God of all that is good and just, grant us courage to walk the path of faith with integrity and wisdom to rely on you to guide our feet toward the level ground of vital Christian community. Test us where we think we are strong, and strengthen us where we know we are wavering. Above all, create in us pure hearts given fully to love of your truth. Amen.

—*A Guide to Prayer for All Who Walk with God*
Schedule for the 2019 General Conference Day of Prayer
February 23, 2019

9:00–10:00 a.m.  Opening Plenary Prayer Service. Theme: Surrender to God’s Purpose

10:00 a.m.  Welcome by Hosts: Bishops Al Gwinn, Robert T. Hoshibata, and Debra Wallace-Padgett

10:05 a.m.  Europe and Eurasia prayer time led by Bishops Eduard Khegay and Harald Rücker

After the presentation, visit one or more of the seven unique experiential prayer stations in the bar of the Conference or the concourse area and pray for the missional challenges in Europe and Eurasia.

10:45 a.m.  Africa prayer time led by Bishops Mande Muyombo and John Yambasu

After the presentation, pray with a nearby friend or a new neighbor in your area of The Dome.

11:30 a.m.  USA prayer time led by Bishops Minerva Carcaño and Leonard Fairley

11:45 a.m.  Blessing of Prayer Room and Prayer Volunteers led by Bishops Bob Farr and Frank Beard

11:50 a.m.  Lunch / Conversation or Fasting / Self-Directed Prayer

Participants are invited either to visit one or more of the seven unique experiential prayer stations in the bar of the Conference or the concourse area and/or participate in self-guided prayer after fasting or eating lunch.

1:15 p.m.  Philippines and Southeast Asia prayer time led by Bishops Ciriaco Francisco, Rudy Juan, and Pedro Torio

After the presentation, participants are invited to pray aloud, standing or seated, in the Korean style of Tongsung Kido, a fervent crying out to God for the work of this Special Session of the General Conference.

2:00–3:30 p.m.  Closing Plenary Prayer Service. Theme: Seek God’s Will

Hosts for the Day of Prayer: Bishops Al Gwinn, Robert T. Hoshibata, and Debra Wallace-Padgett

Praying Our Way Forward Planning Team: Tom Albin, The Upper Room; Aletha Weatherall, Host Committee Prayer Team Representative; Raymond Trapp, General Conference Worship and Music Director; Bishops Young Jin Cho, Al Gwinn, Robert T. Hoshibata, Peggy Johnson, Eduard Khegay, Marcus Matthews, Gary Mueller, Joaquina Filipe Nhanala, Debra Wallace-Padgett, Peter Weaver, and Mark Webb.
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Dear Friends,

Leading and participating in the Praying Our Way Forward Initiative continues to be our great joy! This prayer emphasis began in the fall of 2016 within the Council of Bishops and expanded in January 2017 to include Annual Conference Days of Prayer. It has continued in recent months with a call to daily prayer and weekly fasting and culminates at this General Conference.

Now we arrive at the February 23, 2019 Day of Prayer. The twofold purpose of this special day is to pray for (1) the 2019 Special Session of General Conference and (2) increased effectiveness in fulfilling our church’s mission. How appropriate it is for United Methodists from around the world to spend hours in community, talking and listening to God on the day prior to a Special Session of General Conference. This Prayer Day signifies that the people called United Methodist recognize our dependence on God to lead us forward.

Many people have been involved in preparing for this day. We are especially grateful for the work of the Praying Our Way Forward team consisting of bishops from various regions around the world, representatives of the host committee for General Conference, and The Upper Room staff.

May today be a powerful and unifying day that sets the tone for our 2019 Special Session of General Conference. We count it a privilege to pray our way forward with you.
Blessed Redeemer, Savior of all humankind,  
We humble ourselves before the One who made us and remakes us. We praise you for your loving patience with us and your gracious invitation to us.  
May we hear your still small voice speaking to us in the midst of so many loud voices clamoring for our attention. Forgive us all, O God, for our anxiousness and tendency to control.  
We thank you for your willingness to help us even though we are unworthy. All of us have sinned and fallen short of your glory!  
Bless our United Methodists leaders who gather to make weighty decisions about the way forward for our global church. Shine upon their thoughts and their conversations. And may you be glorified by their conduct and their love for one another. Amen. (Bishop Al Gwinn)  

