

Glory Revealed

A Week of Prayer for the Commission on a Way Forward



Western PA Conference

The United Methodist Church

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Bishops' Preface to *Glory Revealed*
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As a result of the action of the 2016 General Conference, the Council of Bishops appointed a Commission on a Way Forward to help the Council find a way forward in light of the fact that good, faithful United Methodists have searched scripture and have come to different beliefs about the role of practicing homosexuals in the life of the church. Historically those in the Methodist movement have used scripture, tradition, reason and experience to discern God's will. The commission, therefore, has engaged biblical scholars, church historians, social scientists and endocrinologists in its discernment process. The Commission members have also spent significant time building relationships and sharing their personal stories as they seek God. They continue to work to discern a way forward.

In order to help undergird the work of the commission, the Council of Bishops has been praying for the commission and has asked United Methodists around the world to pray daily for the commission's work. The council asked each annual conference to take one specific week to cover the commission in prayer. The Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference has been asked to pray daily from Sunday, February 11th through Saturday, February 17th. I am grateful to the members of our Conference who have prepared a prayer guide in order to assist us in fulfilling our commitment to pray for the work of the commission.

I ask every member of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference to use the guide and join in our focused prayer effort. I ask because I believe in the power of prayer. I know God hears and answers prayer! I am asking that we follow the example of Jesus. Please do NOT pray that **your** will be done for the United Methodist Church. I am asking you to pray that God's will be done so that God is glorified through the work of the commission. Further, if you do not have health concerns that would prohibit you from fasting, I ask you to also fast that week. If you cannot fast from food, you might consider fasting from television or the Internet for that week and use the time you would have spent watching television or routine for prayer.

I am confident God is not through with the United Methodist Church yet. I am confident God is still using and will continue to use this denomination to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I am confident that if we ask for God's will to be done and for God to be glorified through our denomination, God will hear us. I continue to see signs that revival and revitalization are on the horizon. I cannot wait to see what God has in store for us!

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

Glory Revealed through SEEKING Sunday, February 11



Scripture: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on my Name and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.” Jeremiah 29:11-14

Praise God: For God’s desire to reveal God’s self to us and make God’s self known

Offer Thanks: For God’s faithfulness to the promises God makes, especially to hear from heaven (2 Chronicles 7:14) and answer our prayers

Confess: Any tendency to doubt God’s love and goodness toward us.

Ask God: To give us hearts fully devoted to seeking God’s glory continually above all else that we may display the glory of God. “Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Spiritual Discipline:

As we begin this week, we recognize that as much as we need bread and water to live, we need the bread of Christ and the living water God offers to us. As you are able, submit yourself to a voluntary weakness and forgo the good food you have to eat this day for the better meal that God has for you.

Reflection

The words “Seek the Lord” appear in both Old and New Testaments of the Bible to remind us to do what should come naturally to us as believers and followers of Christ. Sadly, what should come naturally, doesn’t, at least, not like it should. The truth about us is our hearts become divided. Instead of “seeking” the Lord (some translations say “looking”) with hearts that are fully and wholly devoted to God, too often (if we’re honest) we find ourselves seeking after other things in the place of God. Our hearts get distracted, with our own selves.

It’s what Peter, James and John found themselves doing when they were on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Jesus revealed his glory. Peter’s response was to remain, exclaiming, “Lord, it’s wonderful for us to be here! If you want, I’ll make three shelters as memorials – one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (Matthew 17:3-4)

While none of us can fault Peter, and many of us (if not all of us!) would likely have responded the same way, what Peter didn’t understand yet was experiencing Jesus’ glory was not to be an experience for him alone. Others also were to experience it, especially God’s mercy, justice and truth. It’s why Jesus came down the mountain. It’s also why Jesus went to the cross. Jesus went to the cross to display God’s glory.

On the cross Jesus displayed God’s glory by the sacrifice of his life as an expression of God’s love. It was God’s glory Jesus prayed for most of all. His heart torn between his will and the will of his Father in heaven, Jesus prayed, “Father, glorify your name.” (John 12:28) Wouldn’t you know it? God answered Jesus’ prayer! John writes, “Then a voice came from heaven. ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’” (John 12:28)

When the desire of our heart is the same as the desire of Jesus' heart and we pray like Jesus prayed – “Father, glorify your name.” – seeking God's glory above all else we fulfill the reason why we were created (Isaiah 43:7). While there will be much about which we will be uncertain, of this we can be sure. When we pray for God to be glorified God will answer our prayer.

