC it does not need to hold a vote.

If the local church agrees with the conference's decision (to stay or leave) then they do not have to hold a vote. If the local church does not agree with the annual conference it can hold a special church conference and vote to either be part of the WCA, UMC, or newly formed Methodist denomination.

If you have more questions regarding this proposal please visit the following website:

www.unitedmethodistbishops.org

There is a Frequently Asked Questions & Answers Page

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Box 697
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The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Mark Your Calendar

Jan 1 Happy New Year!
Jan 2 St. Paul's Admin Council at 7 pm
Jan 5 SPRC meeting at New Hope UMC at 6 p.m.
Jan 9 New Hope UMC at 7 pm
Jan 16 Pastor Jess is at a meeting in Chariton
Jan 29 *Human Relations Day (special offering)*

Pastor Jess is on renewal leave from Jan 20-Feb 16.

Coming Up

Feb 2 Rev. Moody Colorado will be preaching and presiding over Holy Communion at both churches
Feb 9 Scouting Ministries Sunday
Feb 26 Ash Wednesday at St. Paul's UMC
Lent Begins

Planning Ahead

Mar 6 World Day of Prayer Service at St. Paul's UMC
Mar 22 UMCOR Sunday (special offering)
Apr 5 Palm Sunday (beginning of Holy Week)
Apr 9 Holy Thursday at New Hope UMC
Apr 10 Good Friday at St. Paul's UMC
Apr 12 Easter Sunday!
Sunrise Service at New Hope UMC

Pastor Jess Office Hours

Tuesdays at New Hope
10 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Wednesdays at St. Paul's
9 a.m.– 4 p.m.
Thursdays at New Hope
Noon– 5 p.m.
Fridays at St. Paul's
9 a.m.– 1 p.m.
Saturdays at St. Paul's
10 a.m.– 2 p.m.
(3rd Saturday of the
month Pastor Jess is at
New Hope

Contact Information

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*The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love.
And just as you do not analyze the words of someone who love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did...
Then ponder this Word long in your heart
until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you.
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer*