

Monthly Update

November 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of our “Monthly Update” continues with information on annual conference reports, and problems. We almost hate to say, “I told you so” but one of the things you will notice as you examine the reports is the financial decrease – something we had predicted.

In recognition of one of our favorite celebrations, may I share with you the words that Senator Robert C. Byrd composed on November 18, 2009 in his “Byrd’s-Eye View”:

Thanksgiving is one of America’s most beloved holidays. It is a day devoted to turkey, family gatherings, football games, parades, and the beginning of the Christmas-holiday season. But it also should be a day devoted to giving thanks to God for our many blessings. Most of us learned about the Pilgrims conducting the first Thanksgiving in 1621 in Plymouth Colony. To the Pilgrims, Thanksgiving was intended as a religious celebration to give thanks to God for helping them survive that first brutal...winter.

During the American Revolution, following the American victory at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777 that marked a turning point in the war, the Continental Congress approved a resolution proclaiming a day of “Thanksgiving and praise.” In his...notes on the war, General Washington wrote: “Tomorrow being the day set apart by the honorable Congress for Public Thanksgiving and praise, ... duty call[s] us devoutly to express our grateful acknowledgments to God for the manifold blessings he has granted us.” Following the establishment of the new government of the United States in 1789, President George Washington issued a “Thanksgiving Proclamation” designating a “day of public thanks-giving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

During the American Civil War, following the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln asked the people of the United States to set aside the last Thursday of November “as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father.” President Lincoln proclaimed, the country should take a day to acknowledge the “gracious gifts of the most high God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”

On this Thanksgiving, I would like to thank God for the young American men and women who will spend this holiday in harm’s way protecting our country and the values we hold dear.

We have many reasons to be thankful for the blessings we have in life. Despite the problems we see around us, in our United Methodist Church and our country – we have the gift of life on this earth and that of eternal life when we leave it. So, we need to give heartfelt thanks to God. From those of us here at Concerned Methodists, we wish you a Happy Thanksgiving.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,
Executive Director

Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church

Tact is the art of making your guests feel at home
– when that is where you wish they were.

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Annual Conference Reports

California–Pacific. The California–Pacific Annual Conference met June 16–19 at the campus of the University of Redlands in Redlands, Calif., under the leadership of Bishop Mary Ann Swenson. This was the 27th session of the California-Pacific Annual Conference, which was created out of the Pacific and Southwest Annual Conference. This session marks the 160th session since the organization of the Pacific Conference in 1851, the oldest of the merging annual conferences. The Rev. Darryl Fairchild, guest speaker and community organizer for Lift Greater Dayton, along with his wife, the Rev. Karen Armentrout, minister at Elden UMC in Ohio, shared experiences with delegates on ways to create vital congregational communities and ministries. Bishop Swenson reminded the conference members that change requires hard work: “Change will be seen in the breadth and depth of what we are about to do.” The conference voted to pass a new structure of the Five Essentials Ministry Plan in which 38 existing conference boards, committees and agencies will come together around the ministry of navigation, resource, leadership, new ministries, and justice and compassion. The conference also approved the adoption of the Mission Areas Charter. This charter will reduce the number of superintendents from eight to five districts and each district into geographic units called Mission Areas for the purposes of growth, relevance and vitality. The Comprehensive Strategic Plan for Ministries with Hispanics in the Cal–Pac Annual Conference was also approved. This plan will provide guidance to the conference in the area of starting new congregations, transforming existing congregations (revitalization), relocating churches and merging congregations in order to be more effective in mission and ministry in the conference. Conference members adopted a 2012 apportionment budget of \$12,060,826, representing a 3.3 percent decrease from 2011.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Ken Ellis (co-chair), Leanne Nakanishi, Mele Maka and JoAnn Yoon Fukumoto. Clergy delegates: Tom Choi (co-chair), Molly Vetter, Cedrick Bridgeforth and Patricia Farris. Lay Delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Norma Kehrberg, Marjorie Suchocki, Monalisa S. Tu’itahi, Ana-Haydee Urda, Ralph H. Logan, Carolyn Ingram, Krista McVey and Mark Stephenson. Clergy delegates: Frank Wulf, Mary Elizabeth Moore, Bau Dang, Charlene Zuill, Myron Wingfield, Piula E. Ala’ilima, Tonya Harris and Cynthia Abrams. Clergy reserves: Catie Coots and Paige Eaves. Laity reserves: Lauolefiso “Fiso” Ali’ifua and Krystle Wheeler.

During the ordination service, eight were commissioned as provisional elders, one was ordained deacon in full connection and nine were ordained elders in full connection. Guest preacher Darryl Fairchild challenged the ordinands to be courageous in their ministry. The Rev. Lepeti Taufua, a retired cleric of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Chair of the Bible Society of the Pacific and royal chaplain to the King of Tonga, also participated in the ordination service. Special offerings received \$20,371.05. Membership is 80,026, down 869 from the previous year.

– Leah Helen Gallardo Switzer, California–Pacific Annual Conf., as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 ed. of UMNewScope.

Dakotas. Over 500 members of the Dakotas Annual Conference gathered in Watertown, S.D. June 8–11, to follow 2 Timothy 1:6 : “Rekindle the Gift of God That Is within You.” Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey called for all those in attendance at the session’s opening worship to reach out across the Dakotas Conference and rekindle the flame. Dr. Lovett Weems, Director of the Lewis Center for Leadership and guest teacher to the Dakotas Annual Conference, encouraged members to rekindle the flame by asking thoughtful questions about what the church’s current situation is and where the church should be in the future. Ray Baker, chair of the Common Table, proposed the vision statement for the Dakotas Conference, and session members approved: “We will increase average worship attendance by 1 percent. Our top priority is to undergird the local church to: equip lay people to make disciples and transform the world; reach more people, younger people and more diverse people; develop strong children and youth ministries; support and strengthen families; make a difference in our communities, locally and globally, through acts of mission and mercy.”

The lay delegate to General Conference 2012 will be Janelle Jones (Spearfish, S.D.). The alternate lay delegate: Jodi Cataldo (Mitchell, S.D.). The clergy delegate: Rebecca Trefz (Brandon, S.D.). The alternate clergy delegate: Greg Kroger (Sioux Falls, S.D.). Lay delegates to the North Central Jurisdictional Conference: Janelle Jones and Jodi Cataldo. Lay alternates: Matthew Bader (Valley City, N.D.), Angelica Laudermith (Vermillion, S.D.) and Larry Madsen (Gettysburg, S.D.). Clergy delegates: Rebecca Trefz and Greg Kroger. Clergy alternates: Rich Zeck (Fargo, N.D.), Jenny Hallenbeck

(Wahpeton, N.D.) and Doug Diehl (Rapid City, S.D.).

The approved budget for 2012 is \$6,035,970 in apportionments and \$1,260,000 in HealthFlex Direct bills for a total of \$7,295,970. This is a decrease of \$97,426 from 2011. A total of \$23,648.67 was collected in offerings: the Japan Emergency (\$2,285.43), Dakotas Disaster Relief (\$10,529.82) and UMCOR Domestic Relief funds (\$8,587.42). The offering at the ordination service of \$2,246 was equally divided between the Central Conference Pension Initiative and the Dakotas Seminary Debt Reduction. 2,276 health kits were collected, which will be distributed to people evacuated from their homes due to flooding throughout the Dakotas Conference. Membership is 37,440, down 1,154 from the previous year.

