

**The Mission of Trinity United Methodist Church is to proclaim God's love by building community and living by the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.**



## The Tip of the General Conference Iceberg

*The best of all, God is with us. — John Wesley*

I don't know where to begin, but I know that I have to begin somewhere. As Maria sang in the Sound of Music, "Let's start at the beginning — a very good place to start."

When I was about 17 years old, Rev. Deborah Suddarth, the current senior pastor at Collierville UMC, told me, "You have a gift for seeing where things aren't right." Even then, I did not like the 'gift.' Somehow I knew that it would always feel like a thorn in my side — a problem that needed to be fixed — a consistent cycle of discontent, if I allowed it to be so.



From the floor of General Conference

For my time in the church, the 'gift' has felt like that, dependent on the season, the congregation, my place in life. Sometimes seeing and correcting has felt like working a jig-saw puzzle. Other times it has felt like climbing Mt. Everest. When it comes to the denomination, Mt. Everest feels more correct.

The United Methodist Church has been at an impasse for so long — long before my time — and I was in a state of hopelessness when it came to making adjustments that might make the church reflect the Kingdom of God for all of God's people. Can you imagine being a person with an incredible sense and belonging in the theology of resurrection hope and yet, feeling hopeless?

I worried a lot about my role in a church that, for me, was stuck in the 'not yet,' while longing for a Church that already was a safe-haven for the marginalized and the oppressed. I knew that my sense of belonging was in and for a place that, under the umbrella of United Methodism did not yet exist and that my doing, alone, would never build that Church.

When I was elected to the General Conference back in 2019, it was an opportunity I'd been longing for since the early days of my faith. It was a chance for my voice and vote to have an impact. But, since my time as a young person in the Church, I'd noticed that the General Conference body moved at the pace of a snail, and that in 20 years, it hadn't been able to accomplish much 'good.' In fact, in recent years, before COVID brought every sense of progress in any direction to screeching halt, the work of the General Conference, much like the work of the U.S. Supreme Court, seemed to move in retrograde, to values that are no longer reflective of the society and time in which we (Americans) live. So in 2024, the Church I've always known and loved, found itself at an impasse and something, one radical way or another, was going to have to give. The following is the briefest of summaries of where we are.

After two years of many centrist-to-conservative leaning churches disaffiliating from the denomination (to the tune of 25% of the entire church, globally), the make-up of the delegation to the

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General Conference was much more centrist-to-progressive. The outside conservative/traditional voices that had plagued the General Conferences of years past, present only to sway votes of the Central Conference (conferences outside of the U.S.) delegates in their favor, were not present or were not present enough to make a difference because they'd already left the denomination or were only still present to light small fires that, on their own, dissipated. The overwhelming voice of the conference, then, was both a progressive one and one of consensus with those who thought differently theologically OR simply wanted to coexist with different voices and a unified goal — to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Because of the above, the delegation present was able to pass regionalization — a structure plan that will allow the global church to be divided into regions that will be encouraged to contextualize their practices to fit the cultures and sometimes laws of the areas in which they exist. The churches in Africa — in places where one might be jailed, still, for being gay, can keep a traditional stance on gay marriage and ordination in the church, where churches in America might adopt a practice of ordaining openly LGBT+ persons called to ministry, and pastors may choose to marry a same-gendered couple in their church. Regionalization passed on a General Church level OVERWHELMINGLY, and now has to be ratified by a 2/3 aggregate vote of the voting members of Annual and Central conferences around the globe. The work is not finished, yet, but the door has been opened.

The General Conference also, OVERWHELMINGLY voted to remove all language from the Book of Discipline (our governing book of polity and doctrine) that bans the ordination and marriages (and marrying) of LGBT+ persons — language that has been in our Book of Discipline for over 50 years. We voted, as well, to allow pastors who'd been forced to surrender their credentials for being LGBT+ or marrying couples who are, to request their credentials to be reinstated — to begin to undo the harm the language in the BOD had caused for decades.

