

## **The United Methodist Bishops' Call to Prayer for 131 Days: Prayer Resources for the Annual Conference Day of Prayer for The United Methodist Church, the 2016 General Conference, and the World**

### **Overview**

This document is a work in progress and a new version will be updated regularly as we live into this movement of the Holy Spirit within the Council of Bishops and the Prayer Ministry Team of the 2016 General Conference. Our hope is that the prayer network within the United Methodist Church will continue to grow as the 131 Days of Prayer continues.

Below you will find the resources available this week and I will continue to receive and distribute information as it becomes available in my role as Co-Chair of the GC2016 Prayer Team and Dean of The Upper Room Chapel.

Please feel free to contact me via email: [talbin@UpperRoom.org](mailto:talbin@UpperRoom.org) or phone: 615-340-7110. If the matter is urgent, my mobile phone is 615-500-5741.

### **Invitation**

The December 2, 2015, press release from the Council of Bishops contained the following information and the invitation for anyone interested to contact his or her annual conference office. Below is an extract from the full press release:

*The Council of Bishops has invited each of the annual conferences to host a 24-hour prayer effort on a specific date, with the intent of creating a groundswell of prayer in the days leading up to the General Conference....As the spiritual leaders of The United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops conceived the plan for a prayer vigil in the months before the event as a meaningful way to focus spiritually on the experience, as well as to surround the delegates and church leaders with prayer for a General Conference that inspires us in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*

*"United Methodists from all over the world will come together in the spirit of Christian conferencing in Portland," said Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of the North Alabama Conference and chairperson of the "Council Life Together" team, which helped initiate the idea. "We want those attending to know that their United Methodist family is praying for them and with them -- that God will lead them in the decisions that they will make for the future of our church and that the event will be a positive Christian witness in how we conference together."*

*"We are encouraging people to pray for God to guide delegates and church leaders as they prepare for General Conference," said Bishop Al Gwinn, who chairs the Council's prayer subcommittee. "We hope they will pray that God would give them an understanding and loving heart; that all will have a spirit of humility and a desire to do God's will; and that the fruit of the Spirit would be evident in such a way that all who observe would sense that true Christian conferencing will take place."*

## Partnership

The 131 Day of Prayer Initiative of the Council of Bishops and the Prayer Ministry Team of the 2016 General Conference, along with the General Agencies of The United Methodist Church and historic partners of the General Conference Prayer Ministry have responded positively to this invitation to prayer.

## Contents

Overview	p. 1
Invitation	p. 2
Partnership	p. 2
Suggestions for a Place to begin, Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett & Bishop Al Gwinn	p. 3
Resources for a 1-hour prayer experience	p. 4
Resources for a 3-hour prayer experience	p.
Resources for a 6-hour prayer experience	p.
Resources for a 12-hour prayer experience	p.
Resources for a 24-hour prayer experience	p.
Other Recommended Resources and Ideas for Prayer	p.
Appendix 1: Praying for the General Conference, the Elected Delegates and Alternates	
Appendix 2: Praying for the General Conference Committees	
Appendix 3: Praying for the General Agencies that implement the decisions of the General Conference	
Appendix 4: Praying for the United Methodist Leaders: Council of Bishops, Jurisdictional Conferences, Central Conferences, and Annual Conferences	
Appendix 5: How to participate in the creation of 2016 a unique Protestant Prayer Bead Strand for the General Conference	
Appendix 6: How to use <i>The Upper Room 60 Days of Prayer for General Conference 2016</i> as an individual, a family, a small group, a local church, a district, or an annual conference	
Appendix 7: How to use the online Prayer Website, Prayer Wall and Prayer Calendar	
Appendix 8: How to create a Prayer Room or Sacred Space	
Appendix 9: How to participate as a Prayer Volunteer/Prayer Delegate in Portland, May 10-20, 2016	
Appendix 10: Prayer Resources for Group Experiences including a Concert of Prayer	
Appendix 11: Other Online and Social Media Resources	
Appendix 12: Models from Other Annual Conferences for their 24-Hour Prayer Experience	

**Below you will find the initial letter containing suggestions for a Place to begin from Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett and Bishop Al Gwinn:**

*Prayer Task Force Suggestion Sheet (Dec. 2, 2015)*

*We are excited about the innovative and excellent twenty-four hour Prayer Vigils that your Conference leadership will design. We are encouraged at what might be accomplished through this 3,144-hour God-honoring event (131 days x 24 hours)!*

*Even though we know that many of you are already at work in commissioning and/or designing your Prayer Vigil, we thought it might be helpful for us to offer a few basic ideas that could be used or could serve as a trigger for your thinking. Below are those ideas.*

- 1. Many of you already have Prayer Teams who have demonstrated their creativity with previous Vigils and you plan to simply cast the vision of what might happen through this time of trusting and honoring God.*
- 2. Some of you are considering having each District within your Annual Conference cover an assigned section of the 24-hours in the way that they choose.*
- 3. Others of you may want to have a Conference-wide event earlier than the 24-hour time slot you are covering as a "kick off" event that could bring greater passion and energy for the time.*
- 4. One Conference we heard about wants to have all of its congregations involved so they are dividing 24 into the number of congregations they have and then asking that number to cover each hour of the vigil. Thus, bringing greater ownership to the plan.*
- 5. Another idea is to have a particular place where anyone could come during the 24-hours and join in praying. A designated leader would be present each of the 24-hours.*

*And the list could go on and on! In fact, we are looking forward to hearing from many of you as to how you plan to cover your assigned day! We are hoping to include some of your designs in our next general church press releases!*

***A final note of great importance!*** *We are not attempting to have a "pass the baton" approach to each 24-hour prayer section. So, no one needs to be concerned about what time zone they are in. Forget the time zones and simply mark when your assigned day begins and when it ends. We are confident our God is not so technical that this might be disturbing to the Lord of the Church! We know that God looks upon the heart and not upon the outer appearances.*

*The peace, love and grace of our Savior be with you as we seek to join hearts and hands in this special time of intercessory prayer!*

*Advent Blessings,*

*Debra Wallace-Padgett & Al Gwinn*

## Resources for a 1-hour prayer experience

The basic information needed for this prayer experience will be found below and in **Appendix 1: Praying for the General Conference, the Elected Delegates and Alternates**.

### SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

It will be helpful to have a Bible, a cross, the United Methodist logo with the cross and flame, a globe or world map, paper to write on and pens or pencils for writing, a candle, and a means to light the candle. You will also need the list of the elected delegates and alternates from your Annual Conference.

When you are ready to begin, we encourage you to use these words or others of your own choosing:

- We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- We place this cross is to remind us that we serve a risen Lord who is the head of the church.
- We place The United Methodist cross and flame to remind us that we were formed in 1969 from the union of two expressions of the Church universal, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church (the two flames by the one cross).

### OPENING SCRIPTURE

[When you are ready, please read the following passage from the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, verses 1-5 (the Common English Bible translation is printed below).]

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God  
and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> The Word was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup> Everything came into being through the Word,  
and without the Word  
nothing came into being.

What came into being

<sup>4</sup> through the Word was life,  
and the life was the light for all people.

<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

Prayerfully reflect on this truth, that the Word—Jesus Christ—was with God and was God from the very beginning. Everything that “came into being” did so because the Word—Jesus—was involved in the creation of all things—all people—all planets—all solar systems—everything! We are one in Christ by creation and by redemption. Through our profession of faith in Christ and baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually connected to one another.

What prayers, songs or feelings or pictures come to you now as you reflect on the reality Jesus Christ is the creator, light and life of all people?

[Pause here for two to five minutes. This will allow time to center ourselves in Christ, pray, sing and draw, etc.]

Now, offer a prayer for yourself and for all your brothers and sisters in the United Methodist Church who have responded to the call to Christian discipleship. Open yourself to this holy mystery of our oneness in Jesus Christ. Meditate on the spiritual reality that we are sisters and brothers. Pray that this deep and essential truth will undergird and guide all preparation for the General Conference, all the interactions during the General Conference and the commitments made at the General Conference.

[Pause three to five minutes for prayer, reflection and writing, etc.]

When you are ready, read this verse from John 1:14 CEB.

<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh  
and made his home among us.  
We have seen his glory,  
glory like that of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.

Let the Holy Spirit help us consider anew the mystery of the incarnation, the cosmic Christ who was involved in all creation, now come to us as a baby—so vulnerable—so powerful—so unique. Consider Charles Wesley's poetic reflection on the mystery of how the unique Word of God became flesh, "God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man."

What prayer or thought comes to you now as you consider the mystery of the incarnation—God with us—the Word become flesh?

[Pause to reflect and pray. Feel free to write or draw. If there is a group, invite people to briefly tell about the thoughts and prayers that come to them today.]

When you are ready, consider the character and content of the living Word of God who "became flesh and made his home among us...full of grace and truth." As you consider the essential nature of Jesus Christ—full of love, grace and truth—what prayer, song, feelings and pictures come to you now?

[Pause for two to five minutes to allow yourself to write or draw or pray the thoughts and feelings that come to you.]

## THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Now go to Appendix 1, study the picture and read the text. Consider the awesome responsibility of these 864 men and women from around the world, meeting for 11 days for worship, prayer and discussion in order to discern God's will and direction for 13 million United Methodists.

Pray this assembly, its member and its leaders, as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray. [Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write or draw.]

#### THE DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Now, take up the list containing the names of the lay and clergy delegates of your annual conference. If you wish, you can also pray for the delegates and alternates from your Jurisdiction or any of the other areas of the world.

Pray for the delegates and alternates as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray.

#### THE WORLD

The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary church—engaged in God's mission to seek and save the lost, the least and the lonely. If you have a globe or world map, prayerfully gaze at the world, imagine the seven billion people on it, and pray the prayer that God places on your heart.

Pray that God's mission—to seek and to save the lost—will be the top priority of all Christians, in all churches, including the United Methodist Church around the world.

[Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write or draw. Be attentive and receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are there particular people or places or situations in the world that you feel led to pray for now?]

#### THANKSGIVING

As you close your hour of prayer. Give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ—the Word of God become flesh—full of grace and truth. Give thanks to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us—teaching us everything that Jesus taught the first disciples.

If you feel led, you might want to conclude this hour with The Lord's Prayer.

## Resources for a 3-hour prayer experience

The basic information needed for this three hour prayer experience will be found below and in the following appendices:

- Appendix 1: Praying for the General Conference, the Elected Delegates and Alternates**
- Appendix 2: Praying for the General Conference Committees**
- Appendix 4: Praying for the United Methodist Leaders: Council of Bishops, Jurisdictional Conferences, Central Conferences, and Annual Conferences**
- Appendix 5: How to Participate in the Creation of the unique Protestant Prayer Bead Strand for the Delegates, Alternates and Leaders of the 2016 General Conference**
- Appendix 6: How to use The Upper Room 60 Days of Prayer for General Conference 2016 as an Individual, Family, Small Group, Local Church, District, or Annual Conference**

### SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

It will be helpful to have a Bible, a cross, the United Methodist logo with the cross and flame, a globe or world map, paper to write on and pens or pencils for writing, a candle, and a means to light the candle. You will need the list of the elected delegates and alternates from your Annual Conference. Please download the free PDF file containing the appropriate language version of *The Upper Room 60 Days of Prayer for General Conference 2016* from the website (which will be live by no later than January 21, 2016) [www.60daysofprayer.org](http://www.60daysofprayer.org). You will also need to order the supply kit for the Protestant Prayer Bead Strand for General Conference. This is available from [www.PrayerWorksStudio.com](http://www.PrayerWorksStudio.com) and there is a cost for the supplies, shipping and handling.

When you are ready to begin, we encourage you to use these words or others of your own choosing:

- We light this candle as a reminder that Jesus Christ is the light of the world.
- We place this cross is to remind us that we serve a risen Lord who is the head of the church.
- We place The United Methodist cross and flame to remind us that we were formed in 1969 from the union of two expressions of the Church universal, the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church (the two flames by the one cross).
- We place this copy of *The Upper Room 60 Days of Prayer for General Conference* on the table to remind us that 13 million United Methodists around the world will be joining us in prayer the 40 days before the General Conference, the eleven days of the event, and the nine days after it is completed.
- We place these supplies for the Protestant Prayer Bead Strands on the table, asking God to help us create a beautiful gift for each of the General Conference delegates, alternates and leaders—this gift will be a physical reminder that we are praying for them and with them.

