

Dr. Scott Hagan: In between what has happened and what will happen there is a right here right now that is happening in the South Georgia Annual Conference. In Columbus this past June, you shared with us some of the specific things that the Annual Conference will be doing. That all came on the heels of an election of delegates for 2020. Share with us about what happened in Columbus and also what's happening now.

Bishop Bryan: So every four years as we get ready for a General Conference, all Annual Conferences elect their laity and clergy delegates and that election occurred, as you said, at Annual Conference 2019. So we have our delegates who will represent us in Minneapolis at General Conference 2020, and they are meeting now and they are working now to prepare themselves for all that they'll be voting on, all that will be coming up.

Bishop Bryan: We also indicated to the Annual Conference that the Leadership Forum Task Force would continue to meet throughout this year to monitor all the legislation that may be coming up at General Conference, to work with the delegation, to be a resource to the delegation, but also to be a resource to the whole annual conference and be able to produce updates to the annual conference that summarize where we are as we move toward General Conference and then to continue providing those updates and guidance after General Conference.

Bishop Bryan: So the Leadership Forum Task Force is already meeting and at our most recent meeting we took a look at all the different organizational plans that are currently available. Some will recognize the name of the Indianapolis Plan or the UMC Next Plan or the Bard/Jones Plan, a variety of plans. And we broke into small groups, and each group studied a plan and presented it to the whole and then we are going to be engaging as we do that in scenario planning. What would it be like to live and minister under any of these plans?

Bishop Bryan: Of course as we have said, we're operating under the Traditional Plan now. So we can look at that one as well and compare it to the others, which we're doing. It's part of scenario planning. As those plans are discussed and conversed across the entire denomination, we'll be able to keep our annual conference abreast of how those are being processed and what people are saying about them. Eventually there may be some of the plans that come together and we'll be able to keep the congregations of our annual conference aware of that as well.

Dr. Scott Hagan: So the Leadership Forum made up of lay people and clergy persons in the annual conference has been studying. Our delegation has also been studying and preparing themselves for what might come in May. But you have noted that in addition to leadership at the Annual Conference level, our delegation has been offering leadership beyond the bounds of South Georgia.

Bishop Bryan: Yes, they have. And I believe those relationships they are building, as almost always is the case, will be the basis for working together, for understanding

more deeply what's before us and how we might respond to it. So I'm very grateful to our delegation for taking the lead in our jurisdiction about that.

Dr. Scott Hagan: One of the things the Bishop talked about in Tifton in March and in Columbus in June was these plans that are going to be happening at the Annual Conference level. A possible planned event was going to happen in November. You were going to invite everybody together if it was needed.

Bishop Bryan: Yes.

Dr. Scott Hagan: This video is taking the place of some of that.

Bishop Bryan: We want to be good stewards of everyone's time. We had set aside time in November that we might need to all come together, but we realized that with so many plans that are now before us, and with that conversation still being in effect, it's early in the conversation. So it would be premature to ask everybody to carve out that time and come together when we can do an update today. We also want the annual conference to know that we are going to take seriously your time and your investment and so we want to be sure we have some meaningful work to do when we come together. So we knew and discussed among the Leadership Forum that this was the right way to do it right now so that it can be made available to as many people as possible, so that everyone can know that we are working regularly with our leadership team, with our Leadership Forum, with our delegation. We are preparing ourselves right now to be a part of the conversation and to let South Georgia be a part of that as well.

Bishop Bryan: If you have watched the video to this point, I want to thank you for being a long suffering and patient person! I hope that your investment will be paying off to you as you use the resources that we make available. But I would like to take a moment to ask of you, indeed to beg of you, to use the resources but also realize that I know that the local church is the major arena where disciples are made and there's nothing that any general conference can do to cause us to be the local church. We already are the local church.

Bishop Bryan: What do our communities need? Churches that are alive, people who are alive and serving Jesus Christ, filled with joy and indicating how we can live together in peace, and love, and mission, and ministry. So if while we're going to do all we can to provide any resource we think would be helpful to you or to your congregation leading up to General Conference and afterward, remember, those are important, but they are not the main thing.

Bishop Bryan: The focus is your local church. These are the people God has called together, where two or three gather Jesus is present and he wants to do great work through you. That is the opportunity that we have. Nothing can replace your local church. And remember wherever your church is located, that's where we need you to be. Investing in that area, investing not only in your church

members and caring for one another, but looking around in the community and being Alive Together in Witness.

Bishop Bryan:

What are the ways the area where you live needs to receive the witness of Jesus Christ and the healing ministry of the local church? General Conference can be a great thing to study and to anticipate and we'll be doing that and working through it together, but remember before General Conference, after General Conference, yesterday, today, tomorrow we are the South Georgia Conference. God has called us together for mission and ministry. It is our choice, a choice we can make, to be alive together in Christ and to be alive together in witness. I pray that we will keep that the main thing and that will make that choice today.