

A Word from Woody. . .
“A Report from the WCA’s Big Weekend Event”

Susan Doyle and I were honored to be selected as two of the seven delegates (three clergy, four laity) to represent the Louisiana Wesleyan Covenant Association at the WCA’s Global Legislative Assembly on Friday, April 30th at Frazer Memorial UMC in Montgomery, Alabama. I was left with three major impressions from this event, along with the worship gathering the next day.

First, the fire is still burning for United Methodist renewal! Despite the tough season of COVID-19 and the fact that our last Global Legislative Assembly (GLA) met in November, 2019, United Methodists have not lost the vision for the Holy Spirit’s transformation of Methodism and what is to come. About 240 (out of 300) delegates met in person for the GLA in Montgomery and about 20 participated online from around the world (Africa, Eurasia, the Philippines, and the U.S.). The debates were spirited and the delegates were engaged. Some may have been frustrated with the desire by delegates to debate words, phrases, and sentences in resolutions, but I am impressed that the delegates came so well prepared and had a deep desire to see that this version of Methodism conducts itself in a way that honors the Lord. On the following day there were about 1,200 in-person worshippers for the roughly six-hour service, and others watched online at 82 simulcast sites. It is believed about 3,000 people participated in this gathering.

My second impression is that some important resolutions were passed that revealed the courage and conviction of the delegates. For example, the first resolution we addressed was entitled, “Resolution Responding to Recent Events During the 2021 Appointment Season”. This resolution pointed to bishops in three annual conferences—California-Pacific, Greater New Jersey, and North Georgia—who have informed conservative pastors without consultation that they would be moving. These moves, which neither the pastors nor the churches they serve sought, are seen as an attempt to thwart conservative churches from joining the Global Methodist Church after the Protocol to separate the church is passed. The resolution strongly states that the GLA of WCA “Condemns the actions of these bishops and calls upon them to reconsider each of these decisions, to reappoint these pastors to their current churches during the 2021 appointment season”. A resolution was passed to endorse the plan to separate The UMC, the “Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation”, which should be considered by the General Conference when it meets August 29-September 6, 2022. Another resolution was passed to endorse the formation of the new conservative denomination, the Global Methodist Church. Other resolutions were passed which

affirmed the work on task forces on such things as discipleship, church multiplication, and church revitalization.

My final main impression of the GLA is that many United Methodists want to leave the denomination *now*, not later. They are tired of waiting for General Conference to approve the Protocol, which is still endorsed by all the various theological groups in the denomination. They don't want to wait until the late summer of 2022 for General Conference to meet, and they are frustrated by rumors that even this event could be cancelled with General Conference waiting until 2024 to meet. There are, however, major obstacles for churches leaving now, such as the financial burden. It is estimated that a small church departing with one pastor may have to pay about \$100,000 to the denomination for pension liabilities. Clearly, it is worthy waiting for the Protocol to pass where churches can separate from The UMC and then seamlessly join—with their property and no pension liability payment-- the Global Methodist Church.

There is much to keep in prayer at this time. If you would like a chance to fellowship with fellow conservative United Methodists, then please put on your calendar Wednesday, June 2nd when the Louisiana WCA will hold a luncheon with a speaker in Lafayette. More details are to come on this exciting event!

Love in Christ,

Woody