

Prayer, Thanksgiving and Perseverance

By the Wesleyan Covenant Association – March 24, 2020

<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2020/03/24/prayer-thanksgiving-and-perseverance/>

Whether in the city of Manila in the Philippines, in a village on the plains of south central Russia, or in a town in Tennessee, or in many other places around the world, the sounds of hymns and prayers corporately sung and said have fallen silent in local United Methodist churches. To be sure, persevering pastors and worship leaders are doing what they can to ensure corporate worship continues in some way or another (more about their efforts in a moment), but the simultaneous sound of silence in so many local churches is an unprecedented experience for most of us.

This reality is just one of many challenges we face in the light of the novel Coronavirus that has infected over 350,000 people and killed more than 15,000 worldwide.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association Global Council joins with others in offering our prayers in the midst of this crisis. We pray for those who have lost loved ones to the virus, and for those presently stricken by it who are fighting for their lives. We also pray for medical workers who are tirelessly attending to the sick and in many cases risking their own lives in doing so. We also pray for the many researchers who are doing all they can, as fast as they can, to find ways to mitigate the virus' severity and to develop a vaccine against it.

And as clergy and lay leaders ourselves, we pray for our sisters and brothers who are doing all they can to keep their local church families connected. Clergy and laity continue to visit the lonely and the sick and provide aid to those in need. They are helping parents who cannot work from home by caring for their children. And even though their congregations cannot physically join them, pastors and worship leaders continue to prepare and deliver sermons, play and sing hymns, lead prayers, and so offer corporate worship services via our computer screens.

Finally, we pray for the leaders of our governments who must make very difficult decisions as they try to implement health policies to save people's lives without creating devastating economic consequences that would undoubtedly impact the poor the hardest. We pray for wisdom, discernment, and comity as governmental officials make critical plans for our countries.

And yet in the midst of feeling anxious, fearful, and disconnected we are reminded we have many reasons to be thankful. We are especially thankful for the people and leaders of our churches who remain steadfast in their faith and model for all of us the sacrificial passion of Christ. And above all we are thankful to God our Father, who inspires and comforts us by the power of his Holy Spirit, and enables us to continue our Lenten journey with Christ to the suffering, the mystery, and the power of his cross, and on to his glorious Resurrection from the dead. This is our sure Hope!

And so we persevere in the midst of the extraordinary and ordinary.

Last week The United Methodist Church's Commission on the General Conference formally announced [the postponement of the 2020 General Conference](#) that was scheduled for May 5 – 15 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Given the state's understandable limitations on crowds meeting in confined spaces, and the worldwide suspension of international and even domestic travel, the commission was forced to announce the conference's postponement.

We are confident the commission regrets the postponement as much or more than any United Methodist. Its staff and commissioners have spent untold hours preparing for an event with hundreds of moving pieces, involving delegates from Africa, Eurasia, the Philippines and the U.S., and a packed agenda that included consideration of the UM Church's separation. We are thankful for the commission's hard work, some of which is now lost, and we regret that much more work will be required of them in order [to make arrangements for another time and possibly in another place](#). We pray for the commission members and staff as they respond to the challenges now presented.

The WCA, along with many United Methodists, regrets that the conference's postponement keeps the general church locked in a state of conflict and dysfunction that harms the work of local churches across the connection, particularly in the U.S., where average worship attendance and giving are plummeting. With bishops, other church officials, and most of the advocacy groups from across the theological and ethical spectrum, earlier this year the WCA endorsed the [Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation](#). The association believed the Protocol's passage at the 2020 General Conference would permit the UM Church to separate as amicably as possible and allow traditionalists to give their full attention to the challenging, but hopeful work of creating a new, global Methodist Church. Those hopes are delayed for now, but they are not dashed.

The WCA will persevere in its mission and use the additional time to continue its work, trusting that God will continue to lead and guide us despite setbacks and new challenges. To that end, in the coming days, weeks and months the WCA Council will share new portions of its draft "[Book of Doctrines and Disciplines](#);" it will continue to help United Methodist traditionalists understand the implications of the Protocol legislation for their local churches; and, it will prepare for its fifth Global Gathering and its third Global Legislative Assembly, both to be held later this year.

The WCA will move forward in these unprecedented and challenging times, and as it does so it finds inspiration in the Apostle Paul's words:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (Romans 5.1-5).

God's peace and blessings on you.