Gracious God, our loving Creator,  
We unite our hearts in prayer, grateful for our common mission and ministry as sisters and brothers in Christ. We seek your Holy Spirit in this time of conversation, prayer, and conferencing. Give us the courage to use our words and actions to build up your kingdom rather than tear it down. May we listen with open hearts and tender spirits that we may form our United Methodist Church into a body of dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ.  
We humbly acknowledge our human weakness and our failure to take up our crosses of sacrificial love for all creation and for all your children as Jesus taught us to do. We know much more lies before us to do as Jesus’ disciples transforming the world. Give us grace sufficient for these days as we gather in worship and praise, in conversation and prayer, in discernment and decision until we adjourn, led by your spirit, triumphantly moving out into the world with a renewed spirit to be in mission to the world, in ministry to all in the name of Jesus who has called us. Amen! (Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata)  

Triune God,  
We acknowledge that you are the Creator of the universe, the Savior of the world, and a constant presence in our lives. Thank you for who you are, for what you do and for the privilege of being yours.  
We come before you today, seeking your will for our United Methodist Church. We pray that during this Day of Prayer and in our subsequent three days of conferencing, you will give us clarity. We also pray that we will reflect you and your way in our tone, words, and attitudes.  
Now, we wait—patiently, expectantly—amazed that you, the God of all creation, are interested in relationship with us. We listen—intently, hopefully—grateful that you came in the person of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth to live, teach, die, and be resurrected from the dead so that we could know forgiveness and new life. We anticipate—tearfully, joyfully, humbled—that you and the Holy Spirit are as close to us as breath itself in this moment and always.  
Thank you, God, for hearing, receiving, and responding to our prayers in your way and time. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen and Amen. (Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett)
Praying with and for Europe and Eurasia  
Bishops Eduard Khegay and Harald Rückert

We invite you to a prayerful journey with us as we thank God and ask for help in the midst of challenges. We thank God for the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe with 16 countries, 20 languages, and 310 local churches that serve tens of thousands of people! We give thanks for the diverse family of God, for the richness of mission work and cultures, and for unity in Christ Jesus.

We give thanks for our church in Copenhagen, Denmark. This vital congregation has three gospel choirs and one classic choir. The Kefas Gospel Choir has moved the church and the population of Denmark for more than 40 years. It is wonderful when God is glorified through our songs of praise! We give thanks to God for the many children who are baptized throughout the year in this congregation and in every United Methodist congregation around the world.

We give thanks for the international UMC congregation in Copenhagen—a church of many immigrants from Western Africa. They actively worship, meet for fellowship, and do mission work in the midst of the capital of Denmark.

We give thanks to God for our sisters and brothers in Poland. Being a minority church in the country, United Methodists offer ministry through radio and share the gospel of Jesus Christ in the whole country.

We pray for children and for summer camps that greatly bless the kids and their families.

We give thanks for young people from Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan who gather every winter to learn more about what it means to be in mission and how they can participate in summer mission projects beyond the border of their annual conference.

We pray for Ukraine—a divided country with displaced people, broken families, and struggling economy. People need hope. Join us as we pray for peace in Ukraine. We pray for hope in the midst of these challenges. May our loving God use us, United Methodists, as instruments of peace and a source of hope.

We continue to bring people of Ukraine and Russia together to send the hopeful message to the world of our unity together. Despite political differences and media propaganda, we pray for one another and share bread together; we invite one another to our homes and travel to neighboring countries to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. May God help us be a light to the world!

Join us in prayer for the Migrant and Refugee Ministry of the Erlöserkirche UMC in Bremen, Germany. This ministry began years ago when the local church opened its doors to migrants and refugees. The congregation started to engage with this special ministry and experienced—as have many other congregations in Germany—radical change and reinvigoration. It began with Café Tiramisu on Friday afternoons. It became a place to gather, to have some
“Kaffee und Kuchen” (a great German tradition), and to socialize and engage with other people. The church offers language classes ranging from learning the alphabet to more advanced German language levels. Volunteers help with the bureaucratic processes of refugees, which includes explaining complicated official letters, providing legal advice, registering children for school, and accompanying them to the Migration Office or the Job Center.

