



Thursday, May 28, 2009

The Annual Conference of the the Greater New Jersey United Methodist convened Thursday at the Valley Forge Convention Center with Gathering Music and followed with the Service of Remembrance and Communion.

Dr. Lloyd P. Terrell - Preaching

Dr. Lloyd P. Terrell started Annual Conference by firing up the crowd during the Tribute Service urging all in attendance to "Make life count." Using scripture from the Epistle Lesson (2 Timothy 4:6-8) he said that Paul gives us a blueprint on how to make our life count, based on how Paul made his own life count. "Paul gave God his best," said Dr. Terrell. "Are you giving God your best? God wants our best. 99 ½ won't do." He added that Jesus made his life count and charged, "All of us should set out on a journey to make life count!" Following his sermon, Dr. Terrell proceeded with the Service of Remembrance which recognized and celebrated the lives of Laity, Clergy Spouses and Clergy who passed away since the last conference. The service concluded with Holy Communion being served.

Natural Church Development Churches Meet

Leaders from the GNJ Conference gathered for a luncheon which celebrated the Natural Church Development [NCD] movement that began here three years ago. Rev. Doug Ruffle, Conference Coordinator of Congregational Development, said the program is founded on the principle that a healthy church leads to a growing church, using coaches to guide churches through the process. If you would like more information contact Rev. Ruffle at druffle@gnjumc.org.

Rev. Adam Hamilton - Featured Speaker/Teacher

"We need to move beyond the people in our church to reach out to others," emphasized Rev. Adam Hamilton, founding pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas during his first of three sessions here. The central idea of the series is "Leading Beyond the Walls" focusing on leadership and highlighting effective worship, preaching, evangelism and the future of Methodism.

He said we are meant to be Jesus' hands, feet and voice in this world which starts with strong leaders who set the tone, clarify and champion the mission and vision of the church and then follow through by holding the church accountable. He said leaders, both clergy and lay, are responsible for the success of the church and are also responsible for preparing the church for the future by leading change.

He emphasized the urgency to reach a new generation of people for Jesus Christ. "If we

are not reaching young people, if we aren't connecting with the next generation, we have no future," said Rev. Hamilton. He illustrated the need for change by contrasting the vinyl LP record of yesterday with the MP3 player used by youth and young adults today. He said that at his church they have a policy to "change, innovate, improve or die."

Awards

Members of Annual Conference celebrated during the afternoon session with the presentation of several awards. The Christian Unity Award was received by two recipients - Lyle Cooper, a lay member of St. Andrews UMC in Cherry Hill for his work with the Cherry Hill Ecumenical Food Pantry and to Covenant United Methodist Church for their Free Meals Program. The Harry Seese Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Rev. Pat Bruger. The Francis Nelson Award was presented to Carolyn Pendleton, Chair of Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry. The Denman Evangelism Award was received by Richard Wilson, a lay member of St. John's UMC in West Berlin and Rev. Doug Smith, Pastor of Sharptown UMC.

Rethink Church

Rev. Ken Sloane from United Methodist Communications made a brief presentation on Rethink Church which he described as an outgrowth of sharing Open Hearts, Open Doors, and Open Minds with the world. Sloane said we have changed open from an adjective that describes who we are to a verb that describes what we do. He said the many doors in the worship space at Conference serve as a reminder that there are many doors to our churches that are open to people in our communities. He also cited the resources available at www.rethinkchurch.org and also noted the importance of each church visiting www.find-a-church.org to make sure their church is represented by updated and accurate information.

Episcopal Address

During his Episcopal address Bishop Devadhar called the churches of GNJ Conference to action. He used the scripture of the "Lord's Prayer" focusing on "Your Kingdom Come," frequently substituting Realm for Kingdom.

Bishop Devadhar challenged the GNJ churches to not just pray the "Lord's Prayer" but follow with action. He reinforced that praying "Your Kingdom Come" is a way of seeking to align ourselves with God's kingdom in heaven. He asked, "Can we walk in the streets of Camden with the spirit of Mother Theresa and John Wesley?"

Bishop Devadhar then introduced the Four Areas of Focus of the United Methodist Church for this quadrennium - congregational development, leadership development, global health and ministry with the poor. He then explained how each of these areas directly connects to Jesus' prayer "Thy Kingdom Come."

Bishop Devadhar also reinforced that Rethink Church calls us to become a movement, to take action, moving beyond our churches with our witness making disciples for the transformation of the world as opposed to waiting for new people to come to us. He

challenged church leaders to "think outside the box" for the sake of the Realm of God.

Following the Bishop's address the appointments for the upcoming year were fixed. The Bishop also celebrated the newly chartered church - Disciple Korean United Methodist Church.

Friday, May 29, 2009



The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference reconvened Friday, May 29th. The highlights of the Friday session were the Celebration of Ministry and Ordination Services.

Service of Ordination

Carletta Hamilton Aston (transfer of order), Michael Sean Bill, Jeanette M. Block, Frank A. Davis, Barbara J. Hoffman and Meekyung Choi Kim were ordained in the Order of Elders. There was also a Reception into Full Membership for Sung II Lee who was previously ordained in the Korean Methodist Church.

