

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ!

The Special Session of the General Conference has concluded with the passage of The Traditional Plan. No matter where you stand on the decision and the direction taken by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, the reality is that we are a Church in deep pain and great division. I want you to know I see and feel the hurt that many of you are feeling today—a feeling that your Church has let you down. These last few days have been emotional for all and deeply harmful for many. That reality grieves my spirit. I have been in deep prayer for all of you—for all of us.

Yet, in this very present reality is a truth. Christ is with us, amid our pain. In the midst of our brokenness, the resurrected Christ is with us. The One who offers us the promise of abundant life has not forsaken us. We are the body of Christ, called to loving God, loving one another and offering the love of Jesus Christ to the world.

The road ahead will not be an easy one for us as individuals and as a Church. I commit to traveling this road with each of you. Upper New York is a collection of beautiful people with a commitment to Christ and a potential for ministry that is endless. We can travel this road together. We can choose to stand against a culture of division and be a people who pray together, talk with one another, choose to love each other, and most importantly, help one another find the ways in which we live out God's call upon our individual lives and our life together with fruitfulness and faithfulness.

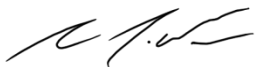
Over the next few weeks and months, our commitment to Christ and one another will be tested and given an opportunity to be lived out in ways that we cannot imagine - ways that can witness to the healing presence of God. We are a people of different opinions and convictions, but our hope is a common one found in the person of Jesus Christ! May we pursue that hope with one another, in one another, and for one another.

Let us remember that we are the Church and we can choose whether we will perpetuate the pain in one another or surround one another in a spirit of encouragement and love.

I hope that the clergy of the Upper New York Conference will join me on Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup> as we gather to be with one another and care for one another. I hope that laity and clergy will join me in one of the [scheduled regional gatherings](#) as we share a time of being with one another and reminding ourselves that God has called us to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ in the midst of the world.

Know I deeply love you, am grateful for you, while holding you constantly in prayer. Pray for me.

Blessings,



Bishop Mark J. Webb  
Upper New York Area