



A Message from the Episcopal Office

Bishop Tom Berlin

November 6, 2024

Dear Florida Conference Clergy,

Before becoming bishop of The Florida Conference, I served Floris United Methodist Church – a large, diverse congregation just outside of Washington D.C. Being located so close to the nation’s capital, we were truly a “purple” church with members on both sides of the political spectrum. Many worked in the government, national security and the military. They were deeply vested in the health of our nation.

During elections members of the congregation were divided in their voting and the way they experienced the results of any election. Leading during such times was challenging. I want you to know that I am praying for your leadership. You are not alone. It is helpful to lean on your fellow clergy and wise laity for support and insight. Continue to seek God's guidance in your ministry, trusting that God will equip you with the grace and strength needed for this season.

Undoubtedly our communities and congregations this week are experiencing a range of emotions, from hope and joy to fear and uncertainty. You minister to diverse congregations, yet, our shared Wesleyan theology emphasizes the importance of love and grace, along with both personal and social holiness. As a pastor, no matter how one voted, if we do not understand what motivated others to vote so differently, then we have an opportunity for deep listening.

Reorient

Many feel disoriented by election results. Our primary identity is that we are children of God. This comes before party affiliation and allegiance to country. We are people for whom Christ died and was resurrected. We affirm this truth in baptism and remind ourselves of it whenever we receive holy communion. We can see that others are also children of God. As such, all people should be treated with respect and love. The call of Micah 6:8 “to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” is rooted in an understanding that all people and creation itself are cherished by God, who created each of us.

Those who feel disoriented by events such as this election can find a centering space in our United Methodist Articles of Faith and Social Principles. Many of our laity have never read these documents. This might be an opportune time to share them as a reminder of the framework of our essential beliefs and the beginning of our conversations over important social issues as United Methodists.

Pay Attention to the Vulnerable

Be aware that some groups in your church may feel especially vulnerable due to statements made during the campaign. Be attentive to those who may be struggling emotionally. Reach out with pastoral

care, offering a listening ear and compassionate support. Your presence and empathy can be a profound source of comfort. We serve Christ when we see and care for vulnerable people as he did in his ministry.

Prayer

Encourage your congregations to remain prayerful in the days ahead, focusing on healing and unity. Pray for civic leaders at every level of government, the incoming president and the people around him. He will soon be the president of the United States. His decisions, actions and utterances will affect each one of us somehow. Encourage your members to pray for elected leaders, regardless of their personal preferences, asking God to grant them wisdom and guidance.

Give Thanks for Service

I am thankful for every one of the thousands of people who offered themselves up for public service around this country. From school board races to judgeships and city council contests to national elections, it is a difficult time to offer oneself to public service. I am especially grateful for those who serve on the boards and commissions, councils and legislatures of this nation who are driven by a moral compass that points them in a worthy direction. The selfless ones usually don't make much news, but they write budgets, strike compromises and slog through endless meetings to keep the country running. We can be grateful and encourage those we know who fit that description.

Finally, I am struck by the beauty of the messiness of this country. After more than a year of bitter campaigning, Americans will show the world that we are a people committed to a peaceful transfer of control.

Elections often consume much of our attention, but our calling remains steadfast: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Continue to engage in acts of mercy and service that transcend political divisions. Encourage your congregations to participate in food drives, community clean-ups, and other service projects. These acts of kindness not only help those in need but also unite us in our shared mission to serve all of God's children.

I am grateful for you. Thank you for your dedication and faithful service.

In Christ,
Bishop Tom Berlin

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