Pray for the Iranians who attend a weekly gathering of church members and interested people to learn and ask questions about the Christian faith—a place where each person may speak and share his or her experiences. The overall theme is “family” because these Iranians found a family in addition to their family back home. Despite the challenges of fleeing to a new country where they did not know the culture, the language, or expectations of the society, they were welcomed and found acceptance and belonging in the church. We also ask for prayers for people all over the world who are making tough decisions: to pack up everything they have and to go wherever they can find refuge. We continue to pray for the flourishing of this ministry and similar ministries around the world.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Russia where we struggle with a negative past. We experience restrictions on mission and evangelism, limitation of religious freedom, and pressure on Protestant Christians and other faith groups based on their close affiliation with foreign entities—this is our current everyday reality. Help us, Lord, to continue to be brave and humble as we share our faith and remain faithful to you in the midst of many challenges.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

In Europe and Eurasia we pray for God’s wisdom and guidance for this General Conference. Join us in this prayer:

**God of grace and God of glory, as you gather United Methodists from various delegations throughout the world, we call on you, Holy Spirit, for you are welcome here.**

Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere. May your presence overwhelm us during this gathering in St. Louis. Breathe into each of us a renewed sense of life, unity, and love. Grant us your wisdom—fill us with courage and humility. Bless your church that we may be agents of transformation and hope in the world. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray. Amen.
Prayers from People of Europe and Eurasia

We give thanks for churches in the Nordic and Baltic area; for those who minister to children and young people; for new ministries among Muslims; for those called to ministry as deacons and pastors. We pray for young people who are called to start new faith communities; for our churches to be tangible signs of hope, peace, and love.
—Christian Alsted, Bishop of the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area

We give thanks for The United Methodist Church, for good ecumenical fellowship and cooperation between different churches. We pray for revival and church growth in this very secular context. May your gospel be spread across the land, and may the message of God’s love touch all people.
—Taavi Hollman, former superintendent, Estonia

We pray for the church. May its members courageously reach out to you, open their hearts to revival and help build your kingdom through their actions.
—Jori Brander, superintendent, Finland

Lord Jesus Christ, we give thanks for your grace and love for us each day. When challenges seem too difficult, remind us of the power of your Resurrection and the transforming strength of your love. Help us believe that the impossible can happen; may we live as if it might happen today. Amen.
—Christian Alsted, Bishop of the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area

Loving and merciful God, we pray for peace in Ukraine. We pray for sufficient food on our tables and good jobs on the market. We pray for justice and transparency in our government. We pray for reconciliation and healing among the people. Help us walk humbly and gently before you, and fill our hearts with patience. Help us accept each other with love and seek unity and peace. You are our Comforter, and your Spirit encourages us to live in faith daily. May we live faithfully every day as we learn the heart of peace and make peace in our home, neighborhood, city, country, and world. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
—Eduard Khegay, Bishop of the Eurasia Episcopal Area
We give thanks for the increasing number of young people in Hungary who are called to ordained ministry. We pray for all those who struggle to get by, particularly for the Roma people and for immigrants; for wisdom to understand God’s will and to discern a way forward for the church.
—Laszlo Khaled, superintendent, Hungary

We give thanks for 97 years of Methodist witness in Poland, for the new church building in Bielsko-Biała, for meaningful education in the School of Service for Lay People. We pray for the development of the new mission church in Czarnkow near Poznan, for new people to be called to ministry in The United Methodist Church (UMC) in Poland, for unity and a strong faith so that we may witness to your love among relatives, friends, and neighbors.
—Andrzej Malicki, leading superintendent, and Josef Bartos, district superintendent, Poland

We give thanks for saved souls, new ministry opportunities, and new churches in Romania. We pray for finances to build a church for the Roma congregation in Cornsestl and to buy property for a church in Cluj-Napoca; for ministry with marginalized people, particularly with Roma people and orphans, and with poor children and their families who visit the day care center.
—Daniel Topalski, superintendent, Romania

We give thank for the pastors who lead new types of ministry in Switzerland; for those who care for people with disabilities, the sick and the elderly.
We pray the UMC in Switzerland will strengthen its focus on mission and transformation of the world, even as it faces administrative and financial challenges.
—Claudia Haslebacher, superintendent, Switzerland

We give thanks for the new leadership team of The United Methodist Church in Albania. We pray for the renovation of the church building in Pogradec and for new church buildings in Elbasan and Tirana. We give thanks for the increased number of young people participating in the life of the church in Macedonia. And we pray for political and economic stability in Macedonia; for more workers in the field, both ordained and lay.
Wilfried Nausner, superintendent, Albania and Macedonia

We give thanks for radio and television programs that proclaim the gospel in the remotest desert areas of Algeria. We pray for those who have lost their jobs, face harassment or are separated from the people they love because of their faith in you; for the development and training of church leaders. We give thanks for the church in Tunisia, for its pastors and for those who share their faith in you. We pray for the many migrants who hope to continue their journey toward the north; for pastoral leaders and missionaries who are responsible for the church in Tunisia.
—Daniel Nussbaumer, superintendent, Algeria and Tunisia
We give thanks for those in France who share your gospel. We pray for unity and energy to revitalize existing congregations and to start new ones, for those preparing for lay or ordained ministry.
—Etienne Rudolph, superintendent, France