So together we pray, seeking God's glory above all else. We pray for the way forward and we pray, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work with us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Glory Revealed through HUMILITY Monday, February 12

Scripture

He must increase, but I must decrease. The one who comes from above is above all; John 3:30-31a

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Psalm 25:9

Reverence for the Lord is an education in itself — first you learn humility, then you experience glory. Proverbs 15:33

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:8

Praise God

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. Hebrews 13:15

Offer Thanks

We thank God for bountiful mercy and unfailing love. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. *God's love endures forever.* Give thanks to the Lord of lords: *God's love endures forever.* He remembered us in our low estate. *God's love endures forever.* Psalm 136:1, 3, 26

Confess

In our times of frailty and moments of pride we do not offer the same love and compassion to others that God has graciously extended toward us. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:12

Ask God

Speak to our hearts, order our steps, influence our ways, and help us to become great in your eyes.

Listen to God

(Simplicity) Therefore anyone who humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew 18:1-4

Reflection

Most pet lovers will agree dogs can be regarded as the humblest of animals. They exist by what is freely given, follow their owner's instructions and are faithful companions. With a mouth full of teeth capable of doing great damage, pet dogs will gently nuzzle even the smallest child. A dog's humility is often displayed as power under control.



It has been said that our humility can also be thought of as *strength under control*. People can intentionally exhibit meekness too but it's not always the norm. Having been created in the image and likeness of God, possessing all things pertaining to life and Godliness, been given full stewardship over all the earth, made a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor, there is a human tendency toward self-sufficiency, rather than first seeking help from the all-sufficient God.

In the book of Judges, it is mentioned that God reduced Gideon's army from 22,000 soldiers to 300. The Lord said to Gideon, "...for Israel would become boastful, saying, 'My own power has delivered me.'" (Judges 7:2).

Our numbers as The United Methodist Church are also large and we have been empowered to do great things, but in times of uncertainty it is important to remain humble. "*Not by power nor might but by my spirit says the Lord.*" God is not looking to honor the great things accomplished by our own strength, but that which is offered in prayerful humility.

Today as we seek to pray our Way Forward, let us humble ourselves in the sight of our God, and prostrate ourselves (in body or spirit). Let us hold on to God's unchanging hand. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among ourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in our hearts (Ephesians 5:19), and perhaps let those led to do so, consider prayerfully humming and enacting this hymn - written by Charles Wesley

*Father, I stretch my hands to Thee,
No other help I know;
If Thou withdraw Thyself from me,
Ah! whither shall I go?*

O Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.** AMEN



Glory Revealed through OBEDIENCE Tuesday, February 13

Scripture

"This is love: that we live according to his commands. This is the command that you heard from the beginning: live in love." 2 John 1:6 CEB

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death - even death on a cross."
Philippians 2:5-8 NRSV

Praise God

We praise you Jesus for the showing us that obedience is a gift, which helps us live lives that honor you and allow us to live in harmony with others and all creation.

Offer Thanks

Thank you, Jesus, for showing us what love is. You loved the unlovable, you reached out to those whom we are often afraid of, and you gave your life for us, so that we could live in love and have life everlasting with you.

Confess

Lord God, there are times in our lives that we go after our own ways, we seek the path that we want, but it eventually leads to disappointment. Yet, we are hesitant to follow your path, because we still think we know best. We want to be right so much so that we do not care how often we are wrong. The fleeting feeling of self-accomplishment leads to disappointment, and we often blame you for something that was our fault in the first place. People get hurt, we shy away from you, but you always pull us back in, like a shepherd leads his or her sheep. Oh, great shepherd, forgive our stubborn ways, but lead us back to your fold, to your protection, to you. Amen.

Ask God

Help us, Lord, to see each other as the image bearers that we are. We often get caught up in our factions that we forget about the humanity in others. We are different, Lord, and you love that about us, but sometimes it is hard to be different and love those who are different than us. We all have different ideas, different talents, different gifts, but we are one body. Help us to realize that we need each other for the body of Christ to be whole. Help us be whole, oh God.

