



**Council of Bishops**  
The United Methodist Church



March 13, 2020

*Kim Simpson, Chairperson of Commission on the General Conference*  
*Rev. Gary W. Graves, Secretary of the General Conference*  
*Sara Hotchkiss, Business Manager of the General Conference*

Dear Members of the Commission on the General Conference,

Grace and Peace in the Name of our Lord, Savior and Healer, Jesus Christ.

We write as the Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops to request that the 2020 General Conference, set to begin in six weeks, be postponed due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic.

We write out of a deep love for our global church and as a tangible way of giving spiritual and temporal oversight in our role as shepherds and we are guided by the core value of helping delegates to do their best work.

Newly imposed international travel restrictions to the US are making it more difficult for our Central Conference delegates. Consideration must also be given to the grave risk resulting from international travel and meeting in a very large gathering with the potential spread of the virus when we are together. We note the possibility that a large group infection may result in a quarantine.

We also identify the essential value of a global church that gathers with a fairness of representation. We note the injustice if a number of delegates from a particular area are not able to be present, due to Visa or health restrictions. We note the damage such a General Conference would do to the trust level if matters of great and lasting importance are voted upon. We are guided here by the core value of justice.

For these reasons, we urge that the General Conference be postponed.

We will work with you to reschedule this important work. In the interim, we will walk alongside those who suffer in this pandemic. We are grateful for United Methodists who so often are on the front lines in response to all who are vulnerable, who suffer, and who live in fear, because they are disciples of the healer, Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord,

+Kenneth H. Carter  
Resident Bishop, Florida Conference  
President, Council of Bishops  
[bishop@flumc.org](mailto:bishop@flumc.org)

Cynthia Fierro Harvey  
Resident Bishop, Louisiana Conference  
President-Designate, Council of Bishops  
[bishop@la-umc.org](mailto:bishop@la-umc.org)