



October 2017

More than one person has observed that adversity brings out the best in us and frequently produces a sense of community that was unanticipated. Plenty has occurred in recent weeks to put this observation to the test. The United Methodist Church continues to intercede for our neighbors experiencing natural disasters, as we navigate troubled waters as a denomination.

As people of faith, we are confident that our prayers make a difference. Prayer brings our will into alignment with God's purposes. Prayer opens our eyes that we might see that which might otherwise be overlooked. Prayer summons resources we did not know existed. Prayer initiates the transformation of circumstances that seemed hopeless. Prayer is not our last option. Prayer is our preeminent priority. So, our prayers must abound. Whatever else is going on in our lives, we will not forget the needs of those who have encountered adversity in recent weeks.

Within the last month, our thoughts in the United States turned first to interceding for those impacted by Hurricane Harvey and its devastation. While continuing to respond to that disaster, Hurricane Irma barreled through the Caribbean and through Florida, Georgia and neighboring states. Our churches have responded with incredible generosity, sending financial contributions to the United Methodist Committee on Relief ("UMCOR") and other disaster relief agencies, assembling flood buckets and sending Early Response Teams into stricken communities. Long after others have moved on to fresh crises, Christ-followers will continue to make a difference in communities that will take years to return to a new normal. No one could respond to the enormous needs presented alone, but working together a difference is being made.

Our vision is limited, so we must be reminded of countless other natural disasters that are being experienced in parts of the world, that are not featured in our daily news. From an earthquake in Mexico, to flooding in Pakistan, to flooding in India, Nepal and Bangladesh, the impact of these disasters is not lessened simply because they are miles from where we live.

Even as we are mindful of the significant needs around us, our prayers are also with the members of the United Methodist Commission on a Way Forward who met for the fifth time in Berlin, Germany from September 18 to 20. The Commission's deliberations have

not been open to the public and little of significance has been disclosed about any proposals which will emerge from the Commission, but the Commission is at a critical juncture in their deliberations. The Commission will deliver a preliminary report to the Council of Bishops when they meet in November, with a final report to be made by the spring meeting of the Council of Bishops.

Join me in praying for the Council of Bishops – that the Holy Spirit will direct their actions, that the authority of Scripture and the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be affirmed, and that their decisions will create a way forward that honors the deeply held beliefs and conscience of all the people of the church, allowing us to bless one another and go forward in peace and good will. We are confident that God is at work in this even as God has been at work in the difficulties we have faced because of recent natural disasters.

In the midst of all of this, the people of The United Methodist Church are confident in the future because we know who holds the future securely in His grasp – the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, I ask you to do three things. First, I urge you to take time in this season to join me in fervent prayer to the One who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20).

Second, I urge you to join me for the simulcast of the Wesleyan Covenant Association's global gathering in Houston Texas on October 14. Hundreds of spirit filled United Methodists will gather at The Woodlands United Methodist Church to worship together and hear some amazing Wesleyan theologians and pastors. The event will be simulcast to dozens of locations across the country. One location is right here in Wisconsin, at Asbury UMC in Madison. I will be attending and would like to take a van load of folks with me. Check out the wesleyancovenant.org website for registration information and let me know if you want to share a ride.

Lastly, I urge you to join me in praying for the members of our Ministry Study Task Force, which had their first meeting on September 17. They were prayed over and commissioned in worship that Sunday; now they begin their work of gathering information and data to look at the future of our churches. The question they are striving to answer is "how is God calling us to make a difference in our community?" The members of the task force are: Russ and Barb Shannon, Dave Turk, Jerry and Donna Bower, Paul Mc Manaway, Victor Vlasak, Kathy Richardson, John Storer, Dave Foley, Beata Elliott, Rick Jones, Pam Peterson-Kintz, Gretchen Kanable, Rev. Don Greer (coordinator of circuit ministry for the conference). We are also very happy that Ron Fruit has accepted our invitation to be a part of our task force. Their next meeting will be on December 3rd. God bless you and yours this month and always.

Your brother in Christ,
Rev. G. Wiley Gladney