Listen to God

Hush and you will hear the voice of God. We have so much noise in the world today, that it is hard to keep our focus on God and listen to His voice. We like to talk, we like to tell God our needs, but we often leave little room for listening. Even in the busyness of life, we can be silent. Take in the sounds, put on music, whatever gets you to that sweet spot, but just listen. God is talking and He has something to say to us.

Reflection

It can be hard to think of obedience as a gift. We have been told what to do by so many people in our lives; first our parents, then our teachers, then our bosses, and the list goes on. But I believe we need to rethink the word obedience, at least in regards to how we think about it with God.

The writer of 2 John tells us that obedience is to live in love. This is such a beautiful image. Wouldn't it nice if it was that simple? But what if it is? There are two great commandments that Jesus tells us to follow: to love God with all of our heart, soul, and might and to love our neighbor as ourselves. God calls us to love God and all that resemble God - humanity. When we put our own interests above others', then we do a disservice to ourselves and to God. Finding obedience in love is how we will be able to live together and how we will be able to live in the Kingdom of God. You cannot love God without loving your neighbor, that is what the author of 1 John says, because how can you love God whom you have not seen if you cannot love your sibling, whom you have seen.

When Jesus walked this earth 2,000 years ago, He showed us what true obedience looks like. Jesus would often listen for God's voice in prayer, He showed God love through His heart, soul, and might, which means all of one's emotions and thoughts, all of one's life, and all of one's treasure. To best explain what is meant by this, there is a legend of a Jewish hero, Rabbi Aqiva:

Rabbi Aqiva was sentenced before the wicked Tinius Rufus. The time came to say the *Shema* prayer. He began to say it, and laughed. He said to him: Old man, old man, either you are a sorcerer or you are contemptuous of suffering. He said to him: May the spirit of this man be blown away! I am not a sorcerer and I am not contemptuous of suffering...I loved God with all my heart, and I loved him with all my money, but I did not test "all my soul," and now I have the chance for all my soul and the time has come to say the *Shema* prayer aloud and I did not miss the chance! That is why I say the *Shema* and laugh. (Aharon Oppenheimer, "Removing the Decalogue From the Shema and Phylacteries : The

Historical Implications,” in *The Decalogue in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2.011), 101-102).

Jesus also showed mercy to those who were often forgotten; the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, ethnic minorities, and the disabled. He healed the sick, welcomed the stranger, and pleaded the cause of the poor. Jesus was obedient, even to the point of death, even death on a cross. What if we lived in this kind of love of God and one another, how different would the world be? Perhaps we need a little more obedience in the church, perhaps we need a little more obedience in our lives, perhaps we need a little more obedience to God. As Lent is coming tomorrow, seek to be more loving to God and others, seek to be more obedient. Amen.

Glory Revealed through REPENTANCE

Wednesday, February 14

Reflect on Scripture

“And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out... Acts 3:17-19 NRSV



Praise God

“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:4-7 NRSV

Offer Thanks

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s...
Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word.
Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.
Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul. Psalm 103: 1-5, 20-22 NRSV

Confess

Most holy and merciful Father: I confess to you... and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that I have sinned by my own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. (BPC - *adapted*)

Ask God

You hate nothing that You have made, and You forgive the sins of all who are truly penitent: Create in me a new hearts that I, worthily lamenting of my sins and acknowledging my wickedness, may obtain from You, God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness. (BPC - *adapted*)

Listening to God

Discipline of Silence – Silence provides a space for the Spirit to speak what we need to hear. Take 30 minutes on this day to sit and be still before God. Invite God to share with you how you have contributed to the conflict within the United Methodist Church. Embrace the opportunity to not respond or defend.

Reflection

Much has been said and written about Ash Wednesday falling on Valentine's Day this year (as well as Easter falling on April Fools Day). Many of the aforementioned writers have been busy thinking of how to make connections between a holy day and a hallmark day. We in Western PA are blessed to have a week of prayer for the Commission on a Way Forward during this special week.

The word of the day today is repentance. It certainly falls in line with Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Today begins a season of repentance, fasting, and preparation of the coming of Easter. Today, whether or not we mark ourselves with ashes, we recognize that something significant is happening.

