



# THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Vision of our Annual Conference challenges us to be a Courageous Church: Loving like Jesus, Acting for Justice, United in Hope. These words help us to form our faith into action as we live as disciples of Jesus Christ. This is as true for the times we seek to take new steps of faith, as it is for the times when our faith is stretched in a different way.

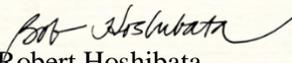
We received word that the former Conference Director of Camping and Youth Ministry, James Parkhurst, was sentenced to 11 years in prison, to be followed by 15 years of probation. Mr. Parkhurst was arrested in 2016 and pled guilty to the charge of transportation of child pornography stemming from action in 2010 while visiting in Colorado.

Although this news is unpleasant and painful, we provide this information for honesty and transparency, so you will know of the outcome of this tragic situation. It is also an important reminder that the work we are called to do as a church is large before us. We are called to bind up the wounds of those who are broken, to lift up those whose spirits are cast down. We are called to work for healing, peace and justice in our communities. As we share word of Mr. Parkhurst's sentencing let us all be renewed in our commitment to live the highest ideals of our faith as we fulfill the calling placed on each one of our lives.

Let us also find it in our hearts to be in prayer for the victims, their families and for Mr. Parkhurst. Let us begin now, with this prayer:

*"God of immense compassion, we confess to you that the depth of emotion which fills our hearts and minds as we receive this information today is beyond what words are able to adequately express. When our words stumble, we rely on the knowledge that your spirit intercedes for all of us. Use your church to offer comfort and healing to those harmed by child pornography. Empower your church to be a place of protection and a place of redemption. God of love, we offer to you the labor of our hands, our voices to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and our unwavering commitment to do your work, until that day when darkness is no more, and the light of your love shines in every human heart. Amen and Amen."*

In Christ's Love,

  
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