## OPENING SCRIPTURE

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- <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was with God  
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and without the Word  
nothing came into being.  
What came into being
- <sup>4</sup> through the Word was life,  
and the life was the light for all people.
- <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

Prayerfully reflect on this truth, that the Word—Jesus Christ—was with God and was God from the very beginning. Everything that “came into being” did so because the Word—Jesus—was involved in the creation of all things—all people—all planets—all solar systems—everything! We are one in Christ by creation and by redemption. Through our profession of faith in Christ and baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are spiritually connected to one another.

What prayers, songs or feelings or pictures come to you now as you reflect on the reality Jesus Christ is the creator, light and life of all people?

[Pause here for two to five minutes. This will allow time to center ourselves in Christ, pray, sing and draw, etc.]

Now, offer a prayer for yourself and for all your brothers and sisters in the United Methodist Church who have responded to the call to Christian discipleship. Open yourself to this holy mystery of our oneness in Jesus Christ. Meditate on the spiritual reality that we are sisters and brothers. Pray that this deep and essential truth will undergird and guide all preparation for the General Conference, all the interactions during the General Conference and the commitments made at the General Conference.

[Pause three to five minutes for prayer, reflection and writing, etc.]

When you are ready, read this verse from John 1:14 CEB.

- <sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh  
and made his home among us.  
We have seen his glory,  
glory like that of a father's only son,  
full of grace and truth.



Let the Holy Spirit help us consider anew the mystery of the incarnation, the cosmic Christ who was involved in all creation, now come to us as a baby—so vulnerable—so powerful—so unique. Consider Charles Wesley's poetic reflection on the mystery of how the unique Word of God became flesh, "God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man."

What prayer or thought comes to you now as you consider the mystery of the incarnation—God with us—the Word become flesh?

[Pause to reflect and pray. Feel free to write or draw. If there is a group, invite people to briefly tell about the thoughts and prayers that come to them today.]

When you are ready, consider the character and content of the living Word of God who "became flesh and made his home among us...full of grace and truth." As you consider the essential nature of Jesus Christ—full of love, grace and truth—what prayer, song, feelings and pictures come to you now?

[Pause for two to five minutes to allow yourself to write or draw or pray the thoughts and feelings that come to you.]

## THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Now go to Appendix 1, study the picture and read the text. Consider the awesome responsibility of these 864 men and women from around the world, meeting for 11 days for worship, prayer and discussion in order to discern God's will and direction for 13 million United Methodists.

Pray this assembly, its member and its leaders, as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray. [Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write or draw.]

## THE DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Now, take up the list containing the names of the lay and clergy delegates of your annual conference. If you wish, you can also pray for the delegates and alternates from your Jurisdiction or any of the other areas of the world.

Pray for the delegates and alternates as the Holy Spirit leads you to pray.

## APPENDIX 6: THE UPPER ROOM 60 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR GENERAL CONFERENCE 2016

[Take the 60 Day of Prayer document and read the first three paragraphs of page 7 after giving this introduction, or words of your own choosing.]

Friends, we are gather here in response to the invitation from the Council of Bishop that every one of the 131 Annual Conferences commit themselves to 24 hours of prayer for our church, the upcoming General Conference and God's mission to reach the whole world with the whole gospel. We introduce this 60 Days of Prayer to you today so it can help us pray together; and, we use it with the hope that you will take it back to your family, your small group, your local church, your district and other Annual Conference events.

Today we will read portions of the 60 Days to help us pray for our church and the 2016 General Conference. Will someone please read the first three paragraphs of page 7?

[Pause for the reading. Then the leader asks,]

What thoughts or feelings come to you as you consider 13 million men, women, youth and children praying together for 60 days?

[Pause to let people answer.]

Let us pray now, for grace and guidance for the United Methodist Church, and our fellow members around the world. Feel free to pray aloud or in silence as we give the next few minutes to pray for the creativity and strength to engage our entire denomination in earnest, fervent prayer as the Holy Spirit might lead us to pray together beginning March 31 through May 29, 2016.

[Pause to let the people pray.]

Now, would someone else read the third paragraph on page 8. [Leader note, try to have a diversity of ages and genders read throughout this exercise. After the reading, ask this question,]

Do you agree or disagree with the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus and the teaching of the Wesley brothers. To say, "God does nothing apart from prayer" is a very strong statement.

[Pause to let people share their thoughts. Now have a different person read the final paragraph on page 8 and the remainder of the text on page 9.]

Is God calling you to gather and lead your family, your small group, your local church or your district in an intentional, 60 days of prayer? Let us pray together for the grace and guidance we need. Feel free to pray silently or aloud—as you feel led.

[Pause for prayers by the people.]

#### APPENDIX 5: PRAYERFULLY CREATE THE FIRST PROTESTANT PRAYER BEAD STRAND

[The leader will have to ordered the supply kit for this project of praying with our hands. The supplies should now be provided to all of the participants. The leader will begin by asking,]

How many of you believe that it is possible to pray with your eyes open? Would any of you be willing to share an experience of praying with your eyes open?

[Pause to let a few people comment. Then the leader will ask,]

How may of you believe it is possible to pray with your hands? Would any of you be willing to share an experience of praying with your hands or your body?

[Pause to let a few people comment or share an experience. If there is no response, the leader could ask, have any of you hear of a prayer shawl ministry? Or, have you heard of people making prayer quilts or prayer blankets for children?]

In the Supply Kit for the General Conference Prayer Bead project, you will find a DVD with various segments for this three-hour prayer experience. If time allows, play the segment by Kristen Vincent describing the history of Protestant Prayer Beads. If time is short, the leader can summarize it briefly. Then use these words or some others of your own choosing:]

It is our intention to provide the opportunity for United Methodists around the world to pray with their hands by making a simple Protestant Prayer Bead strand with the unique General Conference 2016 medallion with the UM cross and flame, the year, and the picture of a mountain sheep to remind us that we are engaged in the mission of the good shepherd, to go and actively seek the one sheep missing from the flock.

[Note for Leaders in Central Conferences: If the prayer experience is in one of the Central Conferences outside the USA, please play the DVD segment by Kristen Vincent describing the materials and giving the participants permission to choose materials similar and available in the country where the event is taking place. The Central Conference event leaders will need the unique UMC medallion and that will be available through the secretary of the General Conference at the Pre-Conference Briefings for the Central Conferences.]