The General Conference also made space, in graciousness, for folks who've disaffiliated (clergy, whole churches, diaspora members) to come back. For some, disaffiliation isn't what was expected, and the UMC that once was home, still feels like home. Like the prodigal son, we have decisively declared, you are still and always will be welcome home.

The General Conference did not take baby steps. It took leaps and bounds and it did so with margins wider than the Grand Canyon. Where many delegates had hoped only to pass a few of these things, and would've been happy for 51% of the vote in favor, we sat in shock, watching the statistics be anywhere from 80% to 97% in favor. It is clear that the Church, worldwide, is ready to do no harm, to do good, and to stay in love with God — TOGETHER.

I went ready to cry, but did not expect the tears of joy I experienced. I expected to come home exhausted. The mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion from spending 2 weeks, doing nothing but this work, truly took a toll on my body. I came home ready to celebrate (and I am STILL ready to celebrate with you) but also recognizing that the work is really only beginning and some folks will need healing and assurance before a celebration. With every change the Church has ever gone through — a reformation of any sort — there have been growing pains, and there will be now, too. We have to, together, continue to find ways to love, encourage, and welcome outside the realm of our agreement. The General Conference showed me that. We may not agree on everything, but we can agree on love, and that IS our mission and commission. It always has been. We love our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we love our neighbor — all of them — as we do ourselves and as we have been loved.

There is much more to share. There are many questions to iron out and I'm sure you have more questions to ask than I can write here. I encourage you to find reputable United Methodist sources for answers. Propaganda exists in all facets of life. Choose those sources that bear the truth. As always, I am here to answer questions and, if I cannot, I commit to finding answers the best I may. Please reach out. Please abandon assumptions. Please pray together and for one another. There is good ahead if it is good we are seeking.

With much love from your very proud pastor,

*Rev. Sara*



## Love Each Other

The **FAITH WORD** for our new unit of study in the Children's Sunday School Class is **LOVE**, which our curriculum defines as "the closeness and affection that we feel with God and others." Our **BIBLE VERSE** is Jesus' words to his disciples in John 15:12: "This is my commandment: love each other as I have loved you." Throughout the month of April, we encouraged our Trinity Church family to participate with us in a "Giving

Contest" to support the church's two food pantries - the brand-new food pantry that's located in our former chapel and the Tiny Pantry that has existed for some time in our front yard. During Children's Time in worship this past Sunday, we shared the joyous news of the generous response from our congregation that has grown the balance of funds available for our food pantries to over \$850 and which also brought in donations of over 225 food items. This act of love on the part of our church family serves as a powerful witness to the children of our church, as well as to the greater community, as to how seriously this church takes this commandment. We are praying that our church family will faithfully continue to support this vital ministry.

Ms. Alyson used to sing a little song called "Love Grows" with the children in Sunday School. This is how it goes: "Love grows one by one, two by two, and four by four. Love grows 'round in a circle and comes back knocking at your front door." This simple children's song illustrates the beautiful dynamic of how love grows in our lives. When love is shared with others, then growth can occur exponentially. We are preparing to extend the invitation to our neighbors in the Evergreen Historic District to join us in supporting our two food pantries. We hope this wonderful project of love will continue to grow and thrive as more people become involved.

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Our children are learning about the early days of the Christian church in our Sunday School lessons. This week's story takes place after Paul's (Saul's) conversion to Christianity. Paul had been an enemy of Christianity and a persecutor of those who practiced the Christian faith. Then he had the miraculous experience of meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus. Through this amazing encounter, in which he was blinded and then healed, Paul became one of the church's most passionate evangelists. But he faced a major challenge when he first tried to meet the other disciples in Jerusalem. Of course, the disciples distrusted Paul and doubted his sincerity. Then Barnabus, that wonderful "encourager," brought Paul to the apostles and served as a witness to Paul's conversion story. Barnabus risked rejection and outright ostracism in standing up in love on behalf of his friend Paul. His efforts had a large impact on the new church and how rapidly its message of love spread. The story tells that following this, there was a time of peace for the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. During this time, the church grew in strength and reverence for the Lord. Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, the number of believers increased greatly.

