

Weaving the Future: Connectional Conversations

Bishop David Alan Bard

September 24, October 2, November 20, December 7, 2017

Our Time Together

Welcome

- Purpose: At the 2016 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, delegates approved a proposal from the Council of Bishops to form a commission to explore how the church might live with grace with one another in light of significant differences on LGBTQ inclusion. In November 2016, the Council of Bishops asked each resident bishop to organize conversation in their area parallel to the work of the Commission on a Way Forward. I invite Michigan United Methodists to gather with hearts and minds open to each other and to God's Spirit as together we discuss our differences and also our hopes and dreams for The United Methodist Church. It is my expectation that as followers of Jesus we will gather to listen deeply to each other and take from these Weaving the Future conversations not only a more profound understanding of both shared values and differences, but also a renewed commitment to compassionate, intelligent and courageous conversation even when topics are difficult.

Devotion

- Philippians 2:4-11, 4:4-9
- Prayer: Come Holy Spirit. In this season of discernment and deliberation enlarge our hearts, enliven our minds, make gentle and generous our spirits. For the work of the Commission on a Way Forward, hear our prayer. For The United Methodist Church, hear our prayer. For the world you love extravagantly in Jesus Christ, hear our prayer. O God, make us instruments of your peace, of your joy, of your love. Come Holy Spirit.
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Guidelines

Video

Conversation

- What values do you hear expressed in the “conservative/biblically orthodox” position?
- What values do you hear expressed in the “liberal/biblically progressive” position?
- Where do you hear similar values?
- Where do you see possibilities for unity, for moving into the future together?
- Summation

On-going Work

- Whose voices have we not heard?
- How can you have such conversations in your own congregations or contexts? What are the roadblocks? What tools might you need?
 - Small group conversations – what resources would be helpful?
 - Would it be helpful for your Church Council and/or SPRC to discuss inclusion and unity? What might be needed?
 - Would there be helpful ways for pastors to preach on unity and inclusion issues?
- Resources
 - Tonight’s guidelines can serve as a resource
 - For Further Reading has a number of resources
 - Tonight’s video will be on-line
- Continuing dialog as time permits

The Lord’s Prayer