Now we will play the video clip with Kristen Vincent demonstrating how to make the 2016 General Conference Prayer Bead Strand. In case there is a problem, in the kit you will find a completed sample of the final product and you will also find a three-page document that gives the step-by-step instructions in writing. [Play DVD]

Now that we have the technical instructions, I want to provide you with some additional spiritual guidance. As you create the General Conference Prayer Bead Strand, we ask that you pray for the person who will receive the Prayer Strand you are making. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you about this specific person and what spiritual strength and guidance he or she might need as they prepare for the journey, as they read the many pages of documents that will be considered, and as seek God's guidance for the United Methodist Church for the next four years.

Sometimes, as we prayerfully construct the beads, there will be no specific insights that come. At other times, people just like you and I have received very specific guidance. One man in the past felt specifically guided to pray for a young man who was a first time delegate. The prompting was to pray that the young man would wisdom beyond his years and the leadership insights needed for our church at this particular General Conference. Likewise, one woman felt guided to pray for a woman delegate from Asia, who was feeling uncertain about her place in the UMC and doubted her ability to speak during the General Conference. The woman creating the prayer bead strand felt the Holy Spirit leading her to pray for the Asian woman who would receive the beads, that she would have holy boldness, deep confidence that God had called her to be a delegate for such a time as this, and that she would have the words to speak when she felt the prompting to use her voice and share her perspective in the legislative committee and on the floor of the General Conference. My request to you is that you simply be open and attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as you pray and create this strand of Protestant Prayer Beads for the General Conference. I will also alert you that we will make one or two more Prayer Strands through the pattern of our next three hours together.

[Allow each participant time to make one strand of prayer beads, then ask them to return to the circle or seating area for the entire group.]

[When the group has completed the first strand and returned to the group, ask them to tell about their experience of making the Prayer Strand for a delegate or leader. Be attentive to allow time for men and woman, young and old, to share. Then the leader will lead the group in a brief prayer and transition into the next prayer experience using the 60 Days of Prayer.]

Gracious and loving God, we offer our prayers and this gift of Prayer Beads to You. May the person who receives them receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised, so that we might “go and make disciples”. AMEN.

#### APPENDIX 6 AGAIN: THE UPPER ROOM 60 DAYS OF PRAYER

We are now going to have another prayer experience before we make a second strand of the Protestant Prayer Beads—praying with our hands. I need two people to read, one to read the scripture on page 10 and the other to read the meditation on that scripture text by Rev. Laura Jaquith Bartlett, the Worship Leader for the 2016 General Conference.

[Pause for the reading of Matthew 28:19-20, followed by a second person (female if possible) to read the meditation.]

This passage in Matthew 28:19-20 is sometimes referred to at “The Great Commission”. The resurrected Jesus is commissioning his disciples to continue the work God had given him to do—to go discipling, to go baptizing, and to go teaching. Please join me in prayer that God will empower us to do the work Jesus called and commissioned us to do.

[Pause for two or more minutes to all people to pray, reflect and write. At the end of this time the leader will say,]

Jesus, we are your disciples—teach us to pray and guide us in our going. AMEN.

#### APPENDIX 5 AGAIN: PRAYERFULLY CREATE THE SECOND PROTESTANT PRAYER BEAD STRAND

[The leader will instruct the participants to pick up the needed supplies and return to the place where they made the first strand of Prayer Beads. The leader will then ask the host or one of the participants to offer a prayer. The leader can use these words or some others,]

As we begin to “pray with our hands” and make a second Prayer Bead strand for another delegate, or our pastor, or for ourselves, who would be willing to voice a prayer for us as we begin this work?

[Allow the person to pray and then the group can begin their work. If time and materials allow, the group can make a third strand for themselves, another delegate, or for their pastor.]

[When the group has completed the second (and or third) strand and returned to the gathering place, invite them again to tell about their experience of making the Prayer Strand. Be attentive to allow time for men and woman, young and old, to share. Then the

leader will invite another member the group to offer a brief prayer for the person who will receive the gift of the General Conference 2016 Prayer Bead Strands just created.]

[Pause for prayer. Then the leader will say,]

As we conclude this three-hour prayer experience, we want to pray for one another and for the world. Please find someone new to be your prayer partner, groups of two or no more than three (if we have an odd number of participants).

[Pause to let the new groups form. Then guide the group using these words or others of your own choosing,]

## THE WORLD

The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary church—engaged in God's mission to seek and save the lost, the least and the lonely. And we are missionary people, Jesus Christ has called and commissioned us to participate in his mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world. To do that we must be ready and willing to go.

In this first prayer experience, I would like you to name the most important prayer need in your life today. If you could ask God for only one thing, what would it be? [Pause to let the participants reflect for 30 to 60 seconds.] Now, I would like you to share this prayer request with your partner and pray for one another. Your prayer for the other person may be silent or aloud. God will have already heard the need as your partner shared it with you. I will give you three or four minutes to do this, then we will have another guided prayer experience.

[Pause and watch to see that each small group has time to pray for one another. Then the leader may say,]

Look at this globe or world map. If we do not have one you can see, imagine yourself in space and looking down on the earth. There are seven billion people on this planet. Who are the people that you feel guided to intercede for? Is there a region of the world that God is prompting you to pray for? A certain group of people, perhaps those with HIV/AIDS, orphans, slaves, boy soldiers or girls forced into sexual slavery?

Pray that God's mission—to seek and to save the lost—will be the top priority of all Christians, in all churches, including the United Methodist Church around the world.

[Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write or draw. Be attentive and receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are there particular people or places or situations in the world that you feel led to pray for now?]

## THANKSGIVING

As close our three-hour prayer experience, give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ—the Word of God become flesh—full of grace and truth. Give thanks to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us—teaching us everything that Jesus taught the first disciples. Silently offer your prayer of thanksgiving.

[Pause for a minute or two of silent prayer. The leader might want to conclude this hour with The Lord's Prayer.]

### **Resources for a 6-hour prayer experience**

[This resource is under construction. It will include guidance in leading a "concert of prayer."]

### **Resources for a 12-hour prayer experience**

[This resource is under construction.]

### **Resources for a 24-hour prayer experience**

[This resource is in process. It will include guidance in how to pray around the world using the times zones to help pray for each part of the world as people in that time zone awaken and when they go to sleep.]

