



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
(Jeremiah 29:11)

Dear Laity and Clergy of the Susquehanna Annual Conference,

Grace to you in the name of Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of Our Brokenness, and Hope of the World!

I am writing this pastoral letter to our people of the Susquehanna Conference regarding the groundbreaking announcement that was made on Friday, January 3, 2020.

Earlier today, the Mediation Team representing the Council of Bishops and representatives from diverse United Methodist advocacy groups released a document entitled, “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation”. This document represents a historic agreement on a negotiated plan for a denominational way forward beyond the current impasse over human sexuality. It presents the over-arching concept of what reconciliation and grace through separation would look like. It will allow each part of the church to remain true to its theological understanding, while recognizing the dignity, equality, integrity and respect of every person. The entire work can be found by going to <http://bit.ly/protocoldoc>. As you follow the link to the protocol, you will also see the names of persons who all agreed to support and work for the passage of this way forward. The signers of this protocol represent diverse groups with different theological perspectives throughout our church.

This is not a finished document. It is a road map for General Conference to consider among a number of others. You will not find all the specifics of the plan outlined. The specifics are currently being developed so that the total plan can be presented to the delegates of the 2020 General Conference.

As people of faith and hope, it is not easy to acknowledge that we need to consider separation. This way forward has an element of sadness. However, beyond the sadness, this possibility can move United Methodists beyond the hurt and continual harming of each other over human sexuality to a new season where our church can fully focus on the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

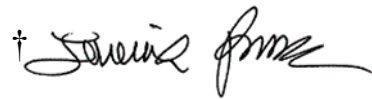
The people and congregations of the Susquehanna Conference have demonstrated remarkable faithfulness and have remained steadfast during this time of uncertainty. I give thanks to God for each of you.

As we look to the future of our church, let's continue to stay committed to the Susquehanna Conference's mission to:

Grow spiritual transformational leaders, equip vital congregations and create new places for new people, and connect with each other and the world so that alive in Christ together, the Susquehanna Conference will embody the beloved community of disciple making congregations.

I would ask that beginning this Sunday and continuing through General Conference in May, a time in every worship service be set aside to be in prayer for the United Methodist Church, for the delegates to General Conference and for God's spirit to work in and through our beloved church. Trusting that God has plans to give us hope and a future, our prayers for our beloved church are to be intensified for such a time as this.

With You in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah Park", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Jeremiah Park