



**ASBURY UMC**

Loving, Growing, Reaching

201 S. Main St. Greeneville, TN 37743

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[www.asburylife.org](http://www.asburylife.org)

April 22, 2024

**RE: Preparing Our Hearts & Minds For General Conference 2024**

**Psalm 46:10 | Be still and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations; I am exalted in the earth."**

Dear Church Family,

On April 23, 2024, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church will come together for 'Holy Conferencing' for the first time since our last General Conference; a special called session in 2019. That feels like such a long time ago. It was supposed to deal with matters of human sexuality and many issues that surround that topic to set a course for the future. But then Covid hit and so many other things happened!

Now, the church once again turns to the process of 'Holy Conferencing' to prepare for the future and what it might hold. **What is Holy Conferencing?** Ultimately, it is the process for how we care for one another; a process of holy discernment. Jesus taught the disciples that "where two or more are gathered in my name, I will be there also."

When the General Conference gathers this week, 862 delegates from around the globe will come together in Charlotte, NC to consider important church business including some 1,099 petitions that have been raised. These include ongoing consideration of the issues relating to human sexuality. Work will begin in smaller groups, called legislative committees, to evaluate each petition and to discern which should be raised for consideration by the full General Conference body. After the legislative committees have completed their work, the conference will come together for worship and to observe the sabbath on Sunday with a day of rest.

I like to remind people that we are a global denomination. This is an important consideration which should ground us in our relationships with one another and God. John Wesley began using holy conferencing in small group settings. But the principles of listening to understand rather than listening to merely respond, loving one another, and listening for God during the conversation, have become a part of our Methodist DNA. Wesley referred to holy conferencing as a means of grace; meaning that this is not only a way to reach understanding but also a way to draw near to God.

Throughout this General Conference, I encourage you to evaluate information about the conference, especially that shared by secular media reports and social media, with caution and a healthy dose of skepticism. Such reports tend to lack a complete understanding of the nuances of ecclesiological matters and often sensationalize the news for commercial gain. As the general conference progresses, we will share important updates with you and at its conclusion we will provide you with an update concerning the decisions that are made and how our church might be impacted in the future.

If you would like to keep up with the work of General Conference, you can follow along using these links:

Rev. Jerry Jones, Senior Pastor | Susan Bowers, Office Administrator | Natasha DeBord, Director of Student Ministries |  
Susan Kilday, Director of Children's Ministries | Cindy Sams, Director of Traditional Music Ministries  
Abby Whitaker, Director of Contemporary Music | Chassidy Inscore, Director of Asbury Child Enrichment Center  
Carolyn Gregg, Organist | Keith Cornwell, Building Supervisor



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<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/general-conference-2020>

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-conference-2020-advance-daily-christian-advocate>

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/guide-to-prayer-for-the-united-methodist-general-conference>

Bishop Christian Alsted (Nordic-Baltic Episcopal Area) cites that the early American version of Holy Conferencing was for “polity, unity and revival.” It is my great hope and prayer that we may again join in the unity of the body and enjoy a revival of the Spirit coming out of this season of Holy Conferencing. Please join me in praying for our delegates as they give themselves to this time, April 23- May 3. May the Holy Spirit guide their thoughts and actions, and may God give them the words of unity and peace. But most of all, may God’s will be done! Our chapel will be open for personal prayer daily throughout the General Conference. We invite you to prayerfully participate in this time, and we encourage you to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Blessings,

Rev. Jerry Jones

Senior Pastor, Asbury UMC