– Doreen Gosmire, Dakotas Annual Conference, as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Indiana. “Do Justice; Love Kindness; Walk Humbly with God” from Micah 6:8 was the theme of the third session of the Indiana Conference held at Ball State University in Muncie June 8–11. Indiana Bishop Michael J. Coyner led two Bible studies, one on the conference theme verse and one on Acts 1 about the selection of the disciple to take the place of Judas. He applied Acts 1 to the selection of delegates by the conference, saying we have more good people than we have spots for them (as delegates), even though Indiana is now the fourth largest conference. The conference celebrated some firsts: membership and average worship attendance grew for the first time in more than 30 years. That is somewhat credited to the new emphasis on church growth and development and the first full year of a Conference Church Development team with five full-time staff members deployed across the state. More than 60 congregations have been enrolled in the Fruitful Congregations program. Fifty more congregations will begin the program in September.

Another first was the building of the first lodge in 43 years at Epworth Forest Conference Center in North Webster. Bishop Coyner dedicated it June 4. The lodge was named in honor of retired Bishop and Mrs. Sheldon Duecker of Fort Wayne. Another lodge is under construction; there are plans for four more lodges, each one housing 32 campers. In 2010, the seven conference camping sites received 3,206 summer campers, of which 495 made professions of faith and 213 high school students responded to a call of vocational ministry. Indiana continues to lead the North Central Jurisdiction in volunteers in mission and raised more than \$3 million in 2010 for mission and Advance Specials giving. In 2010, more than 5,000 volunteers-in-mission served 3,372 days of service valued at \$3.4 million. The conference approved 73 Conference Advance Special programs across the state. The conference approved a \$15.8 million budget for 2012, of which \$5.6 million is for general church and jurisdictional apportionments. The conference paid only 84 percent of them the previous year.

Nine laity were elected to General Conference: Ed Fenstermacher, Kayc Mykrantz, James Ottjes, Patricia Miller, Ike Williams, Rita Gaither-Gant, Carolyn Johnson, Douglas Worthington and Ken Adams. North Central Jurisdictional lay delegates elected: Doris Clark, Anne Bunch, Jeananne Park, Melissa Zimmerman, Manet Shettle, Ruth Ellen Stone, Ashley Moreland, Megan Manning and Benjamin Boruff. Lay reserves: Kenneth Hudgins Jr., Roger Summers and Gregory Cook. Nine clergy were elected to General Conference: Frank Beard, Kimberly Reisman, Russ Abel, Gregory McGarvey, Beth Ann Cook, Michael Dominick, Mark Dicken, Cindy Reynolds and Chris Nunley. North Central Jurisdictional clergy delegates: Lisa Schubert, Andy Kinsey, Brian Durand, Mark Fenstermacher, Raymond Wilkins, Gregg Pimlott, Ida Easley, Glenn Howell and Taylor Burton-Edwards. Clergy reserves: Shalimar Holderly, Chris Roberts and Sandy Harlan.

The conference approved one petition asking the General Conference to change Ministerial Education Funding from 75 to 50 percent for theological schools in the U.S. and to delegate 25 percent for theological schools and MEF programs in central conferences. Membership is 200,620 members, up 3,271 from the previous year.

– Daniel R. Gangler, Indiana Annual Conference, as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Kentucky. More than 1,200 UMs felt God’s presence during the 2011 Kentucky Annual Conference session. The theme, “Called by Christ, Sent to Sow,” was evident throughout; even the visuals on stage carried a rustic theme to remind participants that all are called to sow God’s word. In the opening worship, the Rev. Rebecca Curry, Louisville District superintendent and assistant to the bishop, preached a sermon titled “Celebrating the Sower.” She encouraged those present to “give thanks for those who have gone before us and the seeds they planted.” Participants also remembered 19 clergy and clergy spouses who died in the past year. The opening worship concluded with the serving of Holy Communion. At the ordination and commissioning service, 14 people were commissioned as provisional members, two were recognized as associate members and eight were ordained as elders in full connection. Bishop James E. Swanson Jr. of the Holston Conference preached on “The Essential Nature of the Call.” At the retirement service, the conference recognized with

gratitude the ministry of 18 clergy retiring from active service this year. The Rev. Eddie Fox's sermon was "Therefore, by God's Grace, We Do Not Lose Heart." Fox also preached at the mission and ministry night. Through the mission offering, more than \$82,000 was raised to plant a new church in Thailand and to help support the UM seminary in Venezuela preparing clergy to be church planters. The three Bible study leaders were pastors who recently planted new churches. Participants were also introduced to three new church planters. During business sessions, awards were given to churches that have hosted refugee families, implemented special-needs ministries and shown exceptional growth. Those receiving Harry Denman Evangelism awards this year were Bryce Osborne, Linda Gayheart and Don Barnett. Clergy members who have reached the milestones of 25 and 50 years of service also received awards