## **Other Recommended Resources and Ideas for Prayer**

### Prayer Guide from the North Alabama Prayer Team:

"Called to Action"

*Matthew 28: 19-20—"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

This great commission pronounced by Jesus before he ascended is an echo of his first command to his first disciples in Matthew 4:19: "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people." From the beginning of his ministry until he left this earth, Jesus called his disciples to action. His language was imperative. Jesus' call to action remains imperative for us today.

**Come!** First we must move from where we are to where Jesus is.

**Follow!** But Jesus does not stand still. Like the first disciples, we learn as we walk. **Go!** We must go into the world; the world will not come to us.

**Make!** Disciples are created through a loving, continuous, relational witness.

**Baptize!** Carry the water, the symbol of the Holy Spirit poured out, to the world.

**Teach!** Share everything Christ commanded us to do.

**Remember!** Act with the confidence of Christ, because you remember.

Thousands of delegates will converge for General Conference to determine the future of the United Methodist Church. They have agreed to lay down their nets to come and follow. These delegates are undoubtedly feeling the awesome responsibility entrusted to them, and are already seeking God's will in prayer, in study, in meeting and discussion.

More than two thousand years ago a smaller delegation met in Galilee. For three years they had walked and talked and lived and learned as they followed Jesus. And then, one last time, Jesus came to be with them, just as he had promised. His final words were a call to action—to go and make disciples, to baptize and teach, and amidst it all, to remember.

And no doubt it will be the same at our General Conference. It will be a great event as delegates gather from all over the world. But its true significance will be derived only from the presence of the One who called the disciples to meet him for a last word in Galilee, the One who called His disciples to action. The One who continues to call us to action today. And no doubt Jesus will renew that call clearly at General Conference. Let us pray for the same expectation held by the original disciples as they met in Galilee and waited.

PRAYER: God of all nations, we pray for the United Methodist Church and for General Conference. Bless the leaders and delegates as they seek to move from where they are to where you are. Grant a sense of expectancy of your presence during the preparation and the Conference. Prepare hearts and minds to once again hear and respond to your commission to go, make, baptize, teach and remember. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer vigil ideas from Lyn Cosby and the North Alabama Prayer Team:

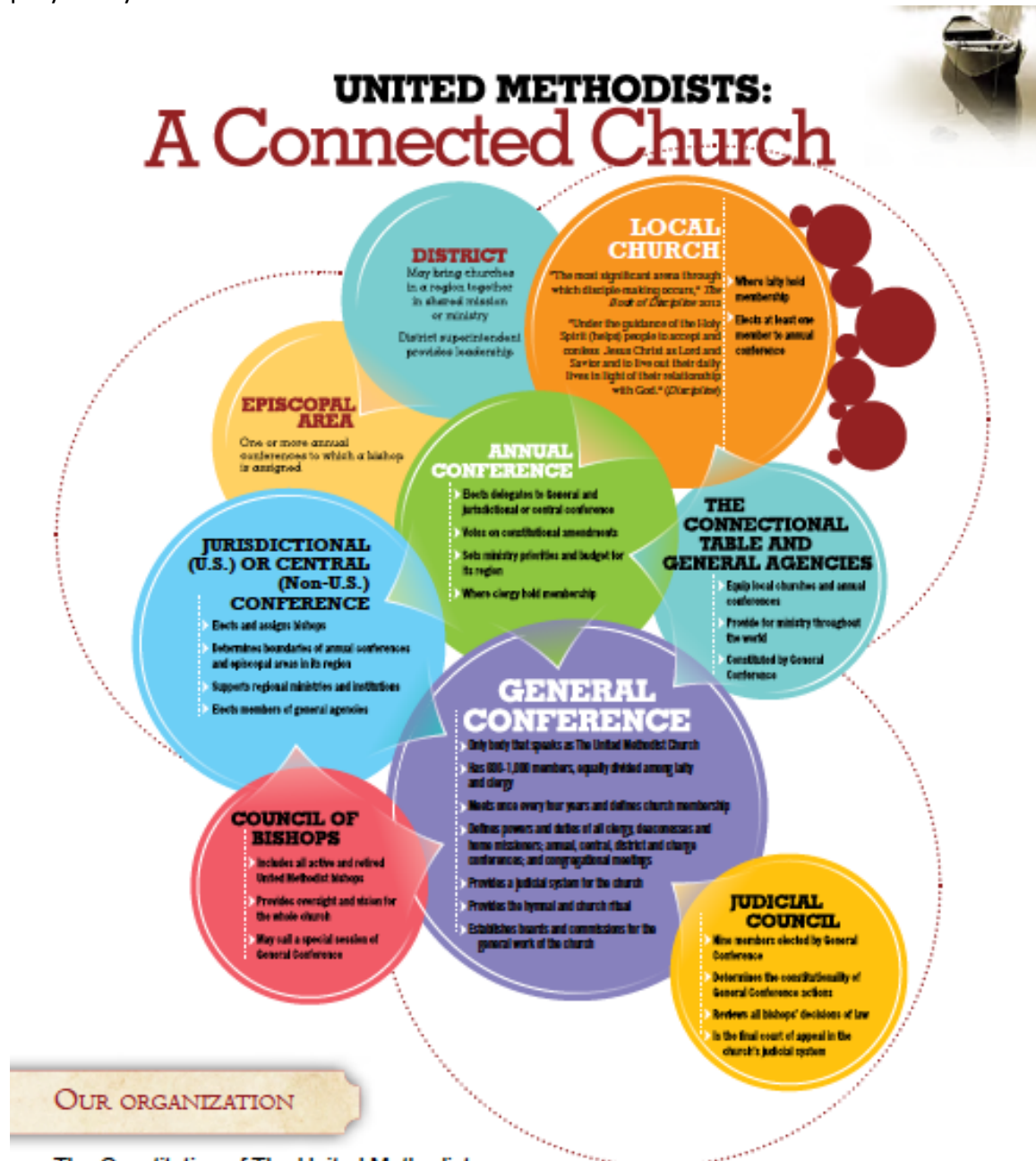
- Plan a conference-wide kickoff event prior to the assigned date
- Plan gatherings in each District
- Appoint area recruiters to solicit volunteers
- Seek out existing prayer teams or groups in local churches
- Write and share simple prayers among volunteers
- Plan activities that can be done while praying, such as making prayer beads or writing messages of encouragement to delegates
- Involve children and youth

Some things to share with prayer volunteers for the day of prayer:

- A list of your own delegation
- A list of prayer concerns specific to your area
- A list of Annual Conferences / Episcopal areas worldwide (provide)
- A list of actively serving Bishops (provide)
- A list of Legislative Committees (provide)
- The General Conference Agenda (provide)
- A list of major legislative issues (provide)

## Appendix 1: Praying for the General Conference, the Elected Delegates and Alternates

Below you will find a picture of the General Conference and the relationships with the other structures that make up The United Methodist Church. How is the Holy Spirit leading you to pray today for our church and its mission?



