

Pulse



*Confessing Jesus Christ as
Son, Savior and Lord!*

Commission On

A Way Forward - Update

By Patricia Miller, Executive Director

I think the first meeting of the bishops' Commission On A Way Forward went very well. The 3 bishop moderators had given great thought to the agenda, resources and process.

When I arrived there were several members of the Commission that I knew well. Some I had met but did not know well and others I had never met. During the 4 days we met all together and also in small groups. Through this process we were able to get to know everyone and to develop a good spirit of comradery. When we left we had talked about a number of issues associated with A Way Forward and each of us has an assignment to develop and bring back to the whole Commission at the end of February. The Commission released an official statement which can be found at:

<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward>

I am privileged to have the opportunity to be part of the Commission and I continue to be optimistic about the outcome. Please know I will remain faithful to the doctrine of The Unit-

Commission On A Way Forward The next meeting of the Commission will be February 27–March 2.

The Judicial Council of the UMC will meet April 25-28, 2017. The agenda includes several items related to acts of disobedience regarding the church's position on the practice of homosexuality as well as the election and consecration of Bishop Karen Oliveto of the Mountain Sky Area. Please be in

In 1517 Martin Luther penned his "95 Theses" and nailed them to the Wittenberg Castle church door. Thesis number 62 simply stated *"The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God."* 500 years later, as discord intensifies within The United Methodist Church, we must acknowledge that it is not for us to elevate our denomination above the gospel but to seek to reach the lost with a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ! The words of pastor and author Paul C. McGlasson remind us that even in the turmoil we are now experiencing as a church, *"The same God who Reformed the church by his word and Spirit then, reforms the church even now, even this very day."*

February 2017

Bishop James Swanson: Connection Discernment of 2 Churches



In a statement to the
Mississippi Conference,

Bishop James Swanson announced the desire of two churches, Orchard UMC and Getwell Road UMC, to leave the denomination. He states that *"The rationale given for this discernment is that within both congregations, there is a deep concern that any legislative or judicial solution to the denomination's current impasse on human sexuality will sow seeds of deeper division within our church. They see this division as something that continues and will continue to damage the witness of The United Methodist Church..."*

Although Bishop Swanson is hopeful that a way can be found for these two churches to remain in the connection, their pastors and congregations say they have been in their own "period of discernment" for more than 4 months.

Other sources have reported that additional UM Churches in the Mississippi Annual Conference may make similar decisions later this year. Their decisions will depend on the Judicial Council's rulings on matters of human sexuality and the church, particularly in the case of Bishop Oliveto, a self-avowed practicing lesbian in a same-sex marriage.

Renewal Leaders Meet For Prayer: Leaders from several renewal groups will be meeting at the end of March for a day of prayer. Our purpose will not be to strategize or create new alliances. We will come together simply to strengthen friendships, nourish unity, and learn what we're all doing. We want to ensure we are working in a spirit of mutual blessing and fervent intercession. The day will focus on deeply earnest prayer for the renewal of the church, the advance of the Gospel, and the transformation of society through all the various streams of our work.

2 Churches Vote to Leave The United Methodist Church



The Orchard in Tupelo, MS averages about 2,700 in weekly worship attendance. They are committed to growing deep and branching out by introducing people to Christ, growing in Christ and sharing Christ. According to Lead Pastor, Rev. Bryan Collier, the congregation believes the intensifying debate over the church's position on homosexuality is distracting from that ministry. On Sunday, February 5, 2017 1,025 parishioners voted in favor of withdrawal from the UMC, 2 against and 4 abstentions. They have entered into a time of discernment during which church leadership will work with the denomination to determine the terms of their withdrawal.

Similarly, Getwell Road UMC in Southaven, TN is also in the discernment process following a vote of 782 for separation from the denomination, 19 against, and 7 unsure. In a statement on their website, Senior Pastor Rev. Bill Beavers wants to make it clear that *"this decision to peacefully withdraw from the denomination was initiated for reasons that go beyond the more publicized debates that have occurred within the church. Getwell Road's primary desire is to follow God's command to reach out to all who need to know the love and transforming power of Jesus in their lives. We will do this as we continue to stand on the authority of Scripture."*



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