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: Debbie Wallace-Padgett, Bill T. Arnold, Tom Grieb, Mike Powers, Maxie Dunnam and Thomas W. Smith. Laity delegates: Carol Ackley, Michael B. Watts, Linda Underwood King, Ed Shytle, John R. Denham and Jayne Squires. Delegates to jurisdictional conference are the above-named clergy plus Julie Hager Love, Eliseo Mejia-Leiva, Rebecca Curry, Tamara Brown, John Hatton and David Grout. Additional laity delegates: Jan Brown-Thompson, Linda Gayheart, Terry Cunningham, Chrysanthia Carr-Seals, John Crissman and Nancy Wetzel. Clergy alternates are Brian Ebel, Charles Brockwell and Elvyn Hamilton. Laity alternates are Lewis D. Nicholls, Brenda Glover and Tim Roach.

Other business at this year's conference included recognizing Lay Academy of Church Excellence (LACE) graduates. The conference continued to celebrate its partnership with the Red Bird Missionary Conference. Pam Buck from UM Communications discussed Impact Appalachia, a one-day service event in which community and church volunteers from the Kentucky and Red Bird conferences will work together on projects in the Red Bird Missionary Conference. Conference members also approved the 2012 budget, which will keep spending at the same level as 2011. The Rev. Debbie Wallace-Padgett was nominated and endorsed for the episcopacy in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. More than 800 people participated in more than 24 projects in the second annual afternoon of service. For the second year, people not in attendance were able to follow the activities of the conference sessions via live streaming. Conference membership is 150,822, down 1,230.

– Cathy Bruce, Kentucky Annual Conference, as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Missouri. The Missouri Annual Conference session met in Springfield June 3–6, just 70 miles from Joplin, where less than two weeks before an F5 tornado ripped through the town, killing 156 people. "Extravagant Generosity" was the theme, and the conference lived into that theme through generous offerings: HydraAid Water Filters for Haiti (\$32,977), Joplin recovery (\$79,524), Ludhiana Christian Medical College and Hospital in India (\$6,678) and Mozambique self-sustainability projects (\$24,159). The total amount given was \$145,603, nearly four times the \$37,212 in 2010. Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase wanted one thing to be clear during his episcopal address: a sustained focus on congregational fruitfulness and excellence changes churches. "A persistent, relentless focus on starting new congregations, strengthening growing congregations and transforming existing congregations changes churches," he said. The bishop explained that he and other conference leaders have tried to determine what activities are so critical to the success of the church's mission that failure to perform them with excellence leads to decline in the church. The office of Congregational Excellence is built around this idea of identifying areas where improvements will strengthen ministry.

– As reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Nebraska. "Joined in Community by the Spirit" was the thematic underpinning for the Nebraska Annual Conference, May 31–June 4 at Lincoln's St. Mark's UMC. Inspired by Psalm 27, the theme helped session attendees focus on spiritual formation—one of Nebraska's six signs of discipleship. The Nebraska-Kansas Episcopal Area Transition Team provided a report followed by holy conferencing that resulted in taking a vote to gauge support for becoming one new annual conference out of Nebraska, Kansas West and Kansas East. Two-thirds of the body was in general support of such a move.

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: David Lux and Cindy Karges; laity delegates: Lavina Schwaninger and Tom Watson. Clergy delegates to Jurisdictional Conference: Charles K. Murithi and Nan Kaye-Skinner; laity delegates: Lisa Maupin and Katie Karges. Clergy alternates: Stephanie Ahlschwede and Galen Wray; laity alternates: Marilyn Zehring and Dave Mendyk.