For us to tie into the hallmark aspect of today, Valentine's Day, we have to dig a little deeper to connect with repentance. It would be easy to insert a joke about a husband bringing home a vacuum cleaner to his bride instead of flowers, and needing to repent making the connection for us.

But just as the above spouse made an error in showing love, we as Christ-bearers have been erred as we attempt to show God's love to a world that desperately needs it. Instead of giving the world a beautiful bouquet of God's love, we have given a vacuum cleaner. God forgive us.

As we look forward to Glory Revealed in Jesus Christ, let us remember that all of us has at one time offered an inappropriate gift to those God has sent us to serve. For that, we pray for forgiveness. But let us also remember that the God we serve together never gives the wrong gift. Amen.

Glory Revealed through LOVE

Thursday, February 15



Reflect on:

Above all things, have unending love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8 Modern English Version

You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is

forgiven little loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:46-48 Modern English Version

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32

Praise God

We praise You for the mind-bending love that You have shown to each one of us, even to our "enemies".

Offer Thanks

We thank you for forgiving us for every one of our sins. We are overwhelmed by the love you showed by going to the cross in our place so that we could have the gift of freedom and intimacy with God.

Confess

We confess that because of our faithlessness and prejudice, sin and hard-heartedness, we have jumped to conclusions about others and have reacted in sinful ways. We confess treating one another with contempt, failing to recognize that You died for them as well as You have died for me.

We commit to responding with love and respect for those with whom we disagree, and depend on the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin and not to point the finger at each another.

Let us open our hearts and thoughts to the searching gaze of the Holy Spirit to remove the roots of pride, self-righteousness, and self-justification. Let us deny the rationalization that excuses our own sin and condemns our brother or sister.

Since we cannot agree on what is right, let us invite the Holy Spirit to guide us daily in how to treat one another. Let us not fall into legalism or license, but rather fall into your holy and Grace-filled righteousness for all.

Ask God

Help me to forgive and move forward in love and unity. How can we love someone with whom we disagree so strongly? Jesus said, "Love your enemies; bless and do not curse them." Many of us in the UMC have taken positions that deeply oppose one another and we have become like enemies. The Good News is that Jesus calls us to love even our enemies. In order to love, we must forgive.

Listen to God

Spend some time in silence, listening to the Holy One, soaking in the Presence, and experiencing the deepest love and forgiveness, and freedom to forgive others.

Reflection

C. S. Lewis said: "Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive." How true. It's not until forgiveness becomes personal and costly that its actual size and weight become real.

Perhaps what makes forgiveness so hard is that we don't understand what it is ... and what it is not.

Forgiveness doesn't mean excusing what someone did to you or forgetting what happened to you. Neither does it mean denying or stuffing your feelings and especially not reconciling instantly every time. (That requires the other person's willingness to change their behavior and rebuild trust in a safe and accountable environment.)

Jesus modeled forgiveness and welcomed back those who hurt him most – like Peter who denied him. He forgave those who tortured him on the cross, before they ever asked for forgiveness. Giving up the right to get even, to punish, and to see justice done is the essence of forgiveness.

If forgiveness is hard for you, remember that when someone owes you something - respect, an apology, tenderness, . . . there remains a "debt;" a hollow place in your soul as long as it is not fulfilled. However, un-forgiveness is a trap that leads to resentment and keeps reminding you of the hurt and pain. It hurts you more than it hurts them, and leads to bitterness. Choosing not to forgive is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die!

If you want to be free of that knot in your stomach every time you think of that person or action that has hurt you, you must forgive them. It is not "letting them off the hook", but rather letting YOU off the hook of anger and intolerance. Spend some time in solitude, speak the words of forgiveness over your offender, free your enemy, and free yourself from the prison of unforgiveness. Welcome peace into your soul. Amen.

Glory Revealed through HOPE

Friday, February 16



Scripture

“For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease.” Job 14:7

“And you will have confidence, because there is hope; you will be protected and take your rest in safety.” Job 11:18

“Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.” Psalm 33:22

Praise God

For the steadfast love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Psalm 100:5

Offer Thanks

“O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good for his steadfast love endures forever.” 1 Chronicles 16:34

Confess

When we think, feel, and act that our life and our life together in the church is beyond the power of God. “My flesh and heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” Psalm 73:26

Ask God

God give me faith to see beyond the horizon of the current uncertainty of the future and give me the assurance that all things will work together for my good and your glory. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

Listen to God

Listen to God in the other. Focus on the spiritual discipline of hospitality (welcome the other and entertain the image of God in them). “Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” Romans 12:12-13

Reflection

In our life together, when we only focus on the issues and problems facing our church related to human sexuality, I think we can be filled with fear and despair. Our lives and our life in the church can become like a gray overcast day.