In this week's story we see several acts of love. Paul showed love to God as he preached and shared the Good News. Barnabus showed love by speaking up on Paul's behalf. The community of believers showed love by accepting Paul. We want our children to know that love can look like different things in different circumstances. They may be called to love people in their lives in different ways at different times, but we pray that they will know that God's Spirit is there to guide them in each situation.

Peace and love,  
*Irene and Kathy*



Bill McConnell May 10  
 Mike Dodson May 27  
 Jenna McClurkan May 27  
 Josh McClurkan May 27  
 Chris Glover May 27

## You are invited.

Rev. Josh McClurkan, and the graduating class of Memphis Theological Seminary, invites you to attend the Commencement Service, Saturday, May 11th, 2024 at 10:00 in the morning at First Baptist Church Broad 2835 Broad Ave. Memphis, Tennessee 38112



TUMC CELEBRATES

**PRIDE**

**JUNE 1ST, 2024**  **11 A.M. - 5 P.M**

Robert Church Park, 4th and Beale

**BRING A CHAIR, BE OF GOOD CHEER,  
 COME CELEBRATE ALL GOD'S  
 CHILDREN.**

**Memphis Pridefest is right around the corner, and Trinity is registered to participate, as in years past. If you are interested in serving during Pridefest, we need people for all parts of the festival. Please reach out to Rev. Sara ASAP to volunteer.**

## MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

DONATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

IN MEMORY OF

ROSEMARY POTTER FROM  
 HARRY & NANCY BURCK

ROSEMARY POTTER FROM  
 IRENE DYCUS

CHARLOTTE COMES FROM  
 IRENE DYCUS

RON RAYBUCK FROM  
 IRENE DYCUS

NELDA GRAY FROM  
 IRENE DYCUS

ROSEMARY POTTER FROM  
 MEGAN MORRIS & EVERYBODY DANCE

IN HONOR OF

JIM SCHAEFER FROM  
 MARC & SUE TAYLOR

## Trinity Food Ministry News

Trinity's Food Pantry will again be distributing bags of food on the morning of May 27th, the fourth Monday of the month and on Wednesday evening, May 29th. The children's Sunday school class stepped up to support the pantry by initiating a giving contest and are now inviting the Evergreen Historic District Association to also participate.



When hungry people call the church looking for a Kroger card, we'll be telling them about various opportunities around the city for free meals, as well as free groceries. We've been supporting Binghampton UMM's Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry for years, and we are not trying to compete with them or any other local source of food for the hungry. Rather, in cooperation with BUMM and other area churches and ministries, we can help to alleviate the problem of hunger in our community and make sure no one goes to bed at night with an empty stomach.

### SUGGESTED ITEMS TO DONATE TO THE FOOD PANTRY

Granola bars  
Oatmeal packets  
Cereal  
Canned fruit  
Pasta  
Soup

Pasta sauce  
Peanut butter  
Canned vegetables  
Mac & cheese boxes  
Canned chicken  
Jelly

Spam  
Minute rice  
Canned tuna  
Snacks  
Gift certificates for grocery stores



TWKAC Delegation to General Conference



Prayer helps for delegates from the United Women in Faith



### Church Council Meeting

The Church Council will meet following worship on Sunday, May 19th. Lunch will be served, with Kay

Jordan providing chicken salad. Church Council members who normally submit written reports are asked to send them to Craig Jordan by May 17th.



### United Women in Faith

The United Women in Faith will meet Friday, May 24th for UWF business and a potluck luncheon.