Conference members approved a budget of \$7, 371,281, a 2 percent increase over the 2011 budget. Special guest, the Rev. Dr. Gil Rendle, encouraged the church to move to vibrancy. Rendle's ordination message was to be cautious of loving the church too much. His reference was for all of us to think less of the church as the building and think more about the church as the community. Conference focused on several petitions and resolutions concerned with the broad issue of how to be in ministry with and to our LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered) friends, relatives, neighbors and church

members. On most of these resolutions and petitions, the vote was close enough that the Bishop asked us to stand for a counted vote. Except on the petition affirming equal civil rights, the decision of the annual conference was NOT to ask the General Conference to change its stance on this issue. Conference affirmed petitions and resolutions that request immigration reform, support Africa University, support the 20/20 plan for an AIDS Free World and maintain our stance on reproductive choice. Concerns of the Association of Retired Ministers and Spouses were accepted into the Transition Team report as a friendly amendment, and the full version of the Transition Team's report was received and affirmed. Membership is 76,885, down 1,271.

– Kathryn Witte, Nebraska Annual Conference, as reprinted in the August 3, 2011 edition of UMNewScope

New England. The New England Annual Conference met at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., June 8–11. The theme of “Living Side-by-Side: The Broken and the Whole” was woven through the sessions as more than 1,200 clergy and lay representatives from around the conference gathered to share worship, business, fellowship, learning and inspiration.

Bishop Peter D. Weaver preached during the opening worship session, highlighting the theme of broken and whole through a message based on Ezekiel 37. Honored guest Bishop Minerva Carcaño preached during the ordination service, led the conference in reflection around our call to “welcome the stranger,” and shared thoughts and experiences in her ministry with and for immigrants. More than \$3,100 was raised in a “Miles for Mission” 5K fun run and walk to benefit Imagine No Malaria. Another project was a Stop Hunger Now packaging event was held throughout the conference, raising more than \$10,000 and packaging more than 51,000 meals for families in Nicaragua. Other collections included offerings for Cooper Community Center in Massachusetts and the UM Economic Ministry in Maine. This year's conference offerings and fundraising totaled more than any previous conference session. The conference approved a 2012 budget of \$7,452,615, including a “connectional mission share” for churches unable to pay 100% of apportioned amounts.

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: We Hyun Chang, Rebecca (Becca) Clark, William (Scott) Campbell, David Abbott and LaTrelle Easterling. Lay delegates: Bonnie I. Marden, Ralph R. R. Oduor, Rene Wilbur, Oscar Harrell and JoAnn Carlotto. Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Martin McLee, Leigh Dry, Karen Munson, Nizzi Santos Digan and Gary L. Shaw. Lay delegates: Annie MacNeal, Sam Purushotham, Fay Flanary, William Aldrich and Sean Delmore. Clergy alternates: Sandra Bonette-Kim, Tsitsi N. Moyo, Pat MacHugh, Tom M. Getchell-Lacey and Thomas Bentum. Lay alternates: Dwight W. Crain, Rebecca Hewett, Philip Susag, Marla Marcum and Evie Doyon.

Thirty-three resolutions were approved: calling for pressure on our state legislators to support the Dream Act, encouraging the conference to radical hospitality through a “Call to Conscience,” several amendments to policies and procedures and the establishment of a conference-wide “Disabilities Awareness Sunday.” Conference affirmed 14 petitions to be sent to the 2012 General Conference: two on disability issues and ministries, one calling for the alignment of UMC investments with the church's stated position on Israel/Palestine, and 11 petitions centered on removing discriminatory language regarding homosexuality from the Book of Discipline. By the end of the conference sessions, more than 90 New England Conference clergy had signed a statement declaring their intention to perform marriage ceremonies for same-gender couples. Membership is 95,871, down 2,108.

