

Subject: A Message from Bishop Tracy S. Malone
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**The United Methodist Church
Ohio East Area**

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Tracy S. Malone
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March 8, 2022

A Message from Bishop Tracy S. Malone

Dear Laity and Clergy of the East Ohio Conference,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The United Methodist Commission on the General Conference has announced that the 2020 General Conference is further postponed until May of 2024. The Commission on the General Conference provided the reasons for its decision to postpone the conference in its press release statement. It was noted that they will look to the Judicial Council for clarity regarding the processes for the General Conference in preparation for 2024. The Commission members made a difficult decision and I honor the work that they did.

There are various entities within The United Methodist Church that are working collaboratively on how best to provide leadership and to steward the mission, ministry, and witness of The United Methodist Church in light of the postponement. One of these entities is the Council of Bishops.

The Council of Bishops met today, and we addressed the implications of the postponement and we have identified and clarified some pathways forward; however, additional work needs to be done. We're looking at provisions that already exist in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016* related to jurisdictions, assignment of bishops, disaffiliation, and separation. We are working together to provide leadership to help sustain the worldwide witness and mission of The United Methodist Church.

Where do we go from here?

Beloved, we breathe, and we don't fret. We pray and fully rely on the Sovereignty of God, knowing that God holds us, our beloved United Methodist Church, and our future in God's hands ... trusting that God will make a way forward. I encourage us to keep our minds and efforts focused on our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and not being preoccupied with processes and postponements. We do this because what is not postponed or delayed is our calling to share the love and the Good News of Jesus Christ, our compassion for those who are hurting and grieving, our listening and responding to the needs of the poor and the marginalized, and our work for peace, hope and reconciliation. This is our ongoing work and witness!

Let me reassure you that there are no decisions or actions that need to be made or taken now ... not for pastors, congregations, or faith communities. Over the next few weeks and months, I will be working with my Cabinet and the Conference Board of Trustees to explore the Disciplinary options related to matters of separation. And I will continue to be in conversation with lay and clergy across the Conference to listen and to provide guidance and encouragement.

Let me restate what I have said on many occasions: no one is being forced out of The United Methodist Church. There is plenty good room for a generous unity in our beautifully, diverse church. It is my hope that none of you will choose to leave The United Methodist Church.

As your bishop, I will continue to shepherd and guide us through these uncertain times and humbly ask that you commit to trusting where the Spirit of God will take us.

I will continue to lead in ways that will enable as many lay and clergy who feel called to remain in The United Methodist Church to continue our shared mission and work of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

I, again, remind you of the words from the Apostle Paul: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4: 1 NRSV).

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Tracy S. Malone
Resident Bishop, East Ohio Conference

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EAST OHIO CONFERENCE VISION

The East Ohio Conference equips and supports pastors, congregations, and faith communities to grow in their capacity to bear fruit that lasts by:

- being disciples, making disciples, and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ;
- being God's agents of transformation in our communities and throughout the world; and
- being bold and courageous leaders in reaching new people, younger people, and a more diverse people.