

View this message online



A Message From Bishop Jung

May 31, 2018

Opportunities: A Call to Pray and to Participate

There are so many challenges to ministry today, and a lot of our energy is being spent on the current state of our denomination. This is a crossroads moment for us, as we prepare to address the report of The Commission on A Way Forward, the Council of Bishops recommendation, and the upcoming special session of the General Conference in February of 2019. These are all very important, but they inspire me to a deeper reflection on the future of our Church: how will we be faithful to our call and to our mission? God provides us with so many opportunities – will we rise to meet them or simply let them pass? The work of God and the will of God are too important to ignore. While we worry about tomorrow, we miss the vision for a rich and vital future. So, when Jesus says in Matthew 6:34, “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today,” he is not saying we should not look to the future possibilities, but that we should not let our *worries* blind us. There are many things we cannot control, so to worry about them – and to use them as an excuse not to work for good – is an inexcusable waste of time.



As a bishop, I am constantly living with a foot in two worlds – the world of today and the world of the future. Today I find very troubling. We are not united in our faith, in our baptism, or in our commitment. We are divided – in heart and mind and spirit. We are allowing our divisions to be more powerful than God – the God who calls us to unity of purpose. But pay attention that I do not say “uniformity” or “unanimity” or “agreement.” Unity is so much greater than any of these, and it allows for harmony – for the resonance and the dissonance among the many chords struck. We make music when we all offer different notes and tones; if we all sounded the same, all we would produce would be noise – and not a joyful noise. In our current “discord” (dischord?), we are reflecting the manifold perspectives, worldviews, opinions, and beliefs that our United Methodist Church has always valued and supported. We are a denomination that prides itself on not imposing one thought-system or belief-system on intelligent, faith-filled people. We celebrate the diversity within the fullest span of theological interpretation. How sad when leaders forget this, and try to limit what God has given to us. It is time to celebrate the gifts that bring us to faithful disagreement and difficult exploration!

My vision for our Wisconsin Conference is that it is time to *Launch Out!* in faith. Some might think this is a clever campaign theme, but it is so much more than this. I applaud that the team of clergy and laity leaders organizing the *Launch Out!* initiative emphasize that this is about “faith-raising” and not just “fund-raising.” The call from Luke 5:1-11 is a call to faith and faithfulness – to “launch out into deep water,” – to take risks grounded in the assurance that God will provide. Fear, disillusionment, fatigue, and fixation with the current reality can cripple us, can tempt us to hang up our nets and quit; but this is not the way of faith. As Paul reminds us, “we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7) We do not allow the things we see discourage us, because we believe in the power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit.



There are things our Wisconsin Conference should be doing to strengthen the kingdom/kingdom of God, but we are not. Currently, we lack the leadership or we lack the funds or we lack the time. Will we be defined by what we can’t do, or will we be defined by what we can do? I believe God is calling us to GREAT things, and I

believe that Wisconsin United Methodists are ready to pull together to make these things happen. To this end, I would ask three things of every member of our Conference:

1. **Pray. Pray. Pray.** Pray for our future, and for the power of God's Holy Spirit to ignite a Pentecost fire in the hearts, minds, and bodies of each and every one of us. Pray that we will have the faith to move together through the difficulties of the present time (think of Paul in Romans 8) to the glorious future God has in mind for us (a future with hope – Jeremiah 29:11). Pray that we will *Launch Out!* together – not simply to raise funds, but to do ministry together with the power to transform the world!
2. **Catch the vision** – begin to dream and vision with us what we can do together that is impossible in our current reality. We can turn struggling congregations around and offer new life and new possibility. We can reach new people with new opportunities for a relationship with God in new (and sometimes undreamed of) places. We can live together (Matthew 25: 31-46 – feeding the hungry, providing water to those who thirst, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and bringing comfort to the imprisoned). We can become champions of mercy and justice for the most vulnerable in our communities. We can become salt, and light, and a city on a hill (Matthew 5:17-20) – a powerful witness to the truth of the gospel.
3. **Encourage your leadership** – pray for every member of the Annual Conference, and encourage them to support *Launch Out!* in its totality. More than voting to support a campaign; encourage the clergy and laity leaders of our Annual Conference to DO it – to *Launch Out!* in faith to discern the will of God and work together to build a strong and lasting future for the ministry of the Wisconsin Conference.

Brothers and sisters, I pray every day for our future. I pray every day that we not only continue the good and faithful work we already do, but that we go into the “deep waters” and do more than we have ever done before. We have a world that is dying for a Savior. We have a Savior who has died for the world. United, we can bring them together, and celebrate together God's new day for Wisconsin!

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung



[Request to unsubscribe](#) if you're no longer interested in receiving communications from the Wisconsin Conference.