



*The Methodist Messenger*  
AUGUST 2018  
Whiteville United Methodist Church



Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.  
Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.  
Wednesday Communion Service - 6:30 p.m.

SUNDAY EVENING FILM SERIES

Whiteville United Methodist Church

The Parlor

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August 5/6:00 p.m.

"God's Not Dead 2" (2016)

A high-school teacher is criticized for answering a student's question about Jesus. The teacher refuses to apologize, endures the school board's suspension, and joins with a lawyer to defend herself.

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August 12/6:00 p.m.

"I Can Only Imagine" (2013, released 2018)

The backstory of MercyMe's famous contemporary Christian song of the same title. Bart Millard is mistreated by his father. The father is redeemed by Christ, and he reconciles with his son. Years pass, and then Bart writes this famous song based on his dad.

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August 19/6:00 p.m.

"Facing Giants" (2006)

A high-school coach faces personal problems, parents who want him replaced, and a football team that appears to be incapable of winning. In the end, he inspires his team to practice faith to overcome fear.

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August 26/6:00 p.m.

"Wonder" (2017)

This is the story of a child who is born with facial challenges but inspires kindness in others.

PASTOR'S PAGE

WHERE THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS

On the evening of July 15, a Sunday, at Salem United Methodist Church in Eastover, a conversation on The United Methodist Church -- and its Commission on a Way Forward, its Council of Bishops, and its 2019 General Conference -- took place. The conversation was led by our episcopal leader, Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, who was assisted by several who will be delegates to the special, called 2019 General Conference. It was attended by laity and clergy from our end of the North Carolina Conference. Mrs. Carolyn Hankins, Rev. Bob Hankins (now pastoring Hallsboro United Methodist Church), Mrs. Marsha Stallworth, and your scribe attended.

What follows is not a point-by-point account of what was said during the July 15 conversation. That would get too far down into The United Methodist Church's weeds -- and the bugs are too thick this time of year to do that! Likewise, what follows will not be a long, point-of-view article about what this pastor thinks. My personal reflections will be reserved for this article's concluding section.

Attempting to be objective and fair, this pastor will report (in broad, but careful, strokes) on important, recent developments in what might be called the unfolding Great Debate (and Great Drama!) in The United Methodist Church today. Hoping to inform Whiteville United Methodist Church about recent denominational events and their impact on the larger church, this pastor places this mostly journalist account in front of you.

**The Three Plans**

First, recall the three (3) plans. Sketches of the three (3) plans -- which are the three (3) ways forward for The United Methodist Church that have been proposed -- follow. Each will draw from language provided by Bishop Kenneth

Carter, Jr., who is the current president of the Council of Bishops and a moderator on the Commission on a Way Forward. Bishop Carter's thumbnail descriptions of the plans are taken from his May 9, 2018 article entitled "Seven Comments about the Council of Bishops' Recommendations on a Way Forward," which can be found online at [www.flumc.org/newsdetail/seven-comments-about-the-council-of-bishops-recommendations-on-a-way-forward-11359573](http://www.flumc.org/newsdetail/seven-comments-about-the-council-of-bishops-recommendations-on-a-way-forward-11359573).

The One Church Plan "removes the language [against homosexual practice from The Book of Discipline] and allows for adaptation." That is, it permits pastors to decide to perform same-sex weddings, local churches to decide to host same-sex ceremonies, and Annual Conferences to decide to ordain those in a same-sex marriage.

The Connectional Conference Plan "allows for three distinct bodies [progressive, centrist, and traditional] within a larger church, with different perspectives on human sexuality." Each of the three "bodies" (or branches) of the church would have its own teaching on, and discipline regarding, human sexuality. Each clergyperson, layperson, congregation, and Annual Conference would decide which branch to join.

The Traditional Plan "retains the present language [in The Book of Discipline] about human sexuality," increases accountability in upholding the church's discipline, and offers a "gracious exit" to those whose consciences would not permit them to remain in The United Methodist Church.

### **The Council of Bishops Rises**

On May 4, the Council of Bishops voted to approve a motion. That motion clearly indicated three things.

1. The Council of Bishops would report to the 2019 General Conference.
2. In its report, the Council of Bishops would recommend the One Church Plan to the 2019 General Conference.
3. In its report, the Council of Bishops would include all three plans -- the One Church Plan, the Connectional Conference Plan, and the Traditional Plan. The One Church Plan, the plan recommended by the bishops, would be featured and placed squarely before the 2019 General Conference. In contrast, the Connectional Conference Plan and the Traditional Plan would become part of the report's historical narrative.

### **Enter the Judicial Council**

The Council of Bishops not only made these decisions, but also had asked for the Judicial Council (which is The United Methodist Church's "Supreme Court") to rule on what petitions (or legislative bills) the 2019 General Conference could receive and consider.

On May 22, preparing to make this decision requested by the Council of Bishops, the Judicial

Council held an oral hearing. Bishop Bruce Ough, who claimed to be representing the Council of Bishops, spoke in favor of severely limiting the number of petitions to be considered by the 2019 General Conference. In opposition, Bishop Scott Jones, who forthrightly challenged Bishop Ough's claim to represent the bishops, advocated for a larger number of petitions.

### **The Judicial Council Rules**

On May 25, the Judicial Council handed down its ruling (Judicial Council Decision 1360). The Judicial Council decided, on the basis of church law and precedent, that General Conference 2019 would be open to more, not fewer, petitions. Also, the Judicial Council's decision contained a powerful footnote (number 6) that caused the Council of Bishops to hand over its reporting responsibility to the Commission on a Way Forward.

**So....**

This is where The United Methodist Church is.

