



**From the office of  
Robert D. Farr  
Bishop**

Dear Friends,

I want to apologize for the hurt on all sides of this special session of General Conference.

As a Bishop of the Church, I am concerned for all of our clergy and laity, regardless of their opinions. We knew the special session would be difficult. We knew it would be divisive. But, I don't think anyone realized just how hurtful it would end up becoming. I truly hope we can begin to find healing in the days ahead.

I cannot begin to understand the hurt felt by our LGBTQIA+ sisters and brothers and those who support them. I can't even fully understand the hurt felt by our more traditional brothers and sisters. No one will walk away from this special session without being wounded in some way. Please hear me when I say, all have sacred worth. Your value comes from God, not from the General Conference. The gifts of us ALL strengthen the body of Christ and we need you as part of the Church.

Whether you are elated or devastated by this decision, I encourage you to pause for just a moment and take a deep breath. No one is yet prepared to say what this means for the Missouri Annual Conference. We are still processing the work of the General Conference.

I've said all along that nothing will happen fast. I've also urged all of us to be prepared for disappointments along the way. As we wait and watch, I will be initiating conversations with the directors, Cabinet, Mission Council and other church leaders to begin discerning what this means for the Missouri Conference. I also have district town hall meetings planned for mid and late March (information to be released next week). I encourage you to attend one in your district.

So, what are we to do? My hope for the Church is that we tear down the walls that prevent you, no matter who you are or what your opinions might be, from experiencing the grace of God, especially in the life of the United Methodist Church. I pray we can find a third way of being in community with one another. Since my election to the episcopacy and my assignment to Missouri, I have said I wanted to figure a way to remain in spiritual community despite our theological differences. I still believe that is possible, perhaps not in our greater connection, but here in Missouri. Those of you who know me know that I have a bias toward the local church. I want our ministerial leaders to serve their mission field and become outwardly focused and spiritually centered Christ followers. It is so painful to me that our local leaders may be prevented from serving their context most fully.

Please pray for your pastor. Pray for your lay leader. Pray for the Missouri delegation who worked tirelessly to prepare for and serve at this General Conference. Know I pray for each one of you – gay, straight, young, old, single, married, lay, clergy, traditional, progressive, but all called to ministry through the vows made at your baptisms.

In addition to your prayers and conversation, I would ask your continued patience. In the heat of emotion, it's never good to take action. Rather, I ask you to wait. Who knows what God holds for us? I still say what I have been saying: God has something great in store for the Missouri Annual Conference. God is still doing incredible work in our local churches and their communities. General Conference is but one part of the Church. Our local churches are still the locus for the most powerful ministry and I am thrilled to be the bishop of such an active and loving annual conference.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RF' or similar initials, written in a cursive style.

Bishop Robert Farr  
Resident Bishop  
The Missouri Area of the United Methodist Church