

Family Conversations

Arkansas United Methodists have historically approached our lives and common ministry much like a family. When a family experiences a challenge, they are faced with the choice of coming together or going their separate ways. The 2019 Special General Conference has had a significant impact on all of us, and our church family needs time to gather, to listen, and to heal. Bishop Mueller and the Cabinet invite you to join them in hosting ongoing conversations to strengthen the Body of Christ, create hearts of peace, increase care for all people, and encourage intentional daily prayer for one another.

The scripture passage that has been on the hearts of the members of the Cabinet and the Bishop as we have journeyed together has been 1 Colossians 3:12-15 (NRSV):

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

We encourage pastors and lay leaders to schedule and facilitate as many of these conversations as possible involving as many people as possible. Laity and pastors who come to the table are encouraged to embrace full transparency, vulnerability, and mutual respect. While this document is designed for local congregations, you are invited to adapt this to your ministry setting, team, or committee. In whatever context you are in, this is a time for listening to one another, and not speeches or sermons.

As you lead these sacred conversations in your own congregation, ministry team, class, committee, or small group, please use the following questions, allowing everyone to have a voice, and "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts":

- Why are you United Methodist?
- What do you think happened at General Conference?
- In light of the answers you shared and heard, if you were the pastor, how would you now lead this congregation?
- In light of the responses you shared and heard, how can you, as a part of the body of Jesus Christ, be in ministry with each other or help one another?

We are a family with a mission. As followers of Jesus, may we endeavor to remain focused on creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.