### OUR ORGANIZATION

The Constitution of The United Methodist Church is designed with checks and balances built into the structure to prevent any one branch from taking too much authority over the whole body.

Source: Originally published in *New World Outlook* magazine, September-October 2012, General Board of Global Ministries. Used by permission. Graphic designed by Christopher Coleman.



## UNDERSTANDING AND PRAYING FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

General Conference is the United Methodist Church's top legislative body. It meets every four years; and, it is the only entity that speaks for The United Methodist Church. The 2016 General Conference will be held in Portland, Ore., in the Western Jurisdiction.

The General Conference is an international body of nearly 1,000 delegates. The delegates are elected by annual conferences (at annual conference sessions) to attend General Conference. They represent all annual conferences around the world. Half of the delegates are laity (non-clergy members), half are clergy. In 2016 there will be 864 voting delegates from the following areas of the world.

North Central USA	92
Northeastern USA	86
South Central USA	108
Southeastern USA	188
Western USA	30
Africa Central	42
Congo	138
West Africa	80
Central and Southern Europe	14
Germany	6
Northern Europe and Eurasia	20
Philippines	50
Concordat	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>864</b>

Bishops attend the General Conference but cannot vote. Different bishops serve as presiding officers during the conference. Other bishops cannot speak unless permission is specifically granted by the delegates.

During General Conference, delegates discuss and vote on petitions and resolutions proposed by individuals, agencies, annual conferences, and other groups within the denomination. These actions result in a revision of the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's book of law, and *Book of Resolutions*, policies of the denomination on current social issues.

It is at General Conference where delegates wrestle with today's issues in light of scriptural teachings and the church's understanding of that teaching. Here is where the church's official stands and church policies are made regarding such issues as mission, vision, discipleship, spiritual formation, human sexuality, abortion, war, peace, and funding.

*How is God guiding you to pray for the elected delegates and alternates?*

The theme of the 2016 conference is **"Therefore, Go..."** reflecting Jesus' great commission to his disciples in Matthew 28: 19-20: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

Prayer Resources for the Bishop's Prayer Initiative—131 Days, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

*Pray for the mission, vision and passion of The United Methodist Church for the next four years. You might also pray for your own grace and guidance to “go and make disciples” in your own country and local context?*

The General Conference website is <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/general-conference-2016> This is the place to find updates on the assembly, read news and feature stories, track petitions and watch video streaming. Stories and daily summaries will also be available by email from United Methodist News Service.

All plenary sessions of General Conference will be streamed live over the internet. Among the events, which can be viewed as they happen, will be the Episcopal Address, Laity Address, Young People's Address and daily evening worship services.

General Conferences are held in years divisible by 4, such as 2008, 2012, 2016, etc.

If you have questions about The United Methodist Church or General Conference, contact The United Methodist Information Services (InfoServ) at [infoserv@umcom.org](mailto:infoserv@umcom.org) or visit [www.infoserv.umc.org](http://www.infoserv.umc.org), or go to The United Methodist Church's official website, [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org), and click on “Questions.”

**Appendix 2: Praying for the General Conference Committees**

[This appendix will have the names and functions of the various legislative committees of the General Conference, along with suggested ways to pray for each committee, its members, and the manner that they conduct their business.]

**Appendix 3: Praying for the General Agencies that implement the decisions of the General Conference**

[This appendix will have the names and functions of the various General Agencies of the UMC, along with suggested ways to pray for each group, its mission, the staff, and the manner that they conduct their ministry.]

**Appendix 4: Praying for the United Methodist Leaders: Council of Bishops, Jurisdictional Conferences, Annual Conferences**

[This appendix will have the names of the active Bishops, the function of the Jurisdictions, the composition of the Central Conferences, the work of the Annual Conferences of the UMC, along with suggested ways to pray for each group, its mission, the leaders, and the manner that they conduct their ministry.]

**Appendix 5: How to participate in the creation of 2016 a unique Protestant Prayer Bead Strand for the General Conference**

[The leader will have to ordered the supply kit for this project of praying with our hands. The supplies should now be provided to all of the participants. The leader will begin by asking,]

How many of you believe that it is possible to pray with your eyes open? Would any of you be willing to share an experience of praying with your eyes open?

[Pause to let a few people comment. Then the leader will ask,]

How may of you believe it is possible to pray with your hands? Would any of you be willing to share an experience of praying with your hands or your body?

[Pause to let a few people comment or share an experience. If there is no response, the leader could ask, have any of you hear of a prayer shawl ministry? Or, have you heard of people making prayer quilts or prayer blankets for children?]

In the Supply Kit for the General Conference Prayer Bead project, you will find a DVD with various segments for this three-hour prayer experience. If time allows, play the segment by Kristen Vincent describing the history of Protestant Prayer Beads. If time is short, the leader can summarize it briefly. Then use these words or some others of your own choosing:]

It is our intention to provide the opportunity for United Methodists around the world to pray with their hands by making a simple Protestant Prayer Bead strand with the unique

General Conference 2016 medallion with the UM cross and flame, the year, and the picture of a mountain sheep to remind us that we are engaged in the mission of the good shepherd, to go and actively seek the one sheep missing from the flock.

[Note for Leaders in Central Conferences: If the prayer experience is in one of the Central Conferences outside the USA, please play the DVD segment by Kristen Vincent describing the materials and giving the participants permission to choose materials similar and available in the country where the event is taking place. The Central Conference event leaders will need the unique UMC medallion and that will be available through the secretary of the General Conference at the Pre-Conference Briefings for the Central Conferences.]