1. The Council of Bishops did not write, and did not send, a report to the 2019 General Conference.
2. The Commission on a Way Forward has written, and has sent, a report to the 2019 General Conference. That lengthy report is now available online at [cdnfiles.umc.org/Website/Properties/who-we-are/judicial-council/judicial-council-dockets/docket-10-2018-12.pdf](http://cdnfiles.umc.org/Website/Properties/who-we-are/judicial-council/judicial-council-dockets/docket-10-2018-12.pdf).
3. The Commission's report does not highlight the One Church Plan, which was recommended by the Council of Bishops.
4. The Commission's report will send all three (3) plans -- the One Church Plan, the Connectional Conference Plan, and the Traditional Plan -- as packages of legislative petitions to the 2019 General Conference. All three plans will be equally placed before, and equally considered by, the 2019 General Conference. Again, the One Church Plan will not be privileged above the other two, as desired by the Council of Bishops. The Council's recommendation will probably be a part of the historical narrative of the Commission's report.
5. The Commission's report will soon be translated into the official languages of The United Methodist Church -- English, French, Portuguese, and KiSwahili -- and then sent to the 2019 General Conference delegates. This translation project should be completed by late July or early August.
6. The Commission's three (3) plans will be reviewed by the Judicial Council -- before the 2019 General Conference, perhaps in late October -- to make sure they pass church-constitutional muster. This is being done at the request of the Council of Bishops. It is done to lessen the risk of the disaster of General Conference 2019 adopting a plan only to have it later ruled unconstitutional by the Judicial Council.

## RECOLLECTIONS FROM A MEETING ON A WAY FORWARD

Bob and I attended the July 15 meeting on A Way Forward. Bishop Hope queried the group, and Christine Dodson recorded questions as asked. Clarification on the difference between the Council of Bishops making a recommendation/report and the Commission on A Way Forward making the report was requested by Paul Stallsworth. (The same information will be presented.)

Some specific recollections from the meeting will be noted before I share my own opinion. Most vivid is the alternate delegate who spoke early on in passionate support of the Traditional Plan, which would affirm current language in the Book of Discipline which bans “self-avowed and practicing” gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex unions. It would also enforce those bans swiftly and strictly. The gentleman, for me, did not reflect either Jesus’ love or respect for others, especially our Bishop as well as the total Council of Bishops. When he was through speaking, Bishop Hope commented that the NCC delegates to General Conference were a diverse group with varying opinions.

During the meeting, comments by attendees were clarified:

- \* Church trials against gay clergy each cost about \$50,000.
- \* At an earlier session in Sanford, a young adult questioned why we were even talking about this when there are so many needs in the world that we should address with our time, energy and funds.
- \* Scripture references have been previously reviewed; context of the time and situation must be understood. When we ask what Jesus says regarding homosexuality in the Gospels, the answer is ‘nothing.’
- \* Perception and reality do not match. Asked the percent of the population who are not heterosexual, many will answer 20%. Reality is about 4%.
- \* The gospel calls us to be disciples of Jesus our Lord, to show love to all. Showing **love for all** was the point Bishop Hope stressed.

And here are my opinion and musings:

- \* There have always been homosexual clergy in the church. The practice was to look at God’s call and the “gifts and graces” of the person to follow Jesus and lead a congregation.
- \* When the determining factor for ordination is on sexual orientation, rather than on God’s call for a person to respond as clergy in ministry, we set ourselves above God.
- \* We all can have tunnel vision on our position and become shrill in expressing our views. If we could each have (and be willing to take!) the opportunity to worship with and get to know an inclusive church family, we would be able to see Jesus in service to others and love for all neighbors.
- \* The Global Young People’s Convention 2018, a quadrennial gathering in July in Johannesburg, South

Africa, gave the delegates of young people and adult workers an opportunity to choose topics for small group discussion. In Legislative Session, delegates voted to share their opinions. One vote was on the three plans; the One Church plan led with over 60% of votes cast.

To obtain information on the 2019 General Conference and latest resources, use this link to the United Methodist Church website. Details on each of the three plans can be found in the article Court Docket Details Proposed Plans for UMC at [umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session](http://umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session).

We are encouraged to share our thoughts with NCC delegates to General Conference; the list of delegates and their email address is available at <https://nccumc.org/gc2016/delegation>

As this process of discernment continues, please be in prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide all of the leaders. A tremendous amount of work in study, prayer, meetings and getting to know each other has occurred. Listening skills have been enhanced and a better grasp of why someone else holds a particular view heard with respect. For all the leaders, this work has been added over and above existing commitments and schedules, family responsibilities and time of rest. They have my appreciation. – Carolyn Hankins

Lay Delegate to NCC Annual Conference

### AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Thomas McLam
5 <sup>th</sup>	Scott Deans Greyanna Ashley Ryan Power
6 <sup>th</sup>	Phil Stoll
12 <sup>th</sup>	Arron Barnhill
18 <sup>th</sup>	Nicolas Bell
19 <sup>th</sup>	John Duncan Peter Stallsworth
20 <sup>th</sup>	Brad Crowell
25 <sup>th</sup>	Layton Dowless
28 <sup>th</sup>	Marty Sellers
30 <sup>th</sup>	Rob Conway
31 <sup>st</sup>	Margie Rabin Olivia Jane Dowdy



Whiteville United  
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Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant  
July-August: Monday-Thursday/9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian  
Monday-Friday/7:30-11:00 a.m.

Ms. Tammie Anderson, Treasurer  
Friday/4:00-6:00 p.m. (or later)

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Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Pastor

Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church

As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.

The Whiteville United Methodist Church Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at [www.wtxy1540.com](http://www.wtxy1540.com): click on "Church Services" in the upper heading, and then click on "Click to Listen Live" next to "United Methodist Church of Whiteville" at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.