



UNITED METHODIST CHURCH AFRICA INITIATIVE

UMC CENTRAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA

AFRICA INITIATIVE

A CALL TO FASTING AND PRAYER FOR THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL AND THE GLOBAL UMC

21st April 2017

Dearly beloved,

On behalf of our global church, we wish to invite you, your local church, district, annual and provisional annual conference to join ranks with us in a season of fasting and prayer for the Judicial Council and the Council of Bishops' Special Commission on the Way Forward as they make critical decisions that will impact the future direction of our Church. Your prayers will make a difference.

From 24th to 28th April, the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church will convene for its regular meeting in New Jersey, USA. The Judicial Council is the Supreme Court of our denomination comprising of nine members from Africa, Asia, Europe and the USA. It is clothed with the responsibility, consistent with our Book of Discipline, to adjudicate cases of the church and come up with final rulings. One of the major issues to be addressed during this session of its meeting is to hand down rulings on a petition from the South Central Jurisdictional Conference which has asked the Judicial Council to rule on questions related to the election, consecration and assignment of a bishop who is in a same-sex marriage.

For the first time in the history of our Church, the Western Jurisdictional Conference, in July, 2016 elected a lesbian as bishop, Rev. Karen Oliveto, who is married to a deaconess. Since her election she has been serving as the bishop of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference. This action of the Western Jurisdiction has caused many disagreements among United Methodists in the USA and globally, and it has created a sense of uncertainty about the future unity of our denomination. The Judicial Council is expected to make a decision on the matter.

Meanwhile, the Council of Bishops who will meet from 30th April to 5th May have set up a 32 member Commission to review every paragraph in the Book of Discipline on the subject of human sexuality in order to determine a way forward. That Commission is at work doing its utmost best to bring recommendations for consideration of the General Church during its meeting in 2019.

Based upon these concerns, and the times of uncertainty in which we find ourselves as a global church, we believe it is time to unite our hearts and minds in prayer to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for His timely intervention in sustaining His Church. Indeed the UMC is at a crossroads (Jeremiah 6:16), and it is only the Lord that can lead us into the "paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Psalm 23:3b).

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The Lord promises, *“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their Land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14). Also, in Jeremiah 33:3, the Lord challenged his people to *“call upon me in the times of trouble, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you do not know”*.

Based upon these scriptural promises, and our confidence in God’s intervention, the United Methodist Africa Initiative invites all local churches, districts, annual and provisional annual conferences of the Central Conferences of Africa in particular, and the global UMC in general, to a season of fasting and prayer, from Monday to Friday, 24th to 28th April, 2017.

At a minimum, we encourage everyone observing the fast to begin at 12:00 mid-night to 12:00 noon daily, while individual and corporate prayer sessions may be held throughout the day at your convenience. The purpose of this season of fasting and prayer is to intercede on behalf of the Judicial Council and the Commission on the Way Forward as they seek divine wisdom and scriptural guidance in their decision making process to the glory of God, and in the best interest of the global church.

We want to thank you in advance for your kind commitment to “stand in the gap” (Ezekiel 22:30) on behalf of our church. “If my people...pray...I will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

For His Glory,



Rev. Dr. Jerry P. Kulah, Central Conference Coordinator, UMC Africa Initiative



Rev. Evariste K. Kimba, Coordinator, French & Kiswahili Region, UMC Africa Initiative