– Alexx Wood, New England Annual Conference, as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Northern Illinois. UMs of Northern Illinois recommitted to making disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world stating, “Together We Serve—United by Love” at the 172nd annual conference session, June 8–11 in St. Charles. The conference announced plans to kick off a three-year Harvest 2020 capital campaign to build new faith communities and renew existing ones. The extended cabinet made an initial pledge of a combined \$155,000 over three years. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung said the Harvest 2020 movement is interwoven with the denomination's Four Areas of Focus. “The embers of Harvest 2020 have been kindled into a small flame as our work is emulated and celebrated beyond our conference,” said Jung. In 2012, the conference hopes to launch a Chinese-language church and a Hmong congregation as well as Laotian, Polish, French African and more Hispanic/Latino new faith communities. “We are on the leading edge of change in the church,” said Arnold Rivera, conference lay leader.

Lay delegates elected to General Conference: Lonnie Chafin (vice chair), Roger Curless, Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger and Irma Clark. Clergy delegates: Tracy Smith Malone (chair), James Preston, Gregory Gross and Alka Lyall. Lay Delegates elected to North Central Jurisdictional Conference: Rita Smith, Jack Ryder, Elisa Gatz and Harriet McCabe (secretary). Lay alternates: Daniel Viana and Charla Antrobus. Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Ouk-Yean Kim Jueng, Luis Reyes, Chris Pierson and Daniel Diss. Clergy alternates: Martin Lee and Melissa Meyers.

Guest speakers challenged members to open their hearts and minds to the global world. Bishop Javier Rojas of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia thanked the conference for its continued support and partnership with the church in his country. The conference voted to petition General Conference to remove all discriminatory language about homosexuality from The Book of Discipline and to offer equal rights for all; join the Hyatt Hotels boycott until just settlements of labor disputes are achieved; petition General Conference to divest conference investments from companies that profit from the occupation of the Palestinian territories; and petition General Conference to oppose categorically any form of adult, youth and child bullying. Three offerings were collected: \$5,250 for UMCOR, \$3,674 for the Ministerial Education Fund and \$2,880 for Bolivia. Members also donated 2,655 pounds of health-kit and flood-bucket supplies to the Midwest Distribution Center, which will help tornado- and flood-relief efforts. Members of the conference voted to approve the 2012 budget of \$9.2 million, including apportionments of \$6.6 million, down slightly from 2011 after cuts. Membership is 97,814, down 2,314.

– Anne Marie Gerhardt, Northern Illinois Annual Conf., as reprinted in the August 3, 2011 ed. of UMNewScope

Pacific Northwest. From June 23–26, UMs representing 265 faith communities gathered for the 138th session of the Pacific Northwest Conference in Pasco, Wash. The gathered body was welcomed by members of the Yakama Nations, representing some of the first people to live in this part of the country. The opening worship service included a mariachi band and a young troupe of ribbon dancers from a new church start in Pasco, Nueva Generación de Dios. In his welcome address, Bishop Grant Hagiya embraced the urgency of our annual conference theme, “Everybody Fed Now!” He encouraged the conference community to become a spiritual and transformational force in the world. We were joined this year by the Rev. Michael Slaughter, author and lead pastor of Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio, who led us during three teaching sessions. Slaughter encouraged personal discipleship and a move for churches away from the “attracting members” model to a missional one. The conference adopted 17 petitions relating to its regional ministry and affirmed an additional 17 pieces of legislation to be sent to General Conference. The Rev. Craig Parrish, the first elected clergy-person, will lead the delegation. The body received a report from Congregational Development and an update on progress made on the Ministry Fund Drive it had approved at a special called session in March. The conference concluded with a service of sending. Recipients of offerings included UMCOR Advance: Japan Recovery, Children/Youth for Hope Project in Israel and My Friend’s Place Teen Shelter. Membership is 50,046, down 2,377.

