



# Western North Carolina Conference

The United Methodist Church

## **A Pastoral Word on the Crisis in Afghanistan** from Bishop Paul L. Leeland

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*Follow Jesus, Make Disciples, Transform The World*

The immediate humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan calls for compassionate efforts to assist the 15,000 Americans needing assistance and removal, as well as the thousands of Afghanistan civilians fleeing in fear. With an awareness of inevitable migration, an all too familiar result of war, our prayers for safety and peace must be accompanied with actions for resettlements and immediate evacuations.

Our Christian community is always sensitive to recognize where the church of Jesus Christ intersects with the world. We continue to work in ways that allow all in authority to be shaped by Godly values and therefore we pray that the truth of the Gospel will transform every earthly sovereignty, authority, and power, especially at this moment in Afghanistan. We also pray by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit that our government leaders and those in Afghanistan will sincerely pursue justice, truth, and peace.

Our hearts are breaking at the sight of thousands seeking desperately to escape this catastrophe. This urgent crisis makes it difficult to respond in real time knowing the most humanitarian measures will take time. The prophet Isaiah told us of the age of God's Spirit when we will see the transformation of all creation when he said, "Then justice will reside in wild lands, and righteousness will abide in farmlands. The fruit of righteousness will be peace, and the outcome of righteousness, calm and security forever. Then my people will live in a peaceful dwelling, in secure homes, in carefree resting places" (Is 32:16-18). While we pray for the fulfillment of God's Kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven, we urge the entire church and all local congregations to continue and expand efforts to bring about peace and justice as we pray for cooperative and multilateral action between people and

governments of all countries” (Book of Resolutions: The United Methodist Church and Peace).

May each of us, followers of Jesus, be motivated in our speech and behavior by reminding ourselves “For Jesus Christ is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14). This is where the Gospel intersects with the world. In addition to our immediate and fervent prayers, this may mean opening our hearts, minds, and doors to accept incoming refugees; extending the spiritual gift of hospitality; and encouraging all as John Wesley reminded us that to live the Gospel life means to “do no harm, to do all the good we can, and to love God.” May our speech and actions reflect the revelation of God in Jesus Christ especially in this immediate crisis.