

[BDG] Friends,

Happy New Year! I hope you were able to spend meaningful time with family and friends and take a moment to spiritually and physically refresh. 2019 promises to be a year filled with many emotions and opportunities to be a witness to Christ. Personally I started the new year in Atlanta preaching with Rev. John Russell at the 2019 Festival of Young Preachers. It was a blessing to be back with colleagues in ministry and meet talented clergy from all over the country. We have a tremendous opportunity in our communities to be the church and to show God's love. Here at the conference office, a new year allows us to continue our focus on our priorities. Four areas of focus include the making of disciples, discovering our call to ministry, excellence in preaching and adaptive leadership in these uncertain times. If you would like to review those, visit www.awfumc.org/priorities. I would like you to hear from several of our staff and cabinet about several upcoming things.

[Ashley] We want to thank you for your continued support and prayers as we continue to work to help rebuild the Marianna, Panama City and Port St. Joe areas after Hurricane Michael. The biggest need besides monetary donations, is to send teams. Because this is a long-term recovery effort, we will need people to do various levels of work for years to come. We encourage all who are interested in this task to register through the portal. You can find that link on the home page of our conference Website. We are so thankful to the Rev. Shawn York for his work in directing the relief efforts for the conference and we are excited to announce that the Rev. Chris Ackerman will be the director for the long term of Hurricane Michael recovery. We are also excited to announce that Tammy Tisher will serve as the assistant director of this effort. Information will be coming soon as we introduce the entire team for our recovery efforts. The United Methodist denomination has shown overwhelming support to this cause through incredibly generous financial donations. United Methodist Committee on Relief was in our area in December and will be back in January to help train people from our conference.

[Suzanne] As Ashley said, I express my sincere appreciation for your generous financial support for the Hurricane Michael recovery efforts and to our conference. The financial need to help those along the coast is just as real as it was in October. We continue to help United Methodist churches impacted by the storm in various ways. It is so important, now more than ever in this new year, to continue your connectional commitment in 2019. Eighty percent of every annual conference missional giving dollar stays within the annual conference. None of us can predict what will happen at the special called session of General Conference in February but what I do know is that the Alabama-West Florida Conference will continue to minister to thousands in the midst of uncertainty. Regardless of your expectations of this called session, I hope you will strongly consider helping our ministry efforts of this annual conference. Please help us sustain our focus on ministry by making your 2019 conference missional giving a priority. Together, we can make a significant impact in Alabama, West Florida and beyond.

[Celeste] Speaking of General Conference, ten delegates will travel to St. Louis, Missouri, in late February to represent the Alabama-West Florida Conference. The special called session of General Conference will focus on the topic of human sexuality and how it relates to our denomination. As Suzanne stated, it is impossible to know the outcome of this session. Bishop Graves has planned three dedicated times and a clergy meeting in early March to debrief the results of this conference. Here is the schedule of meetings. More details can be found on the individual dates on our event page on the conference Website.

[on screen]

[Thursday, March 7, 2019, at Montgomery FUMC](#)

[Saturday, March 9, 2019, at Covenant UMC in Dothan, AL](#)

[Sunday, March 10 2019, at Christ UMC in Mobile, AL](#)

Clergy gathering on Monday, March 11, 2019, at Christ UMC in Mobile, AL

[Sarah] While you have your calendars out, make sure you have June 2-5 marked for the 2019 session of annual conference. Our theme will be, "This We Proclaim" based on 1 John 1:1. The event will be held at Frazer Memorial UMC with the ordination and commissioning service at Montgomery FUMC. Many more details will be announced in the coming weeks. We look forward to seeing you there!

[Jeff] As you start this new year in your local churches, don't forget that the conference has several committee training videos available to assist you. The videos available are staff parish relations training, local church trustees, finance committee and safe sanctuaries training. All may be found on the conference Website under Local Church Resources at www.awfumc.org/resources. These trainings will allow your new committee members and current committee members to be on the same page. We hope these resources will enable you and your local church to start the new year off right.

[Bishop] As you can see, 2019 is filled with hope and many opportunities to focus on our mission of making disciples. I look forward to our Kingdom work together.

[June] Happy New Year!

[Doug] I give thanks for your ministry

[MC] Happy New Year (sign language)

[John] Peace be with you

[Debora] May your spirit and soul be renewed

[Darren] God speed, friends

[Beverly] And thank you for your leadership!

[Sara] Make it a great one!

[Susan] Love one another

[Martha] Feliz año nuevo

[Allen] Remember God is making all things new.

[Alan] We are praying for each of you

[Bill] Dream big!

Tim] May God continue to bless each of us

[Bishop] And the best is yet to come!