

Can we talk: Continuing the Conversation

Friends,

There is redemptive value, as well as rewarding possibilities when we are willing to talk to each other. Conversations can lead to healthier communities and deeper Christian relationships when we seek to graciously listen, understand, and respond to one another. When we talk we are not simply sharing words and ideas but commit to listening with an enduring and encouraging heart.

Often we hear the phrase in the form of this question, “can we talk?” I am reminded that honest and open conversations can happen anywhere while sitting, walking, standing, or even, riding a bus to a Chicago Cubs game, as I was this past May with other bishops. We shared hopeful conversations, hard questions, and used this opportunity to learn from one another.

Recently, we as a Conference announced the need and created the opportunity for conversations within each district in Indiana around [A Way Forward](#). These conversations are an opportunity for each of us to come to the table, not to establish or maintain sides, but to offer ourselves with hearts of authenticity and transparency. These times together, face to face, give us a chance to pray, speak, listen, and discern.

We could, of course, choose to not engage in these conversations but I fear that failing to do so would hinder us from these three simple rules, established by John Wesley; Do No Harm, Do Good; and Stay in Love with God. Through our talking, we will bear much fruit. It is a holy and bold discipleship that will require personal risk and missional vulnerability for which we have a perfect example in our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus often engaged in critical conversation, sitting down face to face, asking hard questions and wrestling with the realities of the very world He came to save. His actions are not just an example but instead a calling to each of His followers.

I long to live a life worthy of that calling. I hunger for crucial conversations that can free us from our fear of the other, the unknown, and the uncharted waters of tomorrow.

With tomorrow in mind, we must also be present today. We are at a critical moment in our history as The United Methodist Church. We have acknowledged and witnessed that we are not of one mind in regards to human sexuality. We also recognize that LGBTQ persons are members of our families, churches and have been serving among us for many years. In our current state, The United Methodist Church prohibits clergy from officiating same-gender weddings and the ordination of openly practicing self-avowed persons as pastors. The upcoming Special Called General Conference may result in changes to our polity and discipline as we seek to provide a Way Forward.

As we prepare to come together with this goal in mind, three proposals have been presented around the Commission on a Way Forward’s work. Our Indiana delegation, along with delegations from four continents around the world, will gather in February 2019 to pray, worship and vote. While the [three plans provided by the Commission on a Way Forward](#) are our primary focus, please remember that other officially submitted petitions will be presented

for consideration during the called Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church in 2019. The ability to consider other petitions also means that what becomes adopted in St. Louis may differ from the three plans currently provided.

In this pivotal time we may ask ourselves, “Where do we find and experience our unity?” or “How are we to live together?” or “Are we to agree, come together, collaborate over proposed plans?”

I look forward to our upcoming conversation in the **Northwest District on November 11th.**

Lastly, I invite you to join me in prayer. May we seek the throne of God and place our thoughts, worries, fears, and joys before our Creator remembering our delegation, all those who will gather in St. Louis, and our Church as we discern God’s will for us. We will join together with United Methodists around the world from 2:23-2:26 p.m. each day from now until we gather on **February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.**

Be encouraged, be prayerful, and be in conversation.

Julius C. Trimble
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