Now we will play the video clip with Kristen Vincent demonstrating how to make the 2016 General Conference Prayer Bead Strand. In case there is a problem, in the kit you will find a completed sample of the final product and you will also find a three-page document that gives the step-by-step instructions in writing. [Play DVD]

Now that we have the technical instructions, I want to provide you with some additional spiritual guidance. As you create the General Conference Pray Bead Strand, we ask that you pray for the person who will receive the Prayer Strand you are making. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you about this specific person and what spiritual strength and guidance he or she might need as they prepare for the journey, as they read the many pages of documents that will be considered, and as seek God's guidance for the United Methodist Church for the next four years.

Sometimes, as we prayerfully construct the beads, there will be no specific insights that come. At other times, people just like you and I have received very specific guidance. One man in the past felt specifically guided to pray for a young man who was a first time delegate. The prompting was to pray that the young man would wisdom beyond his years and the leadership insights needed for our church at this particular General Conference. Likewise, one woman felt guided to pray for a woman delegate from Asia, who was feeling uncertain about her place in the UMC and doubted her ability to speak during the General Conference. The woman creating the prayer bead strand felt the Holy Spirit leading her to pray for the Asian woman who would receive the beads, that she would have holy boldness, deep confidence that God had called her to be a delegate for such a time as this, and that she would have the words to speak when she felt the prompting to use her voice and share her perspective in the legislative committee and on the floor of the General Conference. My request to you is that you simply be open and attentive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as you pray and create this strand of Protestant Prayer Beads for the General Conference. I will also alert you that we will make one or two more Prayer Strands through the pattern of our next three hours together.

[Allow each participant time to make one strand of prayer beads, then ask them to return to the circle or seating area for the entire group.]

[When the group has completed the first strand and returned to the group, ask them to tell about their experience of making the Prayer Strand for a delegate or leader. Be attentive to allow time for men and woman, young and old, to share. Then the leader will lead the

group in a brief prayer and transition into the next prayer experience using the 60 Days of Prayer.]

Gracious and loving God, we offer our prayers and this gift of Prayer Beads to You. May the person who receives them receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised, so that we might “go and make disciples”. AMEN.

[Leader Note: Creating a second and or third Prayer Bead Strand, the leader will instruct the participants to pick up the needed supplies and return to the place where they made the first strand of Prayer Beads. The leader will then ask the host or one of the participants to offer a prayer. The leader can use these words or some others,]

As we begin to “pray with our hands” and make a second Prayer Bead strand for another delegate, or our pastor, or for ourselves, who would be willing to voice a prayer for us as we begin this work?

[Allow the person to pray and then the group can begin their work. If time and materials allow, the group can make a third strand for themselves, another delegate, or for their pastor.]

[When the group has completed the second (and or third) strand and returned to the gathering place, invite them again to tell about their experience of making the Prayer Strand. Be attentive to allow time for men and woman, young and old, to share. Then the leader will invite another member the group to offer a brief prayer for the person who will receive the gift of the General Conference 2016 Prayer Bead Strands just created.]

[Pause for prayer. Then the leader will say,]

As we conclude this prayer experience, we want to pray for one another and for the world. Please find someone new to be your prayer partner, groups of two or no more than three (if we have an odd number of participants).

[Pause to let the new groups form. Then guide the group using these words or others of your own choosing,]

The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary church—engaged in God’s mission to seek and save the lost, the least and the lonely. And we are missionary people, Jesus Christ has called and commissioned us to participate in his mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world. To do that we must be ready and willing to go.

In this first prayer experience, I would like you to name the most important prayer need in your life today. If you could ask God for only one thing, what would it be? [Pause to let the participants reflect for 30 to 60 seconds.] Now, I would like you to share this prayer request with your partner and pray for one another. Your prayer for the other person may be silent or aloud. God will have already heard the need as your partner shared it with you. I will give you three or four minutes to do this, then we will have another guided prayer experience.

[Pause and watch to see that each small group has time to pray for one another. Then the leader may say,]

Look at this globe or world map. If we do not have one you can see, imagine yourself in space and looking down on the earth. There are seven billion people on this planet. Who are the people that you feel guided to intercede for? Is there a region of the world that God is prompting you to pray for? A certain group of people, perhaps those with HIV/AIDS, orphans, slaves, boy soldiers or girls forced into sexual slavery?

Pray that God's mission—to seek and to save the lost—will be the top priority of all Christians, in all churches, including the United Methodist Church around the world.

[Pause for a few minutes to do pray, reflect, write or draw. Be attentive and receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Are there particular people or places or situations in the world that you feel led to pray for now?]

As close our three-hour prayer experience, give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ—the Word of God become flesh—full of grace and truth. Give thanks to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, who sent the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us—teaching us everything that Jesus taught the first disciples. Silently offer your prayer of thanksgiving.

[Leader note: you might want to end the prayer experience by praying the Lord's Prayer.]

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING A PRAYER BEAD STRAND FOLLOWS:

## **Assembly Instructions**

### **General Conference 2016 Prayer Strands**

#### Strand Supplies

- 1 General Conference 2016 medallion
- 1 length of wire (about 12")
- 3 wood beads (1 Invitatory and 2 Cruciform)
- 8 jasper beads (1 Resurrection and 7 Week)
- 2 crimp tubes
- 18 neutral-colored seed beads (for main seed bead)
- 6 colored (blue, brown, green, or red) seed beads (for accent seed bead)
- 1 split ring

#### Required Tools (not included in kits)

- 1 pair of chain-nose pliers or needle-nose pliers
- 1 set of side (flush) wire cutters

#### Legend

s = seed bead  
a = accent bead  
W = wood bead  
J = jasper bead

#### Instructions

1. Thread one of the crimp tubes onto the wire, then add the medallion. Thread the end of the wire back up through the crimp tube. This will leave you with the two ends of the wire coming out of the crimp tube: the primary length of wire and a smaller "tail," about one inch in length. Using the pliers, squeeze the crimp tube until it is flattened.
2. String the beads onto the wire in the following order (covering both the primary wire and the "tail"):
  - a. 1 seed bead
  - b. 1 accent bead

- c. 1 seed bead
- d. 1 wood bead (Invitatory)
- e. 1 seed bead
- f. 1 accent bead
- g. 1 seed bead
- h. 1 jasper bead (Resurrection)
- i. 1 seed bead
- j. 1 accent bead
- k. 1 seed bead
- l. 1 wood bead (bottom Cruciform)
- m. 1 seed bead
- n. 1 accent bead
- o. 1 seed bead