Before the General Examination and Examination of Elders Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar called the ordinands to follow Peter's example and get out of the boat and join Jesus on the water. He acknowledged that sometimes it feels as though the sea is too large and the boat is too small, but he said it is during that moment of help-lessness that God is there with us and that God sends angels and the Holy Spirit. "Jesus is constantly calling us to walk on water whether it's sea water or frozen water," said Bishop Devadhar. "It is Jesus who has called us into this ministry, and he constantly watches us if we are faithful to him."

Commissioning Service

Bishop Moo-Goo Shin, Resident Bishop of the Seoul Annual Conference, urged leaders of the GNJ Conference to dream big and have faith. "Open yourself to God's dream for you and see yourself as God sees you," he said. "Have a dream in Jesus and your dream will come true through Jesus."

Following Bishop Shin's sermon Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar led a Service of Commissioning. Twelve candidates were commissioned: Byungil Ahn, Jean M. Arlea, Barbara May Frohock, Erik Charles Hall, Hillary Ann Crute Johnson, Thomas Albert Lank, Erica Leigh Milone Munoz, James Geunsu Ryoo, Rosanna E. Suh, Susan Victor and Sharon Capron Yarger.

Following their commissioning there was the Ceremonial Passing of the Mantle with one of the retiring clergy passing the mantle to the next generation in ministry. This year's retiring clergy are: Dan R. Bottorff, Rose Burn-Hayes, Edward J. Casey, Ronald

A. Crouch, John T. Edwards, John M. Foster, Galen L. Goodwin, Polly E. Hare Jr., Ruth W. Hennessey, James L. Hofacker, David J. Isch, Diane W. Klemann, Jorge E. Sanchez, Harold E. Schmul, Pedro Trinidad, Robert L. Webster, Frederick D. Wilkes III, Betty Jane Young and Jane Verstoep. Together these clergy served nearly 469 years and were moved with their families a total of 110 times, said Bishop Devadhar.

Commission

Words

Spoken in trust

Imparting confidence;

Hands

Placed upon the head

Imparting power;

Arms

Extended in embrace

Imparting love;

Hearts

Reaching out to other hearts

Imparting kinship;

Lives

Yielded to Christ

Engaged in mission

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Constitutional Amendments

Following extensive Holy Conferencing, clergy and lay members of the Annual Conference voted upon the 32 constitutional amendments that were drafted at General Conference. The decision of the vote will be announced at a later time.

If the constitutional amendments are approved by a majority of all members meeting in their respective annual conferences, changes will take effect January of 2013.

Report of the Board of Ordained Ministry

There are two priorities the Board of Ordained Ministry is emphasizing this year, said Steven G. Bechtold, Chairperson of the Board. He said we need to be intentional about seeking younger candidates for ministry stating that we are in the bottom 10-percent of conferences relative to the number of young adult clergy. "We need to be encouraging about inviting young people into ministry," he said. Mr. Bechtold said the other emphasis is the promotion and support of the Ministerial Education Fund.

Rev. Adam Hamilton - Featured Preacher/Speaker

Think of your worship service as a dining experience where you are going to eat soul food was the advice Rev. Adam Hamilton had for GNJ leaders. "Many times we offer soul food that was nuked in the microwave and just thrown together," he said. Hamilton noted that the entire service needs to be planned and should engage heads, hearts and

hands.

He focused on the art of preaching, saying his average sermon length is around 33 minutes which allows him to both teach and preach. Hamilton also suggested that if you want to connect with people from outside the church, we should start by discussing the human condition and then relating it back to the Bible and giving illustrations.

Rev. Hamilton emphasized what he considers to be five important components of preaching that will help connect our worship services to both members and nonreligious or nominally religious people. He said to be engaging, sermons should include teaching, with each person learning at least one new thing. It should also be inspirational and include practical help for leading a Christian life. He ended by saying that in addition to being creative and interesting, there should also be a call to action or response. "Methodists were known for being great preachers. It's time for us to reclaim that," said Hamilton.

In the afternoon he urged leaders to wrestle with three questions when considering evangelism: 1) Why do people need Jesus? 2) Why do people need the church? 3) Why do people need your particular church? He emphasized that for outreach to be effective, church leaders need to identify what makes them special and distinguishes them from other local faith communities.

Rev. Hamilton ended by sharing what he believes to be four keys to a hopeful future for the United Methodist Church - compelling worship in existing churches, raising up 2,000 gifted young clergy to reach their generation, starting 2,000 new faith communities, and engaging in incarnational ministry to our communities and world.

Correction

Yesterday's Digest incorrectly spelled the name of the winner of the Christian Unity Award. The award winner is Lytle Hoover.

Saturday, May 30, 2009



The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference reconvened on Saturday, May 30th.

Correction

Yesterday's Digest omitted the name of Hyoik Kim, who was also commissioned. We sincerely regret the omission.

Constitutional Amendments

The results on the vote on the 32 constitutional amendments proposed at General

Conference were announced.

