

† Pastor's Letter †

Dear Beloved in Christ

May 2024

2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church began last Tuesday and you can find everything about it (including the link to the livestreams) here:

<https://www.cnumc.org/eventdetail/18329897?month=4&year=2024&day=1&display=m>.

Dates: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 to Friday, May 3, 2024

Place: Charlotte, North Carolina

Here are some reports of the General Conference from 4/23-4/29:

- **Regionalization is approved:** United Methodist delegates have overwhelmingly endorsed a constitutional amendment of 'regionalization' (votes 586-164) on Thursday April 25, 2024. Four regions (U.S., Africa, Europe and the Philippines) will become regional conferences with the same authority to adapt the Book of Discipline, the denominational policy book, for more missional effectiveness. This will allow each region to decide all their policies, especially over the role of LGBTQ people in the church through given rule-making autonomy. This needs to be approved by two-third votes at all the Annual Conferences of U.S. by the end of June this year.
- **Revision of Social Principles is approved by the Legislative Session:** "The United Methodist Church now proclaims its support "for the equal rights, liberties, and protections of all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity" ... people should be treated with basic human dignity regardless of whether they are male, female, intersexual, transgender or nonbinary... All around the world, we're seeing people who are trans or nonbinary or who have a diversity in terms of their gender identity be persecuted, be discriminated against both legally and in practical terms," ... "This is a really crucial statement about the sacred worth of all people, and the honoring of basic civil and human rights for all people, including those of various gender identities." Now we are waiting all these Social Principles to be approved in the final week by the full General Conference plenary.

We are still praying that the following item is approved in this week:

- **Removal of Exclusionary Policies in the UM Book of Discipline** regarding the participation of gays and lesbians in UMC. It is very likely that we remove phrases like "the practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching" before the Conference ends on May 3rd.

In addition to affirming the basic human rights of all people, [the revised Social Principles](#) passed on April 27:

- Reject governmental use of threats, extortion, unlawful detentions, extrajudicial killings and other forms of coercion to silence political opponents.
- Speak out against slavery, torture, genocide and war crimes.
- Reaffirm the longtime opposition to the death penalty proclaimed by The United Methodist Church and its predecessors.
- Commit to fair and proportional sentencing and to the humane treatment of those who are imprisoned, while insisting on accountability.

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- Support civil disobedience in protest of “unjust or immoral laws.”
- Deplore war and all other forms of violent conflict and support people who follow the nonviolent example of Jesus.
- Also support people who choose military service as a result of personal conviction and urge “that they perform their duties in harmony with the tenets of the Christian faith and in accordance with the laws of the Geneva Conventions.”
- Affirm health care as a basic human right.
- Call on church and society to support and advocate for the well-being of all children and young people.
- Support the rights of Indigenous, native and aboriginal communities.
- Affirm the dignity, worth and rights of migrants, immigrants, and refugees, including displaced and stateless people: “We oppose all laws and policies that attempt to criminalize, dehumanize, or punish displaced individuals and families based on their status as migrants, immigrants, or refugees,” the revised Social Principle says.

May the General Conference be a testament to the resilience of our diverse and vibrant tapestry of faith! Lord, help us!

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)



Your Pastor, Hyesung Lee