



## FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

June 2017

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

To say that this past month has been pivotal in the life of the United Methodist Church would be an understatement. On April 28, the Judicial Council (the “Supreme Court” of the denomination) ruled that the Western Jurisdictional Conference’s consecration of Bishop Oliveto, a married lesbian, was contrary to church law. At the same time, however, Bishop Oliveto remains in good standing and retains her office while complaints against her are processed and reviewed according to our *Book of Discipline*. That process will take several months I am sure.

The bottom line of the Judicial Council decision is that it is a mixed bag, and it indicates the deep divide in the United Methodist Church over issues of biblical authority and human sexuality. That divide is so deep that at General Conference in 2016 the Council of Bishops created the “Commission on a Way Forward” as a way of bridging the divide or, failing that, presenting a plan of separation for the denomination. That Commission will present its proposal for debate and voting at a special called General Conference in February of 2019. I anticipate that will be the defining moment for the future of the United Methodist Church.

As with the Bishop’s election last summer, there are some who are happy and some who are angry with the Judicial Council decision. I am grateful for those of you who have expressed their commitment to remain with the UMC regardless of events at the denominational level. I also hear and appreciate the concerns of those who think it might be time to leave the denomination behind or send a message through withholding their giving. I understand the temptation to want to react quickly and decisively to events as they unfold. However, I would like to present another alternative to which I think God calls us, and that is patience.

It’s interesting to me that all of this is happening as we are preparing for the season of Pentecost, which begins June 4<sup>th</sup>. The Book of Acts reveals that when Jesus commissioned his disciples right before his ascension, the first thing he told them to do was to “wait”—to wait for the Holy Spirit and power from on high (Acts 1:4). We are generally not good at waiting (I know I am not!) but Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon the gathered disciples at Pentecost only after they had engaged in a period of waiting, watching, and prayer. When the Spirit came, a new church was born.

I believe that we are on the cusp of a new Methodist movement that will be created and sent by the Spirit. If we act too quickly by charging off in a particular direction or giving in to anger and frustration, we may miss the greater future the Spirit has in store for us. Two years from now the United Methodist Church will likely

look very different than it does today, and we can be part of shaping that new future as it unfolds. In the meantime, however, we have to wait on the Spirit and, like the disciples gathered at Pentecost, we need to remain “all together in one place” (Acts 2:1). I urge those of you who are concerned about denominational events to stay at the table, continue your faithful discipleship, and support your local church through your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. It may seem like a hard thing to do in contentious times like these, but Jesus never calls us to do the easy thing. The Enemy would like nothing more than to scatter us like sheep, but Jesus the Good Shepherd calls us to stay together and follow him.

Nothing has changed in the way we do things on a daily basis at Peace and Trinity churches. The day-to-day practice of ministry continues and the cause of Christ will be advanced through our churches regardless of denominational disputes. We will continue to uphold our church’s doctrine and *Discipline*, and we will continue to welcome all people and build them up as followers of Jesus Christ who love and serve God and neighbor.

There is a way forward and we will walk it together!

Peace,  
Rev. Wiley Gladney