



The Alaska United Methodist Conference
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Bishop: Rev. Elaine J. W. Stanovsky
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November 23, 2021

TO: Lay and Clergy Members of the charge conferences of the following local churches:
Ketchikan First UMC Seward Memorial UMC Christ First UMC
Homer UMC Douglas Community UMC North Star UMC
St. John UMC Willow UMC Soldotna UMC

FROM: Rev. Carlo A. Rapanut, Conference Superintendent

RE: Special Shared Charge Conference

Grace and peace to you on this week of giving thanks!

Call to Special Joint Charge Conference

I hereby call a special joint session of the charge conferences of the local churches listed above according to the provisions of ¶246.7 and 246.10 of the 2016 UMC Book of Discipline. This special shared session is being called in consultation with, and the consent of the pastors of the aforementioned local churches.

Where and When?

The special joint session will be held virtually via Zoom on Saturday, December 4, 2021 at 4:00 pm Alaska Time. Anticipated adjournment is no later than 5:00 pm. The Zoom meeting information will be shared later.

Why?

The purpose of this special joint session shall be limited to receiving information relative to the Boy Scouts of America bankruptcy case and to vote on the following motion: *We the _____ United Methodist Church (approve) (disapprove) the BSA plan of reorganization and give authority for the chair of the board of trustees to execute the plan ballot document.*

While this is special joint session, the votes will be recorded separately by local church.

Context

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for bankruptcy after numerous suits were filed for sexual abuse. As part of the bankruptcy process, United Methodist local churches across the country had the opportunity to file a proof of claim. Your church was one of them. Filing a proof of claim indicated, among other things, that the local church had a right to be indemnified/protected by BSA as well as BSA insurance policy coverage for any claim filed against the local church by a scout survivor. Your congregation was in the past and/or is presently a charter organization and could have a lawsuit filed by an abuse survivor against your local church. *Your local church filed a proof of claim and now has the opportunity to vote on the bankruptcy plan.*

All United Methodist local churches that filed a proof of claim must prepare now to record their vote. That is why I am calling for this special joint charge conference session. Local churches' votes must be received by December 14, 2021. This vote is critical to ensure United Methodist local churches are protected from future lawsuits filed concerning an individual claiming they were abused while in a scouting program associated with the local church.

Our Mission: Held and supported by the transforming relationship with God through Christ, we of the Alaska United Methodist Conference seek to be a community that creates a home for all peoples, finds our hope through grace and journeys together into God's preferred future.

Who?

¶246.2 of the 2016 UMC Book of Discipline lists the membership of the charge conference. In a well-announced meeting, those who are present will constitute the quorum.

How to prepare?

An informational webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, November 30 at 5:00 pm Alaska Time (invites will go out later from the Greater Northwest Area). I recommend that at least your pastor and Trustees chair attend this webinar. Here, information will be shared about the case and a recommendation on how to vote. As of this writing, mediation is still ongoing and our denominational lawyers are working on a framework that will assist survivors in their healing and will be a fair and just settlement for our congregations.

A Pastoral Note

As we go about these technical and institutional steps, I hope that we do not lose sight of our greater task as Christian disciples: to care for those who have been harmed and recommit ourselves to John Wesley's second simple rule of "doing no harm." May we continue to pray for the victims and survivors of abuse. May we recommit ourselves to protecting the vulnerable among us. May we abide by and take seriously the policies we have put in place to ensure the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults. And may we continue to work hard so that all our ministry spaces, physical and virtual, are truly safe sanctuaries for all.

Thank you for your attention to this matter on such short notice and during this busy season.

With deep gratitude,



Rev. Carlo A. Rapanut