We give thanks for freedom in Serbia to worship and to proclaim the gospel. We pray for financial stability and self-sufficiency, for renewed joy and zeal in the ministry of the Lord so that the church gives hope to those who are losing hope.
—Daniel Sjanta, superintendent, Serbia

We give thanks for national gatherings of The United Methodist Church (UMC) in Austria, which have strengthened relationships between congregations; for all those who volunteer in projects run by their congregations. We pray for those called to ministry, for unity in the worldwide Methodist Connection for increased trust among the people of Europe.
—Stefan Schrockenfuchs, superintendent, Austria

We give thanks for faithful and generous church members in Bulgaria. We pray for those who face increasing poverty due to migration and demographic changes; for those who cannot afford the high costs of medicine, surgery, or dental treatment; for the UMC in Bulgaria and its leaders as they seek to consider and implement new strategies for the church—its growth and discipleship.
—Daniel Topalski, superintendent, Bulgaria

We give thanks for the newly established Russian-speaking UMC Agapein Prague, Czech Republic; for all those who minister in social care facilities. We pray for the kindergarten and mother and baby center at Litomerice UMC and for plans to run a school there.
—Petr Prochazka, superintendent, Czech Republic

We give thanks for the leadership of Bishop Patrick Streiff; for mission activities that have led to the birth of an emerging church in Dolny Kubin, Slovakia; for students in the Methodist theological program for the laity. We pray for small local churches struggling to survive, for Methodists in Slovakia to remain faithful in their witness to Jesus Christ.
—Stefan Rendos, superintendent, Slovakia

We give thanks for the many churches in Germany that are involved in ministry with refugees, for new migrant churches and international congregations settled in Germany, for steps taken to restructure and refocus the church for mission. We pray for Bishop Harald Rückert as he leads the church; for the German Tent Mission as it serves local congregations throughout Europe and continues to bless their neighborhoods; for the continued witness of United Methodist churches throughout Germany as they seek to be peacemakers and bridge-builders in a changing world.
—Barry Sloan, Director of Evangelism, Germany
In Africa we give thanks to God for

- spirituality
- diversity
- church vitality
- mission

Please join the United Methodists in Africa as we thank God for these answers to prayer. We ask United Methodists around the world to pray that this work will continue to grow and prosper. Pray that we all may live in joyful obedience. Pray that we all may do the work of an evangelist, proclaiming in word and deed, the love of God incarnate in Jesus Christ—and now made flesh in us.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

Pray with us in Africa as we lift up the following missional challenges:

- health
- education
- leadership development
- women’s empowerment
- agriculture

Please join the United Methodists in Africa as we ask God to meet these missional challenges. We ask United Methodists around the world to join us in prayer.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

The United Methodists in Africa are now praying for God’s wisdom and guidance for this General Conference. Please join the people of Africa as we ask God for wisdom and divine guidance for the delegates, the alternates, and the Council of Bishops.
We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

The people of Africa offer prayers for the 2019 General Conference and the important work it is to do.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!
See three Africa prayers for General Conference below. The first is in Swahili, the second in Kiluba, and the third in Shona. English translations appear below each.

**Mwenyezi Mungu,**
_Sauti yako inasema, “Kwa maana wanapokutana watu wawili au watatu katika jina langu, hapo mimi nipo pamoja nao”_

_Na sisi leo, tuko bapa juu yako, Bwana. Tunaomba uwepo wa Roho Mtakatifu kati yetu. Roho yako ya ukweli ilinde kila mumoja wetu, itupe bekima na busara ili mapenzi yako tu, ifanike bapa duniani kama mbinguni, tuna kuomba._

Dear God,

Your word tells us that where two or three gather in your name, you are there. Today, we are gathered here for you, Lord. We call upon the presence of the Holy Ghost in our midst. May your Spirit of truth guide each one of us and grant us wisdom and intelligence so that only your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven, we pray.

**Vidye Shakapanga,**
_Tubefwenya kumeso obe kulomba bwendeji bobe mu kino kyaba. Tubasake enka ntumbo yobe irweke mu kino kitango. Batwe tujimine ino aber kasuku ukande, tubalobe._

God, Father, the Creator,

We come before you to ask for your guidance in this place. May your glory manifest itself in this gathering. May only you increase; may we decrease, we pray.

