Being a Delegate and Why?

John Shive, Lay Delegate

First and foremost, being that this is the first year I submitted my name for “willingness to serve,” I am honored and humbled that complete strangers put their faith in me to represent them in the business of our Church. I can only believe that it is God’s plan and will that I am serving as a delegate.

So why would I take this step and offer to be a delegate? While I have been active in my local church, serving as lay leader, on committees, planning and participating in outreach, and even as treasurer; I had not gotten involved in Annual Conference or General Conference. So, I wanted to understand more of how business was conducted, and what issues were being discussed. Also, being a representative from a small, more rural church, I wanted our voice to be heard as well and wanted our church to be informed in return.

In the past year and the time leading up to the 2019 Special-Called General Conference, I have participated in town hall discussions, the Indiana Annual Conference, and tracked communication, much of which focused on the human sexuality issues facing our church. Much of this is heartbreaking in that one issue can cause so much division in our church. Throughout this journey, I have heard passionate testimonies and witnessed strong avengers, all pushing for what they feel is the right direction.

As a delegate, I think it is important to listen and respect what others have to say. Listening requires understanding the perspective of the other person. I am glad to be learning, not only the church’s business processes and issues, but that each delegate loves the Lord despite our differences. I support inclusion and feel we must reach all and be open to all; however, my personal convictions are rooted in scripture that marriage is between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:20-24, Matthew 19:4-6). I pray that we can find a peaceful way to coexist and do so by transforming the world, rather than the world transforming our church. I look forward to the day that we, as a church, return to more far reaching issues facing our communities, such as helping and feeding the homeless, attending to the broken and lonely, and leading children and youth ministries rather than just the issues surrounding sexual orientation. I pray that we, delegates and church leadership, can find a direction that supports God’s will.

God Bless,

John Shive