

NCC Weekly Newsletter

A Way Forward...

Dear Friends and Members of NCC:

Our church as we know it today was founded when three Newmarket protestant churches, (The American Baptist, (ABC) The United Church of Christ, (UCC) and the United Methodist Church (UMC) came together to form one mainline protestant church. Our three in one status makes us wonderful and welcoming and unique as we have formed our own identity as ***an open door Christian community growing in faith and serving God's people with unconditional love***. When we describe what membership is in our Constitution our wide welcome shines through in article III: *NCC lovingly welcomes a diverse congregation. Membership at NCC is open to all who have a desire to be part of a loving, accepting, and understanding community of faith which follows the teachings of Jesus Christ as found in scripture. Our members rejoice in the worth, gifts, and dignity of every person as a child of God. To honor the multi-denominational foundation and community church identity of NCC its members are not required to commit to one denominational view of doctrine but may if they so choose.*

People who have found their way to NCC often tell me that our warm welcome and acceptance of all people as children of God is why they are with us. When I welcome folks in service by saying, "No matter who you are or where you are on your journey of faith and life, you're welcome here....." I see a sense of safety and comfort move through the sanctuary. We, the people of NCC, have lovingly and intentionally created a safe and welcoming place for all people to worship their God by making it okay to have varying beliefs and by making it not okay to impose one's own beliefs or traditions on others. The safe and welcoming church which is NCC is a place where people agree to accept one another, people strive to understand one another, and people try to love and care for one another while growing in faith with the help of God. I'm incredibly proud of us for this!

As you may have been following in the news as of late, sadly, the UMC (one of our founding denominations) hasn't been able to achieve this level of welcome and understanding and has been in conflict over the full acceptance of LGBTQ people in ordained clergy positions and the celebration of same sex marriages. Much of the New England Conference, (of which NCC is a part), supports full inclusion and welcome of ***all*** people to all aspects of Christian life just like NCC does. However, since the UMC is a world wide church, there are places around the world that do not commit to full inclusion.

In May, 2020, the UMC is poised for a vote at general conference to find a way forward, (which appears will likely cause the church to split). When this vote happens, one way or another, it will impact NCC as we will have to determine how best to move forward with the UMC while being true to our own identity and mission. The Deacons, the spiritual leaders of the church, will work with me to lead NCC in this process.

Earlier this month, Bishop Devadhar sent the message below to members of the New England Conference to provide helpful information on the process. (This came to my inbox right before I left for Guatemala and I apologize for not getting it to you sooner). I found the links with the proposed plans and detailed information to be very helpful and I hope you do too.

As we wait, watch, and listen during this difficult time for the UMC, may I ask you to please join me in prayer for our UMC brothers and sisters as they move through these difficult days. The idea of a break up, (even if it is the best option), is painful.

If you would like to more information or if you'd like to chat about this further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

With Much Peace and Many Prayers,
Pastor Patty

Jan. 9, 2020

Beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I am writing from India where I have been traveling with young people, including two youth from New England, on the Northeastern Jurisdiction's 2020 Mission of Peace. The MOP was created to build bridges between Christians around the world. I am so grateful for your support of MOP and for your prayers as we journey.

Even on this pilgrimage we can't help but aware of the political unrest happening in the world; we know that conflict and turmoil are daily life for many ... violent military actions, natural disasters in Puerto Rico and Australia, a plane crash that killed nearly two hundred people, and countless other incidents. In the midst of all of this, the division in our beloved United Methodist Church became front page news.

Even here in India, people are asking "What does this news about The UMC mean for us?"

What it means for them – and for all of us – is, of course, unknown.

Media reports made the [Protocol on Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation](#) sound like a conclusion or a "done deal," but it is not. It is just one possible path forward for our denomination.

It was formed by a small but diverse group of UMC leaders. Just as with other plans that have emerged since February 2019, it will have to be submitted as legislation to the 2020 General Conference in May, where it will be up to the delegates to discern if this is the direction we should take.

There is much work ahead in these next few months for the 862 delegates (six from New England) to discern all the legislation and prayerfully consider what God is calling us to do and be as United Methodists. Let us offer them our prayerful support as we undertake our own discernment about how to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

I encourage you to read the Protocol and submit questions you have to the mediation team. You can also watch the livestream discussion at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 13, 2020, on the United Methodist News website and Facebook page. [Find all the details here.](#)

These seem like extraordinary times. But even in these anxious days, our faith guides us. May we hold one another in prayer and Christian love.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