Women of the church are cordially invited to join us at 12:00 noon for our meeting, which will include food, discussion, and fellowship.

## PRAYER CONCERNS

**Our country and the world** - for all those endangered by the war between Israel and Hamas and for families on both sides who have lost loved ones; for victims of natural disasters; for those families and communities who have fallen victim to the horror of gun violence in our country; for the people of Ukraine who are imperiled by the invasion of Russian troops, shelling of residential areas, and the terror being experienced by the civilian population; for all those in our country and around the world still impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and variants; for people of faith around the world who are experiencing persecution; for refugees seeking asylum from war and social unrest; for safe drinking water for those living in developing countries; for people around the world experiencing terrorist attacks; for the poor, homeless, and disenfranchised in our city; for immigrants who still struggle due to lost jobs and lack of resources; for persons of color who are speaking out against racial profiling and injustice and for families who have lost loved ones due to race related violence; for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris—pray for their wisdom and that of all political leaders; pray for civility during upcoming Presidential campaigns.

**The United Methodist Church** - for our Pastor, Rev. Sara Corum, her husband, Josh McClurkan, and their five children; for our Bishop, the Rev. Bill McAlilly; and for our interim District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. David Weatherly;

**Trinity UMC** - for members of the congregation homebound due to chronic illness or age; for new visitors joining us as we worship in person and online; for all families who are grieving; for our congregation as we deal with transitions; and wisdom for our Trustees and Church Council. Also, specific prayer requests by and for:

**Pat Plotkin**, friend of Melba Abraham, died April 30th. Melba's cousin **Lydia Melton**, cancer in new site

**Arthur Lee Graffreid**, Clara Farabee's brother, passed away recently

Joan Smith's cousin, **Douglas Robbins**, aggressive cancer, and his wife **Ash**

**Kaelyn Wright**, wife and mother of two young children, has aggressive thyroid cancer. (Friend of Joan Smith).

Amelia Strickland's mom, **Rosemary Batorski**, has been sick for over a month; weak, but some improvement

Chris Glover's sister **Carol** is in hospice care at home and heavily medicated.

**Mike Baloga**, encephalitis, at home with nursing care, and wife **Juli** (neighbors of Joe & Katy Spake)

**Olivia Dunn**, 29 year old with uterine cancer (Katy Spake's request)

**Gene Archer**, diagnosed with stomach cancer; **Lauren Crews**, diagnosed with ALS - both the Millers' friends

**Gwen Dodson**, bladder cancer, COPD, and osteoporosis; IV cancer treatment ongoing every 3 weeks

**Maggi Comes'** niece, **Katie Pendleton**, diagnosed with Tumefactive MS

**Kanyon Glover** has had issues with his heart & continues physical therapy.

**Jacob Foreman**, chronic back pain and nerve damage in left leg

**David Harrison**, Carol Miller's brother, on dialysis; paralyzed on one side after stroke; asthma; COPD; has moved to a nursing home; torn ligaments in shoulder; upbeat despite recent hospitalization.

**Don Culpepper**, Carol Miller's brother-in-law, has cancer in five locations; receiving radiation therapy.

**Val Coates**, much better; pulmonary specialist prescribing new medications

**Eddie Ramsey**, in hospice care at home; **Sally**, macular degeneration

**Seth Genes**, weight now up to 100 pounds due to receiving nourishment through his feeding tube; spent two days in hospital after a fever developed; received three rounds each of blood and platelets & white blood cells now reproducing

Pray for **Jonathan Goff**.

**Lyle Klein**, family member of Amelia Strickland, diagnosed with Parkinson's, cancer, and heart disease

For **Living Word Christian Church**; for **The Lab School**; for all our Scouts and leaders of **Pack 13, Troop 13G, and Troop 13B**; and for those in the **NA** groups who meet at Trinity

*(Please contact the church office if you have additional prayer concerns, need a concern removed, or need to make a change or correction.)*