

RESPONSE TO THE RELEASE OF THE PROPOSED PROTOCOL FOR SEPARATION

January 6, 2020

Dear Chapin UMC Family,

The United Methodist Church was a trending topic in the news this past Friday when a press release was issued through the United Methodist Council of Bishops website. The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, CNN, Christianity Today Magazine, along with other national and local media outlets, reported on a proposed plan of separation of the UMC. I am writing in hopes of offering some context that will prayerfully bring some clarity to what was a somewhat confusing weekend for some throughout the UMC.

What was actually released and who authored it? *“The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation”* is the most recent of several proposals to separate the UMC that have been put together for the upcoming General Conference of the UMC (to take place May 5-15 in Minneapolis, Minnesota). The proposal released on January 3 is significant in that it was comprised by a very diverse group of leaders within Methodism. Those from the right (traditionalists), those from the middle (centrists), and those from the left (progressives) were all included and met together for many hours over the past 5 months to put the document together [\[click here to read the proposal\]](#). It is also significant to note that it is a **proposal**. Keep in mind that nothing has been decided; nothing has been voted on; the only group that can make decisions for the UMC is the General Conference, which, as stated above, does not meet until this coming May. However, various headlines associated with its release have certainly raised the interest levels of many. Here are two examples: *“Methodists Agree to Split Denomination”* (CT Magazine); *“United Methodist Church to Split Over Gay Marriage, LGBTQ Clergy Rights”* (WLTX.com). If someone is not familiar with the workings of the UMC, it would be very easy to jump to erroneous conclusions based on these and other headlines.

No one knows what General Conference 2020 will decide. However, leading voices across the varied theological spectrum of our denomination agree that some type of separation will occur. But to speculate as to how a separation will impact Chapin UMC, when at this point we do not know what plan of separation may be adopted, is nothing more than speculation.

Be assured that your leadership has been actively monitoring the ongoing denominational struggle for years. We will continue to be diligent in our efforts. Also be assured that your leadership will continue to strive to be faithful to the Word of God in all ways, including its teaching related to human sexuality (faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman, celibacy in singleness).

I ask that we all pray for God’s perfect will to be done in the UMC, for the truth of God’s Word to prevail in the UMC. The distinguishing mark of all true believers is love, so pray for the love of Jesus to characterize all of the proceedings that are to come. The world is watching and so desperately needs to see United Methodist Christians who disagree with one another love one another.

Please know that we will inform you of any church-wide gatherings (for the purpose of sharing more detailed information about the aforementioned proposal) that may be scheduled in the future. And most importantly, know that we will continue to stay focused on our mission of helping people connect with the redeeming, life-giving and life-changing love of Jesus!

Love to All,



Jody Flowers
Lead Pastor Chapin UMC