

Mio United Methodist Church
1101 W. 8th St. Mio, MI 48647
989-826-5598

Pastor Brenda Klacking
989-826-5521
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Church News

Due to the COVID-19 Church Services have been suspended until further notice. We aren't sure when we will have general access to the building, but the mail is being checked often. We have a new church website "www.miomethodist.org" and email address miomethodist@gmail.com. If you are willing to get future newsletters or correspondence by email please send us your email address. Until the COVID-19 distancing is lifted please send tithings to the church at 1101 W 8th St; Mio, MI 48647.

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS...

The last few weeks of hearing about coronavirus and not much else has been an eye-opening experience and it has affected so many people and businesses and churches. The most recent for the United Methodist Church has been the postponement of the General Conference that was to meet on May 5-15th in Minneapolis. The General Conference resembles the U.S. Congress and is the decision-making part of the Church. The Minneapolis Conference Center has cancelled all reservations through May 10th thus postponing the General Conference times. There were to be 862 delegates, 66 bishops and others from 4 continents in attendance. Due to the travel restrictions and health reasons, there needs to be a lot done to reschedule as 43% of the delegates come from Africa, Europe and the Philippines. So we can see the logistics nightmare this will become as hundreds of visas are involved as well as reserving hotel rooms, rescheduling flights and a new venue for more than 1,000 people. The bottom line is it will take a long time to reschedule even after the coronavirus scare is past. Consequently, no voting will take place on the church split for several months probably.

In the meantime, fear is running rampant in the lives of people around the world. I read an interesting quote recently: "Faith doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Faith means you don't let fear stop you." It was written by author Craig Groeschel who used 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT) – "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" as he wrote a devotion about a time when his wife was very ill and he wasn't sure if she was going to live and at night his thoughts snowballed out of control. He writes: *Then it hit me. The things that kept me awake were the things I wasn't trusting God to handle. I was holding on to them, trying to find a way to gain control over them, to solve all my problems. Thankfully, by the grace of God, Amy gradually improved back to full strength, but her challenges exposed one of my worst weaknesses. Fear had consumed me.*

Our fears matter...Your greatest fear may point you to your best chance at making a difference in the world. You need God for every moment of every day. Everything you do of value is born out of His heart. His power. His grace. To please God, to serve Him, to honor Him, to live for Him, you cannot be driven by fear. You must be led by faith...The pathway to your greatest potential is often straight through your greatest fear. Faith will propel you forward. In fact, what God wants for you might be on the other side of what you fear the most. As God reveals your fears, He will also build your faith. You need Him. You need His presence. You need His power. You need His Spirit guiding you. You need His Word strengthening you. Faith doesn't mean you don't get afraid. Faith means you don't let fear stop you.

Even though our church doors are closed for a few weeks, this is the time when we can realize that we, the church, go on because the church is not the building. We can encourage and support one another. We can reach out by phone and Facebook and other ways (even that old-fashioned letter writing). Perhaps most importantly we cannot let fear stop our faith. God seems to be wanting to get our attention throughout the world; may we heed what God is telling us and surround ourselves with fearless faith as we walk together on this journey called life.

*Blessings,
Pastor Brenda*

What postponement of General Conference means?

Rev. Tom Anderson, Chairman, Michigan Chapter, Wesleyan Covenant Association

What a difference a day makes! The Commission on General Conference has officially postponed the 2020GC until 2021 due to the Corona Virus restrictions on travel and gatherings. As our calendars empty from cancellations our heads fill with uncertainty about how and when life will move again. But some things can be said with confidence:

1. There will be a reschedule of the General Conference. Ideas about holding an electronic General Conference are recognized by all as being unworkable--given language differences and internet accessibility issues. It is possible the General Conference could be scheduled for May of 2021 but we just don't know anything. The WCA is advocating for a shortened General Conference of 4-5 days focused on the protocol and essential legislative items only. The Commission on the General Conference is the authority on this matter.

2. The Protocol for Separation is gaining strength and the odds of its adoption are going up. All the major progressive, traditionalist and centrist groups have endorsed it. There is wide-spread agreement that the UMC must separate. Several Annual Conference delegations have endorsed it. The African Initiative group has endorsed it. There is no organized opposition to it. The protocol will most likely pass but the time line will need to be reset based on whenever the General Conference occurs.

3. The Africans are poised to migrate to the new Methodist denomination. WCA leaders recently returned from African where we met with bishops and leaders from all African Conferences. The Africans endorse the protocol. They will attempt to make some changes including rights to the name and logo and a 57% voting threshold for their Annual Conferences. Yet even if these changes fail, the Africans will support the Protocol. There are differences between some African Bishops and their conference delegations but overall the Africans want to be a part of the new traditionalist Methodist denomination and it is highly likely they will.

4. The Traditionalist coalition is growing. By now you've read the joint agreement between traditionalist bishops, the WCA and other leaders. There is broad agreement on the draft Book of Doctrines and Discipline. There are differences over the timing and formation of the convening conference. A transitional council is forming that will operate from the doctrinal statement of the WCA while utilizing the polity of the current United Methodist Book of Discipline to administer the church until the convening General Conference. This council will include retired United Methodist Bishops, Africans, Koreans and a diversity of clergy, laity, women and men.

5. The legal structure is in place to offer a blanket 501c3 tax exempt status to all churches that join.

The path to separation is becoming clearer and more certain by the day. That being said, Covid-19 has gotten in the way and we will all need to be patient yet some more. I would not recommend that churches act impulsively to pursue disaffiliation under the current Discipline. It's complicated, time-consuming and potentially very costly to your congregation. The protocol offers a much cleaner path. Wait for it, its coming--like the rain cloud spotted by Elijah that broke three years drought in Israel. A cleansing, refreshing rain is coming.

Many laity and local churches are still ignorant of the magnitude of the issues facing the denomination. Some are only now beginning to become aware of the situation. Many congregations are unaware of the WCA or the emerging shape of the new Methodist denomination. Progressive clergy have not been friendly to the idea of exposing their churches to this information. We will need to politely approach them or work around them if necessary. Every lay United Methodist deserves a fair hearing from Traditionalist leaders of the advantages of the new Methodist denomination. God has given us more time to continue to reach out and build our network here in Michigan