



College of Bishops

North Central Jurisdiction

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Press Release

For immediate release
Tuesday, January 28, 2020

NCJ RECOMMENDS ELECTING ONE BISHOP IN 2020 TASK FORCE CREATED TO STUDY EPISCOPAL LEADERSHIP

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS... In a meeting last week in Chicago, the North Central Jurisdiction (NCJ) Committee on the Episcopacy and the NCJ College of Bishops have proposed to only elect one bishop during the NCJ Quadrennial Meeting, July 15-18 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The two groups have agreed to form a task force to make recommendations on episcopal leadership for the jurisdiction over the next four years.

In late August 2019, David Bard, Michigan Area Bishop and current President of the NCJ College of Bishops, received a letter from the General Council on Finance and Administration. The letter informed Bard that the jurisdiction had fallen below the membership threshold to sustain nine episcopal areas and that a reduction was possible. That decision is subject to a final determination by the 2020 General Conference in May 2020.

During the fall of 2019, the report of the Jurisdictional Study Committee was also released, containing a recommendation to maintain the current number of bishops in each jurisdiction through the 2020-2024 quadrennium. The NCJ College of Bishops has been in conversation with the NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy, chaired by the Rev. Sara Isbell, Illinois Great Rivers Conference, since the release of both recommendations. More recently, the release of the *Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation* has added new dimensions to this conversation.

The decision to reduce the number of episcopal areas in a jurisdiction is made by the General Conference, on the recommendation of the Interjurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy, which will meet during the May 2020 session. The Interjurisdictional Committee considers the recommendation and missional needs of the affected jurisdictions. If General Conference votes a reduction, the Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy (in this case, the NCJ) identifies and enacts the adjusted configuration of episcopal areas.

The NCJ College of Bishops and the NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy met in Chicago, IL, January 20-22, and made the following decisions:

- The NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy will recommend to the Jurisdictional Conference the election of one bishop in 2020, predicated on the retirements of Bishop Sally Dyck and Bishop Bruce Ough.
- The NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy and the NCJ College of Bishops will form a task force on episcopal leadership, to include representatives from the NCJ Mission Council. The task force will make recommendations on episcopal leadership for the jurisdiction, including (1) a recommendation for an interim period, 2020-2024, that will ensure episcopal leadership for each episcopal area during the quadrennium; and (2) recommendation of ideas to be developed for episcopal leadership in the jurisdiction beyond 2024.



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- Members of the task force are:
 - Rev. Sara Isbell, Illinois Great Rivers Conference, chairperson of the NCJ COE
 - Bishop David Bard, Michigan Area, president of the NCJ College of Bishops
 - Rev. Gregory Gross, Northern Illinois Conference
 - Bishop Frank Beard, Illinois Area (Jurisdictional Study Committee)
 - Ms. Nichea VerVeer Guy, Michigan Conference
 - Bishop Laurie Haller, Iowa Area
 - Rev. Kimberly Reisman, Indiana Conference
 - Bishop Tracy Malone, Ohio East Area
 - Three Representatives of the NCJ Mission Council
 - Rev. Ryan Russell, Iowa Conference, Chairperson of the Mission Council
 - Ms. Laura Witkowski, Michigan Conference
 - Rev. Chris Winkler, Northern Illinois Conference

“The church is dealing with a lot of change right now,” said Bishop Bard, “Your prayers for the jurisdiction and for the task force are appreciated.” Bard invited comments on these decisions be sent to: Rev. Sara Isbell Sisbell2@gmail.com and Bishop David Bard bishop@michiganumc.org.

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