



I'm finally getting the hang of driving my little Volkswagen Golf with a manual transmission!

“The Lord knows all human plans; he knows that they are futile.” ~ Psalm 94:11

Another plan bites the dust. I had made plans to enjoy a nice dinner with friends the Friday before last, but then I learned someone I had seen at church had been diagnosed with COVID-19 and I felt I had no choice but to cancel my plans. I was supposed to preach the following Sunday, but since the church had to be closed for two weeks, those plans were canceled too. I've had so many plans cancelled during this pandemic that I'm starting to wonder if I should even bother to make plans at all.

Some of you know that it has long been the desire of my heart to adopt children – ever since I heard a sermon about it when I was 14 in fact. I had always assumed I would adopt as a married person, but upon turning 41, I decided I could not wait any longer. In February, I researched several adoption agencies and contacted one I liked. We did two interviews and they put me in contact with a single woman about my age who was in the final stages of adopting from Bulgaria. After speaking with her,

praying, and looking at the list of children waiting to be adopted in Bulgaria, I made my decision to move forward. I filled out the application, submitted my \$300, and began imagining my life as a mom.

In March, the agency sought permission from the government of North Macedonia to send a representative to conduct a home study on me, but in April they received word that permission had been denied for reasons that did not make a lot of sense. We discussed various options such as getting a US government agency to draft a letter requesting permission, me relocating to the US long enough to establish residency and adopt, or me trying to adopt locally without help from the agency. I didn't really like any of the options and was very disappointed at this snag in my plans. I was so looking forward to announcing to all of you my “Plan B” – my plan to start my family through adoption – once I had passed the home study, but I couldn't even get the home study to take place!

And then Corona happened. The whole world stopped and so did I. As I was forced by lock downs to be still, I wondered if it was God who put this obstruction in my adoption process. I entered a season of fasting and praying and quoting scriptures to God like Psalm 113:9 “He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children.” And Psalm 68:6 “God sets the lonely in families.”

Eventually, I realized I was trying to convince God to let me move forward with my plans instead of patiently and wholeheartedly submitting to His plan for my life. As I got real with God, I had to admit I have a lot of disappointment and I fear I will never get a family if I put off adoption much longer. I also admitted that as much as I long for children and a family of my own, I really don't want to do it as a single woman. Is this setback a gracious “no” from God, or something I just need to push through?

As I've been praying, I've also been thinking about the UMC and the plans it had to resolve decades of conflict with a Special Session of the General Conference in 2019. When the conference failed to bring about the desired unity around issues concerning human sexuality, a “Plan B” was initiated to find a way to amicably split the church. A popular proposal, *The Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation* was supposed to be voted on in May at the 2020 General Conference. *But then Corona happened.* Like my adoption home study, the conference has been put off and we have found ourselves with all this time to wonder what will happen and ponder what does God want.



Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation

- Makes a pathway for 'traditionalist' Methodists to leave UMC
- Allows churches to keep assets, employees to retain pensions
- \$25 million over four years given to new 'traditionalist Methodist denomination'
- Local churches make decision on individual separation by Dec. 31, 2024
- Voted upon in May 2020 by UMC General Conference

Source: "Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation," United Methodist News

Joyfully Thwarted Plans

Ever since February I had planned to visit my mother to help care for her during her battle with breast cancer, but now that she has completed her final radiation therapy and been given a clean bill of health, I no longer need to go. I still wish I could go, but so joyful God has graciously lifted this burden from us.

It is human nature to be more cautious about resources and their allocation during times of uncertainty. I have asked myself if I should continue investing in my efforts to prepare for children, such as reading books on adoption and learning to drive a car here, until I know for sure I can adopt. And I think many members and churches have asked if they should continue to support the work of the church until they know for sure what will happen with the separation. Consequently, giving to missions has declined and budgets and positions at Global Ministries have had to be reduced. What if the protocol doesn't pass and the church continues to remain in turmoil? What if it does pass and thousands leave? Should we continue to invest or jump ship? Does God have a “Plan C”??

While I am still waiting for direction, I can say that I have experienced a lot of peace in going to God in prayer in this season. I have a long-standing habit of making plans and contingency plans and contingency-contingency plans to make me feel more secure. This pandemic is forcing me to see how futile it is to seek security in plans and instead find real security in God's character and love for me.

I encourage you to take as much time as you can to pray this season. God loves us and He loves His church. Getting real before Him and seeking to trust in His plans may be the most important action we take this whole pandemic.

Jennifer Moore