**Ishe Mwari,**
_Rumbidzo itsva yaunopa ndeoyudanana semwri iwe pacbako unotida. Ita kuti rudo rwako runokunda mukuunganidza uku kuitira kuti tikwanise kuzadzisa basa redu rokuita kuti vadzidzi vave nekushandurwa kwenyika, tinonamata._

Lord God,

The new commandment you give is to love one another as you yourself love us. May your love prevail in this gathering so that we may be able to fulfill our mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world, we pray.
Praying with and for the USA
Bishops Minerva Carcaño and Leonard Fairley

Every good gift, every perfect gift comes from above (James 1:17).

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in the USA, we invite you to give thanks for

- New Church Development
- UMCOR Mission Teams
- Ministries with Young People

Mighty God we rejoice in your reckless and extravagant love scattered among us and found in the hearts of your people.

  You have indeed blessed us that we might be a blessing.
  We give you thanks and celebrate with grateful hearts all the amazing things your Spirit has done through us.
  May we never take for granted or lose sight of the truth that each of us has the capacity to do extraordinary things for the Lord.
  But the greatest gifts are those we have discovered and done collectively as the body of Christ.
  May we always live as people who see the possibilities and live the promises.
  We give thanks with joyful hearts for those things you have yet to do through the people called United Methodist.
  O God, our Creator, who gave us all that we are and have; release us from arrogance, anxiety, and fear of scarcity so that we we may share what we are, what we know, and what we have with one another and the world that you love.

  In the name of Jesus Christ, who makes all these things possible. Amen. (Bishop Leonard Fairley)

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

Together we pray for the following persons:

- those living in poverty
- those living as migrants
- those affected by gun violence
- those living in modern-day slavery

Creator God, forgive us when we forget that what we have—food, clothing, shelter, health—are gifts from your bountiful hand.
Strip away all that makes us selfish, and give us hearts of gratitude and love for our neighbor. Teach us how to care and how to share, that all may live abundant lives.

Jesus, our Lord, forgive us for rejecting you as you come among us in the life and struggles of our migrant brothers and sisters.

Open our eyes, ears, and hearts to the witness they bring when they proclaim that you are with us because they have seen you across the long miles of their migrant journeys.

Remind us that you do not build walls among us but rather beckon us to live as brothers and sisters on the lands you have formed and shaped as a blessing to all.

O Christ Jesus, you who bless those who seek peace, encourage us to take on the mantle of true peacemakers.

Stir within our hearts the vision of the prophet Micah of the time when nations would beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; strengthen our commitment to make this our daily labor.

Holy Spirit, we confess that we continue to reject those who differ from us in the color of their skin, the culture of their hearts, the language of their tongues.

On this day we especially pray that you would look upon the suffering of African-American men, young and old, who have been afflicted by our racism and enslaved by our hatred. Hold them and their families in your loving hands and heal them.

Hold us accountable for our wrongdoing and convict us of that holy truth: We are each made in your sacred image and called to live together as your beloved community.

All: In your mercy, O God, hear our prayers.
Christ our Lord, extend your forgiveness to us for our sins.
Holy Spirit, strengthen us to be your church in a hurting world. (Bishop Minerva Carcaño)

Unison Prayer for Wisdom and Guidance

Help us, Lord, to yield ourselves and our work to you.
May God’s will be our delight.
May God’s way have perfect sway in us.
May God’s love be the pattern of our work.
You alone, O Lord, are our hope.
You alone are our safety.
You alone are our strength.
Even with our fears and anxieties, our insecurities and uncertainties, may we swing like a needle point to the pole star of the Spirit.
Amen.
—Richard J. Foster
Gracious God, we bless this area that has been set apart for your people to seek your presence. Where there is hurt in our hearts, may we find healing in your presence. Where there is hope in our hearts, may our hope be in you and you alone. Where there is confusion in our hearts, may peace and clear direction be given by your Holy Spirit. Where there is weariness, may you grant us strength and courage. Your sons and daughters from around the world will gather in this space to pray for your will and for this conference. Cover each person in your grace; may each be reminded of your faithfulness and love. We thank you for your guiding presence, and we ask for your mercy. May we follow you wherever your Spirit leads. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen. (Bishop Bob Farr)

The Lord be with you! (Response—“And also with you”)

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for this gathering and for your promise to be with us as we assemble. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. May we be conduits of your mercy, grace, and love. Especially bless the volunteers who serve us and enable us to accomplish our work by providing acts of service and kindness. Send the gentle wind of your Holy Spirit to blow upon the embers of our hearts that we might be on fire for Jesus and follow his example of humility, love, and service. We pray this in the matchless name of Jesus. Amen. (Bishop Frank Beard)
Fasting in the Wesleyan Way

