



The United Methodist Church
GREAT PLAINS AREA

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SCOTT J. JONES
Resident Bishop

To: The Great Plains Conference

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The General Conference of 2016 has now adjourned. Many wonderful things happened in Portland, and our church can return to its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world with clarity and inspiration for our doctrine, discipline and mission. We have re-committed to our unity in Christ. As a church, we are more than the issues which divide us (<http://www.wearemore.faith> and <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/wearemore>). It is time once again to focus our energy on evangelism, worship, discipling, mission and social justice. The Council of Bishops letter summarizing General Conference can be found at <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/council-of-bishops-follows-tradition-with-letter-to-the-church-4862861>.

Some of you are wondering about the complaint against Rev. Cynthia Meyer and what will happen in light of the General Conference's action on May 18. The statement from the Council of Bishops which was adopted by the General Conference has been posted on our conference website at <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/bishop-ough-shares-council-of-bishops-proposal-for-unity-4801667>. Please read it carefully and study it closely. It has many important sections about prayer, continuing conversation, and the unity we have in Christ. At the same time, there have been social media statements which are based on misunderstandings of the document. The following key points will help you understand what it does and does not say:

- We are committed to the unity of the United Methodist Church and will seek to strengthen it.
- We will lead the church in every part of the world in times of worship, study, discernment, confession and prayer for God's guidance.
- We are called to work and pray for more Christ-like unity with each other rather than separation from one another.
- We have heard that some believe there is "contradictory, unnecessarily hurtful, and inadequate language concerning human sexuality in the Book of Discipline." However, no agreement about the truth or falsity of this claim has been reached either by the Council of Bishops or by the General Conference.
- The Council of Bishops will form a Commission to study all of the paragraphs in our *Book of Discipline* regarding human sexuality. The subject has been referred to the Commission, and it will be named sometime between now and November 2.
- The Council of Bishops may choose to call a special session of the General Conference before 2020 to deal with recommendations of the Commission. No decision has been made about whether this is a wise use of the Church's money and time.



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- The Council of Bishops will have conversation about how the church can best live in grace with one another, including discussion about ways to avoid further complaints, trials and harm.
- The Bishops will uphold the discipline of the Church while these conversations continue.
- All provisions of the *Book of Discipline, 2012* on matters of human sexuality will remain in force until a General Conference changes them.

Regarding the complaint process and possibility of a trial for Rev. Cynthia Meyer, the work of the Committee on Investigation will continue as before because the General Conference made no changes regarding human sexuality to the *Book of Discipline*. At every stage of the process there is the possibility of a resolution. Please pray for Rev. Meyer, the parties to the process, and our Great Plains Conference as we go through this difficult time together.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott J. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "S".

Scott J. Jones