

Delegation thanks Great Plains Conference for prayers, feedback

12/10/2018

Great Plains Conference delegates to the special session of General Conference, scheduled for Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, have drafted this letter to United Methodists in Kansas and Nebraska. The letter shares some thoughts based on feedback delegates have received during town hall meetings and in emails and letters sent to them since August.

Anyone who still wishes to send a note to the delegation may do so by sending an email to gcdelegates@greatplainsumc.org.



Beloved in Christ,

It's now less than three months until the special General Conference to be held in St. Louis, Missouri. Thank you for your prayers and your feedback as we engage in the hard work of discernment and decision-making on behalf of our church.

We are also thankful to Bishop Saenz and the conference staff, who held town hall meetings in each district over the last several months to present information about the proposals coming before the special General Conference. Members of the delegation were present at the town hall meetings so that we could hear concerns and questions from laity and clergy across our conference.

As of the date of this letter, we have also received more than 220 emails sent to gcdelegates@greatplainsumc.org expressing opinions on one or more proposals, sharing essays, stories, and biblical references to aid our discernment. We have also had many conversations, in person and on social media, to help us hear the wide variety of viewpoints in the Great Plains.

Not surprisingly, each plan submitted to the General Conference has vocal support within our annual conference as well as vocal opposition. Our delegation, too, has members with very different viewpoints, members who support different proposals, and members who are somewhere in-between. We continue to study and learn so that we can understand the consequences of each plan from the global to the local level. We want to advocate for the best way forward for our beloved church, a way that maximizes the United Methodist witness in as many places as possible around the world. It is likely that we will not come to total agreement as a delegation. But we are working together in Christian love and expect to do so through these anxious times. We hope that the laity and clergy of our conference will strive to do so as well.

We know going into the special General Conference, whatever the outcome, including the possibility that no proposal gets sufficient support to pass, persons will be heartbroken. Laity and clergy, many whom have given lifetimes of service to the UMC, are anxious about the future of their local churches and their denomination. We also know that, after General Conference, God will continue calling each of us to ministry, and the Holy Spirit will continue to lead. As the storm battered the boat containing Jesus and his followers, they called out, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus calmed the sea and asked his disciples, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Indeed, during this time in our church's history, it feels stormy. But we can be assured that Jesus is still guiding our journey and that God is not done with us.

Over the next couple of months, we ask you to pray for us and for all of the General Conference delegates. Feel free to continue contacting us to let us know your thoughts, concerns, and hopes about the future of our church.

If you are planning to attend the special General Conference in February, please let us know! Our conference reserve delegates will be seated together in the stands and will be glad to have you join them during this historic meeting.

Peace,

— Members of the Great Plains Delegation to General Conference