



Mon., March 7, 2022

Greetings First United Methodist Church,

This past week we received news that the General Conference of the United Methodist Church will meet next in 2024.

The 2019 Special Session of General Conference was organized specifically around matters of human sexuality at which the “Traditional Plan” passed (438 to 384 votes). Later in ‘19 a diverse group of UMC leaders began to meet together and procured the services of esteemed lawyer and mediator Kenneth Fienberg to help to develop an apparatus for future divisions in the United Methodist Church. The proposed agreement became known as “The Protocol” and it was general consensus it would pass at the 2020 General Conference. However, 2020 General Conference did not meet due to COVID. Nor did GC meet in ‘21. It was announced this week the next UMC General Conference will be the regularly scheduled quadrennial meeting in 2024.

[You can read the official UMC press release here.](#)

[You can find the UMNews article here.](#)

[Arkansas UMC Bishop Gary Mueller’s letter is linked here.](#)

The primary reasons General Conference is not meeting are logistical. Travel restrictions and a backlog of visas will keep international delegates from traveling to the United States and many do not have the technological capability to participate in a virtual conference.

What does this mean for Paragould First United Methodist Church? Very little. We have been United Methodist and will continue to be United Methodist for the foreseeable future. Presumably nothing will change in our “Discipline” (church law) until at least 2024. Our church nor its clergy have been affiliated with any other movements or efforts. Personally, I am deeply indebted to and committed to the United Methodist Church. I hope we continue to be a church home for as many people as possible.

Those most disappointed in the further postponement of General Conference were/are highly invested in the passing of legislation that would allow churches to leave the UMC soon and efficiently. The “Global Methodist Church” has been organizing to start a new denomination for some time. With the news of the deferred General Conference, the Global Methodist Church announced they will officially launch in May.

I do not believe the work of General Conference and matters around human sexuality are purely peripheral. We should continue to monitor and engage with these matters as needed. But our work and focus as a local church has not changed. Our ministry is not a call to wait and see what happens next at General Conference or with other congregations. Paragould First United Methodist Church will continue to “Love God. Serve People. Make a Difference.” as disciples of Jesus Christ. God has given us a great opportunity to be in ministry with one another in Paragould and beyond. And I am looking forward to sharing in ministry with you for months and years to come.

Reach out with any questions or concerns.

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Dane