

Friends,

The 2019 special-called session of general conference has adjourned. As predicted, it was a grueling week of legislative and plenary work. This was a gathering that we have been anticipating since May of 2016. By now, you might have heard that several legislative petitions were passed.

First, let me take a moment to thank our ten delegates who tirelessly worked on behalf of the Alabama-West Florida Conference. Steve Furr, Pat Luna, Beverly Maddox, Clara Ester, Dawn Hare, Larry Bryars, Jeremy Pridgeon, Robin Wilson, John Brooks and June Jernigan faithfully served us and responded to numerous correspondence from concerned members of our conference. I want to also thank the many clergy and friends from Alabama-West Florida who made the long journey to be here in support of our delegation and staff. Just seeing their hopeful faces each day was life giving to us all. Another bright spot at this conference occurred last Friday evening. Our very own director of communications, Mary Catherine Phillips, was presented the Communicator of the Year award by her UMAC colleagues at their annual gala. I was honored to help present her with this well-deserved award, and we are all incredibly proud of her and the work she does. The work is often challenging, and she handles it all with grace and expertise every day. If you have the opportunity, please join me in congratulating her.

In the legislative committee, several petitions passed, including the Traditional Plan. The One Church Plan did not pass. The Traditional Plan was passed in the plenary session but yesterday, several components of the Traditional Plan were ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council. The plan, as a whole, will be referred to Judicial Council again for review. Any components of The Traditional Plan deemed constitutional by The Judicial Council will take effect in January of 2020. We are, therefore, still under the guidance of the *2016 Book of Discipline*.

For each person pleased with these decisions, there is someone deeply hurt. I encourage you to attend church this Sunday and worship with one another. Many of our churches will be serving Holy Communion and sharing the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Wherever you may find your spirit after general conference, I hope you will worship with your brothers and sisters in Christ, for we are one Body in Christ.

As we have previously communicated, there are several opportunities next week for us to discuss the outcomes and implications from this general conference but more importantly, come together as God's people. At these gatherings, you will hear more from our delegation and I will further share about how, together, we can walk forward in this journey.

Our communities need our United Methodist Churches and your witness. Was this week hard? Yes. Was it too hard? No. I am deeply grateful to be your Bishop and I still know that the best is yet to come.