The pattern will look like this: sas W sas J sas W sas

3. String the set of Week beads onto the wire in the following order:
- a. 1 jasper bead
  - b. 1 seed bead
  - c. 1 jasper bead
  - d. 1 seed bead
  - e. 1 jasper bead
  - f. 1 seed bead
  - g. 1 jasper bead
  - h. 1 seed bead
  - i. 1 jasper bead
  - j. 1 seed bead
  - k. 1 jasper bead
  - l. 1 seed bead
  - m. 1 jasper bead

The pattern will look like this: J s J s J s J s J s J



4. String:

- a. 1 seed bead
- b. 1 accent bead
- c. 1 seed bead
- d. 1 wood bead (top Cruciform)
- e. 1 seed bead
- f. 1 accent bead
- g. 1 seed bead

The pattern will look like this: sas W sas

5. Double check everything to make sure it is where you want it.
6. Check the “tail” end of the wire just above the medallion to make sure it is still tucked into the beads (sometimes it slips out). If it is sticking out, push the beads away to create enough room to tuck the “tail” back under the beads, then push the beads back into place.
7. Thread the second crimp tube onto the wire, then add the split ring. Thread the end of the wire back up through the crimp tube (the same way you did in step #1). Continue to thread the wire back through the beads just until you reach the first jasper bead (the one closest to the split ring). Pull the wire out from the bottom of the bead. Pull the wire tightly, adjusting the bead as necessary, to remove any slack in the wire and to ensure that the wire is completely covered up by the beads.
8. Use the pliers to flatten the crimp tube as tightly as possible.
9. Use the wire cutter to cut the remaining wire off as close to the beads as possible.

For additional assistance:

- watch the General Conference 2016 Prayer Strand Assembly Instructional Video
- watch “How to Make Protestant Prayer Beads” - a video by The Upper Room - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUJP-WVCSwc>
- consult the Prayerworks Studio website:  
<http://prayerworksstudio.com/prayer-beads/make-your-own/>

**Blessings as you join us in praying for General Conference 2016!**

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**Appendix 6: How to use *The Upper Room 60-Days of Prayer for the 2016 General Conference* as an individual, a family, a small group, a local church, a district, or an annual conference**

[Leader Guide: Please print a copy of the 60 Day of Prayer document in the language that fits your context (it is available in English, Portuguese, French, Kiswahili, Spanish and Korean by January or February of 2016). After giving this introduction, or words of your own choosing,]

Friends, we are gather here in response to the invitation from the Council of Bishop that every one of the 131 Annual Conferences commit themselves to 24 hours of prayer for our church, the upcoming General Conference and God's mission to reach the whole world with the whole gospel. We introduce this 60 Days of Prayer to you today so it can help us pray together; and, we use it with the hope that you will take it back to your family, your small group, your local church, your district and other Annual Conference events.

Today we will read portions of the 60 Days to help us pray for our church and the 2016 General Conference. Will someone please read the first three paragraphs of page 7?

[Pause for the reading. Then the leader asks,]

What thoughts or feelings come to you as you consider 13 million men, women, youth and children praying together for 60 days?

[Pause to let people answer.]

Let us pray now, for grace and guidance for the United Methodist Church, and our fellow members around the world. Feel free to pray aloud or in silence as we give the next few minutes to pray for the creativity and strength to engage our entire denomination in earnest, fervent prayer as the Holy Spirit might lead us to pray together beginning March 31 through May 29, 2016.

[Pause to let the people pray.]

Now, would someone else read the third paragraph on page 8. [Leader note, try to have a diversity of ages and genders read throughout this exercise. After the reading, ask this question,]

Do you agree or disagree with the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus and the teaching of the Wesley brothers. To say, "God does nothing apart from prayer" is a very strong statement.

[Pause to let people share their thoughts. Now have a different person read the final paragraph on page 8 and the remainder of the text on page 9.]

Is God calling you to gather and lead your family, your small group, your local church or your district in an intentional, 60 days of prayer? Let us pray together for the grace and guidance we need. Feel free to pray silently or aloud—as you feel led.

[Pause for prayers by the people.]

We are now going to have another prayer experience before we make a second strand of the Protestant Prayer Beads—praying with our hands. I need two people to read, one to read the scripture on page 10 and the other to read the meditation on that scripture text by Rev. Laura Jaquith Bartlett, the Worship Leader for the 2016 General Conference.

[Pause for the reading of Matthew 28:19-20, followed by a second person (female if possible) to read the meditation.]

This passage in Matthew 28:19-20 is sometimes referred to as “The Great Commission”. The resurrected Jesus is commissioning his disciples to continue the work God had given him to do—to go discipling, to go baptizing and to go teaching. Please join me in prayer that God will empower us to do the work Jesus called and commissioned us to do.

[Pause for two or more minutes to all people to pray, reflect and write. At the end of this time the leader will say,]

Jesus, we are your disciples—teach us to pray and guide us in our going. AMEN.

**Appendix 7: How to use the online Prayer Website, Prayer Wall and Prayer Calendar**

[This appendix will have a detailed description of the prayer website, the prayer wall and the prayer calendar, along with suggested ways to use this resource for prayer ministry.]

**Appendix 8: How to create a Prayer Room or Sacred Space**

[This appendix will have pictures and instructions on how to create a sacred space for prayer in a home, local church or Annual Conference event.]

**Appendix 9: How to participate as a Prayer Volunteer/Prayer Delegate in Portland, May 10-20, 2016**

[This appendix will have pictures and instructions on how to create a sacred space for prayer in a home, local church or Annual Conference event.]

**Appendix 10: Prayer Resources for Group Experiences including a Concert of Prayer**

[This appendix will have optional models for a concert of prayer drawn from previous General Conferences and diverse passages of scripture.]

**Appendix 11: Other Online and Social Media Resources**

[This appendix will identify other online resources for prayer and spiritual formation.]

**Appendix 12: Models from Other Annual Conferences for their 24-Hour Prayer Experience**

[This appendix will contain detailed information about the way other annual conferences have organized their 24-hour Prayer Experiences. Permission for distribution must come from the event leader. Below is a prayer resource from the North Alabama Annual Conference Prayer Team.]