– Patrick Scriven, Pacific Northwest Annual, as reprinted in the August 3, 2011 edition of UMNewScope

South Carolina. “Can you feel it? Can you sense it?” Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor asked members of the South Carolina Annual Conference. “Are you ready, South Carolina, for what God will do with us together?” More than 1,600 UM clergy and laity descended on the Florence Civic Center June 8–12. With a theme of “In the Wesleyan Way—Principles, Passion and Practice,” it was a time of worship, of praise, of fellowship and of legislation. Leadership development Wesley-style was at the crux of this year’s session, with three separate teaching times led by the reverends Bob Howell, Susan Leonard-Ray and Jerry Temple on the principles, passions and practices of strong lay and clergy leaders. Eighteen people (nine clergy, nine laity) were elected to represent South Carolina at General Conference. Eighteen additional delegates were elected to represent the conference at Jurisdictional Conference. The body passed the conference’s \$17,175,808 budget in barely more than half an hour, including time to debate and defeat a petition. The Council on Finance and Administration called the new budget “considerably more conservative” than in the past and reflects a stated CF&A goal to move the budget to 15 percent of total conference average net funds by 2015. The budget is 17.23 percent of average net funds and reflects an overall percent change of -1.3 percent from 2011 to 2012. The body also approved a new structure for Connectional Ministries designed to be better organized, better managed and ultimately more connectional. The new model creates a 100-member entity renamed the Conference Connectional Ministries, comprising representatives from each of the 12 new District Connectional Ministries bodies, organized into four separate areas of ministry (discipleship, advocacy, outreach and lay leadership). Resolutions passed centered on the creation of a task force to evaluate the current number of districts in S.C.; on the collection of a special offering at 2012 annual conference to support the UM Global AIDS Fund; and on immigration reform. The body also approved a resolution to recognize UM Volunteers in Mission as the official agency for sending volunteer mission teams from the conference, as well as resolutions authorizing annual conference trustees to use certain funds in their custody and authorizing the discontinuation of three churches in the state.

– South Carolina Annual Conference, as reprinted in the August 3, 2011 edition of UMNewScope

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Susquehanna. After citing words in Deuteronomy, “I set before you life and death. Choose life,” Bishop Jane Allen Middleton asked 1,500 UMs, “What personal or congregational baggage and keepsakes is Christ calling us to leave today so that we might follow him more closely as his faithful disciples?” The occasion was the opening worship celebration of the second annual conference session of the newly formed Susquehanna Conference, a Pennsylvania Conference of The UMC. The conference was held June 8–11 at Messiah College in Grantham. Special guest speaker for the conference was the Rev. Adam Hamilton, founding pastor of The Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. A distinguished and prolific author, Hamilton presented three sessions during the conference on leadership, preaching and worship and missional outreach. A resolution was overwhelmingly passed to reduce the number of districts from eleven to seven and adding a new district position. The body approved a budget at a 5.9% reduction from the previous year. Seven resolutions passed that dealt with visioning an AIDS-free world, mental health ministries, eating habits, use of Styrofoam, issues related to Marcellus Shale and hydraulic fracturing, and a moral approach to governing. A resolution calling for a moratorium on capital punishment failed. There was also approval of safe sanctuary, cyber safety and sexual ethics policies. A presentation explained changes in the clergy health care plan.

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: Mark Webb, Beth Jones, Lewis Parks, Thomas Salsgiver, Matthew Lake, Kathleen Kind and Towanda Acey. Laity delegates: Zedna Haverstock, Anne Horton, Shirley J. Sowers, Lisa D. Bender, Kristopher Sledge, Gary D. Sowers and Stephen Drachler. Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Dennis Otto, Debbie Heisley-Cato, Gregory Johnson, Michael Bealla, Dennis Keller, Mark Terwilliger and Timothy Baer. Laity delegates: Evanmichael Drexler, Raymond L. Hamill, Karen L. Weiss, Sheryl Hart, Warren A. Heil, Joan Elizabeth Carey and Amanda Bressler. Clergy alternates: Roger Mentzer, Arlene Beechert, Jacob Waybright and Lori Steffenson. Laity delegates: Jean Rupp, Joan Baxter, Ann Ahlf and Milton Loyer.