Fasting is a spiritual practice observed both by Jews in the Hebrew Scriptures and Christians in the New Testament, as well as many other world religions. The person choosing to fast takes time away from the needs of the body to give intentional time and attention to God. Fasting can include a number of options:

1. Abstaining from food and drink, abstaining from food only, or abstaining from certain foods for a limited period of time.
2. Simplifying the time needed to prepare and consume food in order to free time for communion and communication with God. John and Charles Wesley would have a simple meal of milk and bread, freeing the time normally required to prepare the meal and clean up afterward for devotion and prayer.
3. Fasting often means abstaining from food as a spiritual discipline. However, fasting can also mean abstaining from other activities that require time and investing this same time and attention in the divine-human relationship available to us in Jesus Christ. Some Christian friends abstain from television, the Internet, or other forms of electronic media for a day or part of the day to give more time to God and to their families.

For most Christians, prayer accompanies fasting. Many Christians view fasting as a way to intensify prayer and increase its effectiveness. Some believe that denying our physical hunger for a time heightens or enhances our spiritual sensitivity. Fasting adds power to prayer and helps us hear God’s voice more clearly.

What Is the Wesleyan Way to Fast?

During their days at university, John and Charles Wesley felt convinced that the earliest Christians fasted and prayed on Wednesdays and Fridays so they began to observe this same practice. As time passed and they began their mission to North America, they fasted mostly on Fridays, which was the Anglican norm. (See John Wesley’s journal for August 1739.)

The Wesley brothers usually began a Friday fast at sundown on Thursday, in continuity with Jewish and early Christian tradition. Both traditions marked the beginning of the day at sundown, not midnight. The Wesleys typically ended their fast at 3:00 p.m. on Friday.

In every expression of the means of grace, John and Charles Wesley included fasting or abstinence as one of the ordinary means set forth in the Bible. Jesus gave his disciples clear instructions about how to fast (see Matt. 6:16-18), and the early Methodists considered this practice important in their time. They believed it to be an excellent “means of confirming and increasing seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience; deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God and every holy and heavenly affection.” [Henry

Today in the ordination service, the bishop asks every United Methodist pastor the following question: “Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, by both precept and example?” And the ordinand responds, *I will so recommend.*

It is fitting that the Council of Bishops is calling the United Methodist people around the world to a season of fasting and prayer as we prepare for the Special Session of the General Conference in 2019.

**Guidelines for Observing the Wesleyan Fast**

1. **Learn from an experienced teacher.** If you have little or no experience with fasting in the Wesleyan way, seek the guidance of a spiritual director, pastor, or Christian friend who has this experience.
2. **Prepare physically for the fast.** If you are taking any form of medication on a daily basis, consult your physician to choose a means of fasting that does not conflict with your daily health practices.
3. **Prepare spiritually for the fast.** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and listen to the Spirit's response. Do not focus so intently on the *act* of fasting that you forget the *purpose* of fasting: to take time from earthly things to make time for spiritual things. You are going to meet God.
4. **Prepare nutritionally for the fast.** Decide whether you’re going to do a complete fast (water only), a no-solid-food fast (allows milk, juice, coffee and tea), a no-meat fast, or some other fast. No fixed rules exist. Simply prepare yourself to meet God. Keep it simple and keep the fast you set out to do. Some forms of fasting are more difficult than others. In time, the Spirit will lead you to try different types of fast.
5. **Determine the length of your fast.** The Wesleyan fast was observed from sundown Thursday till 3:00 Friday afternoon. Some Christians fast from sundown Thursday till sundown on Friday. Friday carries no special meaning; it became a historical day for fasting in many Christian traditions because of Jesus’ crucifixion on Friday. If another day of the week serves you better, fast on that day.
6. **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water while fasting, no matter what kind of fast you choose.
7. **Be mindful of your health.** Fasting for multiple days is more complex than a twenty-four-hour fast. Be sure your doctor is aware of your intention to fast for a longer time and agree to a plan that does not harm your health.
8. **Let love be your aim and your guide.** Sometimes you will want or need to change your fast day to another day of the week. For example, if you have an opportunity to share a meal with someone on your fast day, change it to a different day that week. Love is not arrogant or boastful or rude. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4.)
9. **Make God the sole focus of your fast.** Do not use fasting as a means to gain attention or admiration of others. (See Matthew 6:16-18.)

10. **Expect something spiritual to happen.** Jesus fasted for forty days before he began his earthly ministry. He fasted and prayed all night before he called the twelve disciples to follow him more closely. Some miracles of spiritual deliverance came only by prayer and fasting. As you follow Jesus’ teaching and example in faith and obedience, expect God’s response.