All of the group one amendments (4, 10, 23 & 26) had more negative votes than positive.. These amendments would have created similar structures for all our world-wide churches with each Annual Conference belonging to a Regional Conference and Regional Conferences would be organized in sub-units called Jurisdictional Conferences.

All of the group two amendments (3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 & 32)also had more negative votes than positive. These amendments would have changed the language for areas outside of the United States from "central" conferences to "regional" conferences.

Amendment 1 was passed. This amendment will change language dealing with paragraph 4, removing detailed language about race, color, national origin, status or economic condition and replacing with "all persons."

Group 5 consisted of miscellaneous amendments. Amendment 2, which will require the adoption of ethics and conflict of interest polices, had more positive than negative votes. Amendment 6, which would have provided an avenue for General Conference to establish representation for newly created conferences on a non-proportional basis under certain circumstances for a transitional time period, had more negative than positive. Amendment 8, which recommends adding gender to the categories of persons protected from discrimination, garnered more positive than negative. Amendment 9, which ensures a minimum basis of support for the election of bishops at Jurisdictional Conferences, had more positive than negative. Amendment 15, which would have allowed General Conference to define laity and clergy membership of the annual conference without going through the process of changing the constitution,had more negative than positive. Amendment 17, which reinstates legislation adopted by the 2004 General Conference to allow lay persons on the Conference Committee on Investigation to vote on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy, had more positive than negative. Amendment 22, which allows Bermuda to be added to the listing of the Northeaster Jurisdictional Conference, had more positive than negative.

All votes count in this balloting and the final results depend on a two-thirds majority of all United Methodists voting in their individual Annual Conferences be realized to pass and/or implement the constitutional amendments.

Bishop Felton May - Multi-Ethnic Center

Bishop Felton May of the Multi-Ethnic Center said that he remembered when we said our church reflected the constituency of the nation. He fears that 50 years from now, our church will not reflect the constituency and diversity of the population served by the church unless we take seriously our charge to evangelize the communities within which we find ourselves. "The call to be Holy and bold comes out of the book of Acts," said May.

2010 Shared Ministry Plan

There was Holy Conferencing on the 2010 Shared Ministry Plan before it was approved by GNJ leaders. Churches will not see an increase in their apportionments this year since the Conference Council on Finance and Administration made the decision not to make any increases. Technically, there may be a slight increase of less than one-percent because of churches that have closed.

Two motions brought forward from the floor sought to further reduce apportionments, but failed. The first looked to use \$121,232 from the surplus fund and the second attempted to eliminate a three-percent salary increase for Annual Conference staff.

Report of the Conference Lay Leader

Conference Lay Leader Ressie Fuller asked leaders to reflect on our ministry using the example of Jesus calling Peter to cast out his nets, despite a tiring and fruitless night of fishing. She posed the question, "How do we face the challenge for laity and for clergy who, like Peter, say to us, 'we have toiled all night and still my attendance is down, I have no young people in my church?'" She said that as lay and clergy, we may be tempted to think that God has overlooked us in our ministries. "Perhaps we are doubting our call or measuring our worth by the empty nets we face day to day," said Fuller. "Jesus is not calling you or me or Peter to be anything but who we are." She called leaders to continue in our ministries with the help of the one who called us. "Imagine each one of us working for our people, working for our churches in the power of the Holy Spirit. Teach, preach and labor at his word."

Structure Study Report

The assembly accepted the preliminary recommendations of the Report of the Structure Study Taskforce. Preliminary recommendations include that the Bishop will have authority of the appointment or removal of conference staff, with the exception of finance staff. It also says conference staff, lay and clergy, should follow an annual appointment schedule. It states there should also be clear operational guides for the Primary Task Team (PTT) and there should be an enhancement of the focus and directional leadership of PTT by the creation of an Executive Committee, which will initially consist of no more than seven members. Finally, the report stated the PTT will be allowed to act upon the final report immediately, if it is issued before the 2010 Annual Conference.

Commission on Equitable Compensation

Leaders approved an increase to the minimum equitable compensation for persons under appointment. Effective January 1, 2010, the minimum compensation for Elders in Full Connection will be \$34,847, the minimum compensation for Provisional and Associate Members will be \$33,105 and the minimum compensation for a full-time local pastor will be \$31,362.

Conference Offerings

There were several offerings taken during Annual Conference for various ministries. GNJ leaders gave generously. During the offering for the Sustentation Fund, which supports pastors in special times of need, \$6,243.59 was collected. The offering for the

Northeastern Jurisdiction Mission of Peace trip collected \$3,567.41, which will help support the mission of youth who will go to India. The offering for the North Katango/Congo Annual Conference, our Annual Conference Partner, netted \$5,174.70. The offering for the Central Conference Pension Initiative collected \$4,188.

Gambling Resolution

A resolution was passed that will allow the exploration of other places to host Annual Conference in 2011. This is a result of the Valley Forge Conference Center obtaining a gaming license, which will allow them to install slot machines. The Primary Task Team will be responsible for making the decision of whether we remain in Valley Forge in 2011 or move elsewhere.