



July 2018

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Today is my first day back in the office with Joan Wheeler. She was Peace Church's delegate to annual conference this year, so has spent the last several days in Madison attending worship services, presentations, and voting on legislation put before the conference. Annie Windstrup was the delegate for Trinity Church. I want to thank them for their dedication and service to the church these past few days. It is a big responsibility, so tell them thank you when you see them.

When I arrived in the office, Joan had to tell me all the things she enjoyed and the highlights. The conference opened with a worship service where Bishop Modesto Mamani Achata, Bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, delivered an inspirational opening sermon. He spoke about the depersonalization he has seen in society, and the need to strive to have "real encounters" with other people and with God. He based his sermon on Genesis 32:30 when Jacob said, "I saw God face to face, and my soul was saved."

On Saturday Bishop Hee-Soo Jung gave his state of the church address. He talked about the recent plans put forth by our Council of Bishops and our Commission on the Way Forward. None of the plans call for a church split. The plan recommended by the majority of the Council of Bishops is the One Church Plan, which would remove all the restrictive language from the Book of Discipline regarding homosexuality and allow a "broad and inclusive approach to ministry" in every Conference around the globe. "Our elected delegation to the Special Session of the General Conference have committed to meeting with every board, agency, caucus, council, and committee to hear from them," he said. The Bishop talked a lot about unity and the need for us to be "ONE in Christ" despite our disagreements over sexual ethics.

In response to the Bishop's address, I would like to share these words from Rev. Carolyn Moore, pastor of Mosaic UMC in Evans, GA and vice chairman of the Wesleyan Covenant Association board of directors. They appeared on her website www.theartofholiness.com. Rev. Moore says, "Let's talk health ... not just survival. Being unequivocal about our beliefs and values is simply good relational work. We must all decide in these days where our boundaries are; to have none is simply not Methodist. Nor is it healthy. This is the fundamental problem with the "one church" proposal. It may support survival, but... it isn't healthy. I contend it isn't even Methodist. My friends in Christ, sound theology is worth the fight. Setting clear values and making a firm statement about what they are does not mean giving up; it means we care."

I was unable to attend annual conference this year as I was attending a retreat as part of my class on Call and Vocation. It is an online class I have been taking from Northeastern Seminary of Roberts Wesleyan College. The retreat was held at a Roman Catholic retreat center on the shore of Canandaigua Lake, one of the finger lakes of North West New York state. It was a good experience and I had the opportunity to get to know some other great people who are pastors and chaplains. One is a pastor of the Free Methodist Church in Canada and serves a church in Regina, Saskatchewan. He flew out to NY...I wish I had!

Until next time, have a wonderful summer and God bless you.

Rev. Wiley Gladney