



**Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor  
Holston Conference  
of The United Methodist Church**

**July 22, 2016**

Dear Holston Friends,

*Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!*

I am sure that you are aware of the events last week as Jurisdictional Conferences elected new bishops for the United Methodist Church. We rejoice in the election of Holston's own David Graves who was consecrated last Friday and assigned to the Alabama – West Florida Conference. He will begin his responsibilities there on September 1.

Many of you are also aware that the Western Jurisdictional Conference elected and consecrated a bishop who is a self-avowed practicing homosexual. When jurisdictions were established eighty years ago, it was acknowledged that regional differences existed in our denomination. The events of last week indicate that differences still exist across the various regions of our church.

The South Central Jurisdictional Conference was in session and requested a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council in response to the Western Jurisdiction's election of a homosexual bishop. The Judicial Council will consider this matter at their next meeting, in Chicago, October 25-28, 2016.

As I stated in my Episcopal Address during the Holston Annual Conference, I am committed to upholding and following The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. Every person before they are ordained answers John Wesley's historic questions which conclude with "*And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake*". I understand that there are those in our connection who are not in agreement with our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality. However, we will keep our rules as stated in The Book of Discipline until the General Conference changes them. If we do not do that, we will have chaos.

Many are wondering what we should do. We should keep on being the church and disciples of Jesus Christ. The church is God's idea. It was first revealed at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus told Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Jesus did not say, "I will build the church". He said, "I will build my church."

Friends, regardless of how far off course we may get as a part of the body of Christ, the church still belongs to Jesus! I bid you pray that we will find a way through this current season of unrest and unwillingness of some within the United Methodist Church to keep the covenant that we have promised to keep.

Let me ask that you keep the promises you have made and be faithful to your local church. Continue to uphold it by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. I believe that God who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it and we will come out on the other side of this time of uncertainty stronger than we have ever been before.

Grace and Peace,  
Dindy Taylor