

April 2018 Caller



Pastor Ken's Column

This month I want to offer an update on the work of the Commission on the Way Forward, which you may remember is a group formed by the Council of Bishops at the request of General Conference 2016. Their charge is to offer proposals for how the denomination can faithfully move forward on LGBTQ inclusion and unity within the church.

The commission has met several times and by all reports have formed a strong working relationship with each other. Originally, three proposals were created and shared with the Bishops (this information is copied from a news release from Rev. Maidstone Mulenga, Communications Director of the Council of Bishops):

- ◆ **Proposal 1** retains the current language and position of the church regarding human sexuality, with a more restrictive call for accountability to the *Discipline*.
- ◆ **Proposal 2** gives churches the room they need to maximize the presence of United Methodist witness in as many places in the world as possible. The One Church Model provides a generous unity that gives conferences, churches, and pastors the flexibility to uniquely reach their missional context in relation to human sexuality without changing the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church.

- ◆ **Proposal 3** is grounded in a unified core that includes shared doctrine and services and one Council of Bishops, while also creating different branches that have clearly defined values such as accountability, contextualization and justice. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country, based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry (i.e. progressive, contextual, traditional branches). Annual conferences would decide which connectional conference to affiliate with; only local churches who choose a branch other than the one chosen by their annual conference would vote.

At their meeting a few weeks ago, the Council of Bishops asked the Commission to continue refining proposals 2 & 3, for presentation back to the Council later this month. The bishops will then determine which proposal to offer for adoption at a Special General Conference called for February 2019. It is likely a caucus group within the church will re-present Proposal 1 at that time, too.

Many of us having been following the progress of these discussions and we each form an opinion about which is the faithful route. As the three proposals were shared with the public, I was

dismayed that an option for retaining our current stance was included as a viable proposal, while an option for full-inclusion was not presented. Full inclusion, to me, is the only just and loving alternative, and that stance, along with those of us who hold and live it, were seemingly being dismissed as superfluous to the denomination. I am also enough of a pragmatist to know that full inclusion is not a viable way to achieve unity; but, neither is maintaining our current stance, or there would be no need for the commission!

I am pleased that the Council of Bishops recommended continued work on proposals two and three, as they both offer a possibility of uniting in our service for Christ, allowing for inclusion, while maintaining our theological diversity. There are positive and negative aspects of each proposal. Proposal 2 is the best compromise of the options, as it allows conferences, congregations and individual pastors to determine how to be in ministry within our context. In many ways, this proposal codifies the current reality in the U.S. church. The primary difficulty with this option, in my mind, is have the justice of hospitality and inclusivity contextualized, rather than a firm value of our denomination. Proposal 3, with several branches of the denomination operating under one administrative structure, is a de facto schism. While it would maintain many of the General Boards and Agencies, and keep the clergy/employee benefits secure, it would construct theological walls where none should be. I honestly do not want to be part of a branch of churches which only thinks and believes as I do; the diversity of thought and theology is energizing. The words of Paul come to mind, "Has Christ been divided (1 Cor. 2:13a)?"

While the details are not final, I thought it important to share with you the progress of the commission. As a Reconciling Congregation, we have already taken a stand for full inclusion in the denomination. Please continue to pray for our congregation and the denomination as we seek the Spirit's continued leading into God's future.

April Worship Opportunities

April 1, 2018 – Easter Sunday

Scripture: John 20:1-18

Sermon: "I Have Seen the Lord!"

Theme: Experiencing the risen Christ in the first century and today
A Celebration of Holy Communion

April 8, 2018 – Holy Humor Sunday

Scripture: John 20:19-31

Sermon: A Suesian Easter...

Theme: God's humorous call on our lives.

April 15, 2018 – Second Sunday of Easter

Scripture: Acts 9:1-19a

Sermon: "Transformed by God's Light"

Theme: God calls and transforms our lives for service in Christ's name.

April 22, 2018 Third Sunday of Easter

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

Sermon: Messages from Leah Abadyn-Dandin and Aranza Gasca

Theme: Youth Sunday

Notes: One bi-lingual service at 10:30 a.m. (No 9 a.m. or Noon worship services)

April 29, 2018 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

Scripture: Acts 16:16-34

Sermon: "Disturbing the City"

Theme: Faithful ministry and witness calls us to disrupt the norms of society.

Our Church Family

Thank You, Thank You

I wanted to thank you on behalf of Dave and myself for all you have done for us during what has ended up being a very challenging time in our lives. When I did not feel well in August, never did I dream that what lingered on would turn out to be a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. I was so fortunate that it was caught early and that I was a candidate for surgery, as well as to live in an area where expert surgeons were available. However, it was a very tough surgery with a very lengthy recovery, not to mention that there have been a few complications along the way. Our family, church family, and friends have been there for Dave and I every step of the way. I appreciated communion before my surgery so much. It filled me with peace and calm. After my surgery, for thirty days you provided dinner. Cards come every day which give me hope and remind me that God is walking with me through this journey. And of course, the unceasing prayers are so important to me. I am finally beginning to get stronger and gain weight. I need that as I begin treatment to eradicate other cancer cells remaining. I know that you will continue to pray for Dave and I, and it means so much to us. Dave's job is as difficult as mine. It is very hard to be a full time caregiver. He has given up so much to constantly be there for me. We try to focus everyday on a bright spot in our future. We miss all of you, but please know that Hughes, and the faith that it provides is deeply embedded in our hearts.

Gail & Dave Hooker

Financial Snapshot

February income: \$40,831	Year to date income: \$88,556
February expenses: \$53,298	Year to date expenses: \$108,924

Kindly e-mail your Caller articles to Marty Weaver, Editor at caller@hughesumc.org or place them in the Caller drawer outside of the Church Office by the 15th of each month.

Please visit the Hughes Website at www.hughesumc.org