

Rocky Mountain Conference Privilege Speech: Ask the WJ COB to Convene Special WJ Conference

Bishop and members of the Conference, I am Ben Roe, lay member from Arvada and the Metro District. I rise on a matter of personal privilege to respond to the work of the Commission on a Way Forward.

(Bishop grants privilege to speak)

Thank you, Bishop. The Western Jurisdiction first caught my attention with the proclamation “We Will Not Be Silent” at the 2000 Western Jurisdiction Conference in Casper. When I worked at the Conference Office, I had the privilege to attend the 2004 WJC. I have been excited to experience the courageous and prophetic witness of our WJC leadership ever since. I was one of those who responded to Bishop Hagiya's challenge at the 2012 WJC to take personal responsibility to carry out the mission and vision of the Western Jurisdiction. I became part of the Western Methodist Justice Movement. So in this context, it is helpful to hear the hopes coming from the Commission, and I know all of us are awaiting what their report will contain.

- The Commission on a Way Forward was tasked with a specific responsibility – to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.
- We are asked to pray for the work of the Commission, because it is a most difficult task to stay at the table to converse with people of different beliefs and ideas on how we are to be in ministry with all God's beloved. We are challenged to continue in dialogue, especially with those who do not share our own way of looking at Scripture and how we are to live our witness as members of God's Church.
- We in the Western Jurisdiction have different ministry contexts, and even with our differences, we seek to live out the vision statement of our jurisdiction, which is: “To be a home for all God's people, gathered around a table of reconciliation and transformation.” Despite our diverse opinions and strongly-held beliefs, I know that we all love God and love the church – the Body of Christ of which we are all indispensable parts.

- The report coming from the Commission on a Way Forward will likely contain proposals that will have a profound effect on our relationships as United Methodists, on our global polity, and our expressions of ministry and leadership.
- The Commission's recommendations, expected in early 2018, will be the basis of a report from the Council of Bishops which will then be the subject of conversation and decision-making by a special called General Conference in February, 2019. Our denomination will have time to listen to each other's views about the proposals, and collectively discern the best way forward that reflects faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 521.2 of the 2016 Book of Discipline gives the College of Bishops, that is, the bishops of the Western Jurisdiction, the authority, by two-thirds vote, to "call a special session of the Jurisdictional Conference when necessary."
- In light of the extraordinary context and kairos moment we are in, I encourage our own Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops to seriously consider calling and convening a special session of the Western Jurisdictional Conference after the Commission on a Way Forward releases its report. This special session would:
 1. Allow our delegates and bishops to strategize ways of working together jurisdictionally in preparation for the special General Conference in 2019, and
 2. Give our jurisdiction an opportunity to prayerfully consider how we can most faithfully continue to be a home for all of God's beloved children.
- I also urge the Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops to appoint a planning team that will:
 1. Consider creative ways of minimizing the cost of a specially called jurisdictional conference; and
 2. Find creative sources for funding this specially called jurisdictional conference.

(~4 1/2 minutes)