



NORTH CARROLL COOPERATIVE PARISH GRACE | GREENMOUNT | ST. JOHN'S

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Information on The United Methodist Church's Way Forward For Young Adults (18-35), Youth (Grades 6-12) and Kids (Grade 3-5) January 13, 2019

The North Carroll Cooperative Parish including Grace, Greenmount and St. John's is a member of The United Methodist Church. The UMC is a worldwide denomination that dates back to 1784 when the movement started by Anglican Priest John Wesley became its own church. Since then the people called Methodists have taken different shapes and forms based on where the leadership calls them to go. In this case, the leadership is a connectional body called the General Conference which is made up of 50% laity and 50% clergy, each with equal voting authority. Although we have Bishops in the UMC similar to other denominations, they have no vote or voice at our General Conference gatherings.

Our General Conference with worldwide representation meets every 4 years to make decisions about the global church. This is the only group that can speak for the whole denomination. During our 2016 GC, it was decided that we would have a special General Conference in February 2019 with the specific task of deciding a way forward in regards to the church's view of human sexuality. The United Methodist Church has a current stance that all people are of sacred worth, but homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teachings. The impact of this stance is that, while persons who identify as homosexual are members and leaders within our churches, the UMC does not sanction same sex marriage nor ordain practicing homosexuals.

Some believe this is perfectly acceptable and right and others believe it discriminates against the LGBTQIA+ community. Further, there are others that believe marriage is not a kingdom of God issue and therefore we should not waste time arguing about it and spend resources on spreading the Grace of God.

Nobody knows what the General Conference will decide in February, but one thing that is likely is that sometime in the future, our parish including Grace, Greenmount and St. John's will have to make decisions about our way forward with The United Methodist Church. Sometime in the next few years it is possible that we may even have to take a church conference vote. That is among the reasons why we want to include children and youth in our early discussion on the way forward. Most of our current kids (3rd-5th graders) and youth (6th-12th) will be voting members by the time that happens. Once kids are confirmed, they are professing members with a vote and voice in church matters. Since 2011, we have confirmed over 50 youth. That is a powerful voting block; therefore, we want them to be informed and encouraged.

Pastor Melissa and I will be meeting with Youth and Kids as follows:

Saturday, January 19; 7 p.m. at NCCP St. John's _____ 3rd through 5th graders

Saturday, January 19; 7:30 p.m. at NCCP St. John's ____ 6th through 8th Graders

Sunday, January 20; 12:15 p.m. at NCCP Grace ____ High School

Sunday, January 20; 12:15 p.m. at NCCP Grace ____ Young Adult (18-35)

We will do our best to have age appropriate discussions. For example, for our 3rd-5th Graders we will talk about how families deal with conflict along with how the church makes decisions. We will not be talking about sexuality with them. We encourage you as parents to have more specific conversations about marriage and sexuality based on your child's maturity.

We will go a little further with the middle school students. We will mention the conflict is about marriage and full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons. We will not be graphic, but we will attempt to be honest about the conflict.

For the High School and Young Adults, we expect to have a more mature conversation. For all of the groups, we want to do more listening than speaking.

If you would like to know more about the Special General Conference or The Way Forward, Please visit <http://www.umc.org/topics/general-conference-2019-special-session>

We look forward to powerful conversations.

Sincerely

Rev. John B. Rudolph

Rev. Dr. Melissa Rudolph