**Additional Resources for Fasting and the Wesleyan Fast**

1. See *The United Methodist Book of Worship* service for ordination and the instructions for the observance of Lent.

2. Read John Wesley’s sermon on Matthew 6:16-18, the seventh discourse in the series “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” (1747). It contains an extended discussion of the spiritual benefits of fasting.


Suggested Questions for Group Reflection during Mealtimes

As we prepare to do our work together, what gives me joy? What inspired me this morning?

What did I learn this morning that gives me confidence and hope?

Where have I seen God at work? Where do I feel confident that God’s work will continue?

As we enter these next three days, what do I worry about?

Jesus tells us “don’t worry” because God knows our needs. So why am I worried?

What would it mean for me to “desire first and foremost God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness” (Matt. 6:33)? What would it mean for us as The United Methodist Church?

As we begin our work as General Conference delegates tomorrow, what do I fear?

Why am I afraid?

If “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18), how can I be filled with this love? How can we be filled with love?

What does it mean to speak the truth in love? Is this my goal and desire?

In what ways does this General Conference evidence a commitment to loving and speaking the truth in love? How will my thoughts, actions, and prayers support this commitment?
Suggested Questions for Personal Prayer and Reflection

What gives me joy? What inspired me this morning?

What did I learn this morning that gives me confidence and hope?

Where have I seen God at work? Where do I feel confident that God’s work will continue?

As we enter these next three days, what do I worry about?

Jesus tells us “don’t worry” because God knows our needs. So why am I worried?

What would it mean for me to “desire first and foremost God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness” (Matt. 6:33)? What would it mean for us as The United Methodist Church?

As the General Conference delegates begin their work tomorrow, what do I fear?

Why am I afraid?

If “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18), how can I be filled with this love?

What does it mean to speak the truth in love? Is this my goal and desire?

In what ways does this General Conference evidence a commitment to loving and speaking the truth in love? How will my thoughts, actions, and prayers support this commitment?
FASTING

Joel 2:12-13
Yet even now, says the Lord,
return to me with all your hearts,
with fasting, with weeping, and with sorrow;
tear your hearts
and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate,
very patient, full of faithful love,
and ready to forgive.

Daniel 9:3
I then turned my face to my Lord God, asking for an answer with prayer and pleading,
and with fasting, mourning clothes, and ashes.

Matthew 6:16-18
“And when you fast, don’t put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They distort their faces so
people will know they are fasting. I assure you that they have their reward. When you fast,
brush your hair and wash your face. Then you won’t look like you are fasting to people,
but only to your Father who is present in that secret place. Your Father who sees in secret
will reward you.”

Acts 14:23
When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting,
they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

PRAYER

Psalm 51:1-2, 10
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your faithful love! Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion! . . . Create a clean heart for me, God; put a new,
faithful spirit deep inside me!
Daniel 9:18
We pray our prayers for help to you, not because of any righteous acts of ours but because of your great compassion.

Matthew 6:7-13
“When you pray, don’t pour out a flood of empty words, as the Gentiles do. They think that by saying many words they’ll be heard. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask. Pray like this:
Our Father who is in heaven,
uphold the holiness of your name.
Bring in your kingdom
so that your will is done on earth as it’s done in heaven.
Give us the bread we need for today.
Forgive us for the ways we have wronged you,
just as we also forgive those who have wronged us.
And don’t lead us into temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.”

Matthew 17:20
And [Jesus] said to them, “I assure you that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Go from here to there,’ and it will go. There will be nothing that you can’t do.”

1 John 5:14
This is the confidence that we have in our relationship with God: If we ask for anything in agreement with his will, he listens to us.

WORRY
Matthew 6:24-34
“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be loyal to the one and have contempt for the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you’ll eat or what you’ll drink, or about your body, what you’ll wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds in the sky. They don’t sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than they are? Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all of his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so
beautifully, even though it’s alive today and tomorrow it’s thrown into the furnace, won’t God do much more for you, you people of weak faith? Therefore, don’t worry and say, ‘What are we going to eat?’ or ‘What are we going to drink?’ or ‘What are we going to wear?’ Gentiles long for all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire first and foremost God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, stop worrying about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”
Dancing our Prayers, Psalm 96:1-3.
“Sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth!
Sing to the LORD! Bless his name!
Share the news of his saving work every single day!”

