

# The Upcoming Special General Conference

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 2-3-19  
At Crossroads United Methodist Church  
Waunakee, WI

The movers came for our belongings this past October 25 and would deliver our belongings the next day. That Thursday evening, Jane and I attended one of the four Listening Sessions held around the state to review the three official Options from the Commission on a Way Forward, about how our denomination will respond to LGBTQ issues in at Sun Prairie; about 250 in attendance to share their responses.

Two quotes:

“We’re going to lose some members, no matter what option is supported”;  
“I love all of you – and I just want us to be the church together.”

I’ve been stewing on those comments from that evening; for the last couple of months, they have a presence in the back of my mind.

The UMC may be wrong on some things and it may be right on some things – but I love the people who are willing to call themselves United Methodist. (Apologies to Catholics/Lutherans/no faith friends).

That we don’t all have to believe alike. We can interpret the scriptures in different ways; see the faith from different angles.

I like it that Hillary Clinton and George W. Bush are UMs.

I like it that Elizabeth Warren and Dick Cheney are UMs.

Our church represents a wide spectrum, not just a narrow sliver of Faith.

Wesley was a pretty cool guy for someone from the 1700’s:

“Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences.”

“Think and let think.”

Past Week: Read quite a bit about the social setting of Paul’s ministry and his letters in the N.T. that reflect that ministry.

Two issues:

- 1) Divisions of wealth and poor (class)
- 2) Divisions over who was acceptable for “table fellowship.”

A few weeks ago, we took time to remember our baptisms and in a few of weeks from today, we’ll be celebrating a baptism. We are baptized into a family, really. You’re baptized into a family.

Families are interesting. You don’t pick family members, do you? Harris and Virginia Walters had two sons; Michael and myself.

Stanley Hauerwas of Duke Divinity School: “Christianity is when you stick with those you’re stuck with.” That’s what a family is.

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That's what love is like when Paul talks about "love" in today's scripture from 1 Corinthians 13.

Do you remember the movie, Forrest Gump? A very instructive film about how to be a Christian in the world today? Tom Hanks plays this guy, Forrest Gump, who has some mental limitations, and he falls in love with this girl named Jenny and he decides he's going to propose to her.

So he asks Jenny, "Will you marry me?" and she hesitates. He knows he has limitations and I love what he says to her. He says, "I know I'm not a smart man, but I know how to love."

We may not be smart people, but we all know how to love. That's about the only thing, as best as I can tell, that God asks us to do.

Jesus does not say, "The greatest commandment is you shall be correct in all things." Jesus does say, "Love." It's our only hope, is to love. That's how early Christianity made. The early Christians lived in a hostile world; people ridiculed and made fun of them. Christianity was the laughingstock in the Roman world, but even their critics grudgingly said, "See the way they love each other?"

Martin Sheen is a devout Roman Catholic. He was interviewed and was talking about when he goes to church and he loves the moment, the people stand in line for communion. He says he loves standing in the line. He says, "How can we understand these great mysteries in the church?"

He says, "I don't have a clue. I just stand in line and say 'Here I am, I'm with them, a community of faith.'"

That kind of inclusion of not asking about one's theology or one's political beliefs or one's sexual identity is what I hope for our United Methodist Church family at the upcoming General Conference.

"I'm with them." Amen.