

Nacoochee United Methodist Family,

On Friday, March 3, 2022, The Commission on General Conference announced the postponement of General Conference until 2024. Due to the Covid pandemic, the previous two General Conferences were cancelled in 2020 and 2021. A General Conference was scheduled for late August of 2022. However, because of the difficulty of international delegates to obtain visas, as well as health concerns, the Commission decided to cancel this year's General Conference. The next regularly scheduled General Conference is for 2024.

The General Conference is the body that sets official policy and speaks as the entire denomination.

As stated in the Commission's news release, "This marks the third delay of what many have expected to be a pivotal global gathering. After decades of intensifying debate and defiance of church bans on same-sex weddings and 'self-avowed practicing' gay clergy, the coming General Conference faces multiple proposals for denominational separation."

With the news of a delayed General Conference, leaders of a planned new denomination (The Global Methodist Church) announced that they are moving up the launch date to May 1, 2022, without waiting for General Conference to act.

As your pastor, I want you to know what is happening in our denomination. At our February Administrative Council meeting on February 21, I provided information on the possibility of another postponement of the General Conference and its implications for our church.

I also want you to know that Nacoochee UMC will begin a season of discernment over how the recent developments affect us and what will be our response, which will be an ongoing discernment process. As we go forward in this, our goal is to listen to one another in the congregation, have constructive and honest dialogue over the issues, and seek the Lord's guidance as a unified body.

This weekend, March 4-5, a group from the church, which is called The Dream Team, will attend a retreat focused on discerning our discipleship plan for NUMC. We will concern ourselves with the church's overall mission or purpose in our community. The group will continue to work after the retreat in discerning practical steps that lead people into deeper levels of discipleship. Everything the Dream Team discerns will be presented to the congregation for discussion and feedback before implementation. We covet your prayers for the work before us.

As we enter this season of discernment, we do so with complete faith in our God to lead us towards His desired future for NUMC. I am grateful for your commitment to this wonderful church family and feel more than blessed to be your pastor. We will continue to serve God, serve one another, and serve our community as always. Let us love one another as our Lord commanded us to do, especially if we find ourselves disagreeing. Let us covenant to let God do His work among us and through us, no matter what happens at the denominational level or what appears in the headlines regarding denominational decisions. I caution all of us to be

careful what we read on social media as the truth. The truth that guides us is God's word, the Bible.

This Sunday we begin a Lenten sermon series called "Connect." The focus of the series is on how we can connect with Jesus by living as He modeled when He walked among us. The series looks at five key habits of a Christian.

Thankful to be your pastor,

Keith