We celebrate the places where God’s work is thriving! Please join the United Methodists in the Philippines and Southeast Asia as we thank God for answered prayer. We ask United Methodists around the world to pray that this work will continue to grow and prosper. Pray that we may live in joyful obedience. Pray that we may do the work of evangelists, proclaiming in word and deed, the love of God incarnate in Jesus Christ—and now made flesh in us.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

We read the following in our Social Creed:
We believe in God, Creator of the world, and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God’s gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God’s handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities, to improvement of the quality of life, and to the rights and dignity of persons.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!
Among the many missional challenges we face, pray for us and pray with us as we struggle with the following issues:

- increasing poverty
- climate change
- human rights violations
- violence against women and children and indigenous people
- displacement and migration
- extra-judicial killings
- overseas Filipino workers

We express our gratitude for God’s gifts and graces and acknowledge our dependence on God’s guidance and generous help as we address specific challenges.

Join us in prayer for all those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In the first half of 2017 alone, 4,388 new patients were registered. That brings to 44,010 HIV/AIDS documented since the DOH began tracking the deadly virus 33 years ago in 1984.

We pray for 22 million (one-fifth of the country’s population) who still live below the national poverty line in the Philippines. Recent research by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) indicates that 90% of the 36 million people in Southeast Asia who live below the international poverty line are Filipinos and Indonesians.

We also pray for those affected by terrorist attacks (bombing and kidnapping). The Philippines ranked 10th in a list of countries most affected by terrorism in the 2018 Global Terrorism Index, according to recently published research by the Institute for Economics and Peace.

Please join us in prayer for everyone harmed by typhoons and other natural calamities. About 20 typhoons visit the Philippines each year. We are also in the Pacific “Ring of Fire” where earthquakes and volcanic activity are common.

Over 10 million Filipinos work abroad. While increased income for families brings blessing, that blessing deprives many children of parental guidance, creates dysfunctional families, and s in many socioeconomic problems.

Listen to the words of scripture: “We have this treasure in clay pots so that the awesome power belongs to God and doesn’t come from us. We are experiencing all kinds of trouble, but we aren’t crushed. We are confused, but we aren’t depressed. We are harassed, but we aren’t abandoned. We are knocked down, but we aren’t knocked out. We always carry Jesus’ death around in our bodies so that Jesus’ life can also be seen in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

More words from our Social Creed:
We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and in the elimination of economic and social distress.
We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God’s Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!

In the Philippines we pray for God’s wisdom and guidance for this General Conference. In particular we pray that God will be present in every part of our time together—in worship and prayer, in discussion and debate, in voting and discerning the way forward.

Together we pray for the delegates, the alternates, and the members of the Council of Bishops who will preside at each session. May we do our work with humility, compassion, and genuine love for one another—and for the mission of the UMC, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

Prayer 1: Dalangin namin ang katagumpayan na nagmumula sa ating Diyos na bubay na si Jesu Kristo.

Prayer 2: Dalangin namin ang tuloy-tuloy na pagsunod ng aming mga kapwa kamanggagawa sa salita ng ating Panginoong Jesus.

Prayer 3: Dalangin namin ang pagkakaisa at pagmamahalan sa loob at labas ng Iglesia Metodista.

We are the body of Christ—baptized in his name, redeemed by his blood, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Glory to God! Amen!
Appendix 1: Focus of the Seven (7) Experiential Prayer Stations

Seven (7) prayer stations are on the floor for delegates, bishops, and conference leaders; the concourse level has seven (7) identical prayer stations for visitors and guests. Below you will find the theme of each prayer station.

1. **Celebration and Thanksgiving**: prayer for the places where the work of God is thriving.
2. **Intercession**: prayer for the missional challenges of the region (spiritual leadership, financial resources, education, medical resources, food, water, etc.)
3. **Wisdom and Discernment**: prayer for the key issues before the GC2019; prayer for the delegates, the alternates, the worship team, the prayer team, the spiritual directors, and the bishops who will preside at each session.
4. **Unity**: prayer for remembering our oneness in Christ—one hope, one faith, one baptism. Water will be available along with instructions to remember our baptism and our oneness in the body of Christ.
5. **The Kingdom of God**: instruction for employing “The Lord’s Prayer”—God’s kingdom come, God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. . . . where persons understand evangelical witness and social justice as equal pursuits.
6. **Violence**: prayer for those who experience abuse, bullying, murder, war, human slavery, human trafficking, etc.
7. **Humility and compassion**: prayer for forgiveness; Jesus taught us to pray that God would “Forgive us for the ways we have wronged you, just as we also forgive those who have wronged us.” Forgiveness demands our awareness of the log in our own eye before we try to remove the speck from the eye of our brother or sister.
Appendix 2: Prayer Stations on the Floor Level for Delegates