Three special offerings were received: Cup of Water Fund (\$23,846.27), No More Malaria (\$21,591.95), Mission Central (\$23,556.39) and Youth Service Fund (\$5,697.39). Membership is 160,326, down 4,324.

– Gerald F. Wolgemuth, Susquehanna Annual Conference, as reprinted in the July 27, 2011 edition of UMNewScope.

Tennessee. Entering the events of the 2011 annual conference (June 12–15), those in the Tennessee Conference were fully aware of the theme “Risk-Taking Mission & Service.” Each of the previous three years has focused on one of Bishop Robert Schnase’s practices from Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations (Abingdon Press). The Rev. Jorge Acevedo from Grace Church, Cape Coral, Fla., was this year’s guest speaker. He delivered passionate messages to the conference, urging the church to actively and aggressively focus on reaching the lost through “Greater Things!” (Luke 10:25-37), “Greater Obedience!” (Isaiah 6:1-13) and by praying, “Lord, send us the people that nobody wants or sees.” Conference was bittersweet for Nashville Area Bishop Richard J. “Dick” Wills. In January, Bishop Wills announced his early retirement, effective Sept. 1, due to health reasons. The Council of Bishops has approved Bishop Benjamin Chamness as the interim bishop in residence of the Nashville Area, which includes the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences. Two special offerings were dedicated, with half of the \$14,796.83 going toward TN UMC Storm Relief and half for the recovery efforts in Haiti. A total of \$2,235.73 was donated toward the Episcopal Discretionary Fund. Bishop Wills introduced Bishop Raul Garcia de Ochoa of the Eastern Mexico Conference as one of the week’s special guests. In 2009, both the Memphis and Tennessee conferences signed a covenant (or pacto) with Eastern Mexico.

Clergy delegates elected to General Conference: Harriet J. Bryan (Clarksville), Stephen Handy (Brentwood), Max Mayo (Cookeville) and A. Lynn Hill (Franklin). Laity delegates: James R. Allen (Nashville), C. Donn Ladd (Franklin), Opal Ransom (Nashville) and Cornelia Clark (Franklin). Clergy delegates elected to Jurisdictional Conference: Jacob C. Armstrong (Mt. Juliet, Carol Cavin-Dillon (Nashville), Kaye Harvey (Brentwood) and Tommy Ward (Fayetteville). Laity delegates: Holly Neal (Crossville), Betty Alexander (Hendersonville), Heather Bennett (Franklin) and Joy Lewter (Chapel Hill). Clergy reserve delegates: Lisa Gwock (Nashville), Bryan Brooks (Murfreesboro), Michael Williams (Nashville) and Jerry Wallace (Gallatin). Laity reserve delegates: Andrew Miller (Franklin), Reba Seals (Fayetteville), Timothy Moss (Franklin) and Deen Thompson (Antioch).

Conference passed resolutions related to rental/housing allowances for retired or disabled clergy, observing Camp and Retreat Ministries Sunday on the third Sunday of March each year, a study of the apportionment formula, recognition of twenty ministry projects as conference advance specials and support of “20/20: Visioning an AIDS-Free World.” Awards included the Denman Evangelism awards (youth: Todd Cox of Cook’s UMC; laity: Adam Jones of Hilldale UMC; clergy: the Rev. Randy Brown of Winchester UMC). The Rev. James Cole presented the Allison Social Holiness Recognition for laity to Beverly Dycus and for clergy to the Rev. Paul Gardiner. Sue Smith presented the Journal Dedication for laity to Pat Sailors and for clergy to the Rev. Fred Harper. Total membership is 119,287, down 0.3%. – Tennessee Annual Conference,

as reprinted in the August 3, 2011 edition of UMNewScope

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Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.
– Abraham Lincoln