All the great minds of the church and the news coming out of the Commission on A Way Forward can't seem to push back the clouds. The Council of Bishops can't seem to shed enough light on the situation to brighten the gray. Our hearts can lose hope.

I am reminded of some of the writings of Albert Camus. This French writer compared us with the legendary Sisyphus, doomed forever to push a huge boulder up a steep hill, knowing that at the very moment the boulder was about to reach the top, it would slip and roll to the bottom, and he would have to start all over again. The best we can expect of ourselves in such a hopeless situation is an act of courage enabling us to continue the struggle.

It is true that Camus had a gift for describing a vital force at work in the midst of life, speaking on one occasion, for example, of “an invincible summer in the midst of his winter.” But I generally come away from encounters with his writing feeling the absence of God's grace. And without God's grace, there is no hope. In one of his stories Camus talks about the doves (symbolizing the Holy Spirit?) circling above the

gray clouds of Amsterdam with no place to land. If the Holy Spirit cannot come to us, then our life is gray and hopeless.

Hope in our life and our life together comes not from focusing on the problems of the present, but on God and the plans God has for us and our life together. Hope in God that no matter what decisions are made, no matter what sketch is selected, no matter what old may pass away and no matter what new may come, God's steadfast love will never fail. And no matter what the future or the future structure of the United Methodist Church, nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and the unity we share in the body of Christ.

Come Holy Spirit, Come.



Glory Revealed through UNITY Saturday, February 17

Scripture

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:20-23, NRSV

"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" Psalms 133:1, NRSV

Praise God

Lord we praise you for the opportunity to get glimpses of heaven as we live in community with those different than ourselves. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:12, NRSV

Offer Thanks

We thank you for the uniqueness in which you have created each of us and praise you for the opportunity to celebrate our differences as a gift from you. "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:13, NRSV

Confess

"Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (United Methodist Hymnal page 12)

Ask God

"We ask you, O Lord, for the gifts of your Spirit. Enable us to penetrate the depth of the whole truth, and grant that we may share with others the goods you have put at our disposal. Teach us to overcome divisions. Send us your Spirit to lead to full unity your sons and daughters in full charity, in obedience to your will; through Christ our Lord. Amen." (United Methodist Hymnal page 556)

Listen to God

Listen to God by celebrating with a brother or sister in Christ today. You have spent a week practicing unity by joining together in prayer with those who may feel differently than you do. Celebrate this opportunity we have been given to be united by the same Spirit in prayer. Celebrate in being assured that that same Spirit holds our future. Grab the hand of your neighbor and offer up a word of celebration that the work of God cannot fail.

Reflection

Have you ever sat in a restaurant and rejoiced as you witnessed a family offering up a word of grace before a meal? Have you ever overheard people in the grocery store talking about what a great message the pastor gave at church that day? Have you ever had the privilege to see someone witnessing about the love of Christ to a stranger?

If you have, then you must understand the feeling of true unity. You don't know those people. You don't know what church they go to, you don't know where they live or where they work. They might look different than you, they might talk different than you, they might even believe differently than you.

However, in those moments that you witnessed the Spirit at work in the world, none of those things really mattered. You somehow felt connected to them. As if you weren't alone in the world and your best friend was within reach. You wanted to run up and tell them you are a Christian too and how good it is to meet another brother or sister in Christ. This is because we are all united by the same Spirit. As we move toward an uncertain future, may we move together.

As we seek a way forward, may we not lose sight of that unifying Spirit. May we desperately grab onto what unifies us and not what divides us. In this way the harvest that is ready will know the love of God. Amen.

To continue directed prayer for the Commission on a Way Forward -- or the United Methodist Church--go to umcprays.org.

AND

To follow the work of the Commission on a Way Forward, visit umc.org/commissiononawayforward