



Rooted in Our Baptism

## Wednesday Wrap-Up

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022



**North Carolina Conference**  
The United Methodist Church

### ***Blessed to Be Gathered Together for Opening Worship!***

Oh how good it is to gather in the name of the Lord for holy conferencing! After an in-person hiatus due to COVID protocols, the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church gathered Wednesday in the Greenville Convention Center. The day began with the Laity and Clergy Executive Sessions and then moved into the Opening Worship.

The worship team reminded us of the diversity of our Methodist Connection by leading us with the words from Ephesians 4: 1-6 in Korean, Spanish, and English.

In his first in-person worship service with us as Bishop, Leonard Fairley began his time of teaching with humor and named an early-morning prayer by conference Communications Director, Derek Leek, as the conduit of the Holy Spirit inspiring him change the title of his sermon to "See How They Love Each Other."

Bishop Fairley reminded us that love is not merely a suggestion for us. Jesus showed us how to love when he laid down his life for his friends. Fairley said that the best witness we can



*Bishop Leonard Fairley breaks bread during Holy Communion as part of the Opening Worship service.*

give is to live into the words of Jesus: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." The bishop paused to emphasize that this was not a suggestion from Jesus — it was a command.

Following the sermon, Bishop Paul Leeland, an NC Conference Elder who served the Western NC Conference prior to his retirement, led the congregation in a baptismal remembrance as we prepared for dining at the Lord's Table. In addition, the choir shared their gifts, offering the anthem, *Many Gifts, One Spirit* by Allen Pote.

## **Afternoon Business Session Began With Conference Rules Debate**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: As this Wrap-Up was going to print on Thursday morning, a motion to revisit the Rules debate was made. Below is a summary from the Plenary on Wednesday afternoon. Updates will be included in tomorrow's edition.*

The Wednesday afternoon business session began as Bishop Fairley officially called the session to order. The session began with Rev. George Speake's presentation from

the Committee on Conference Rules. The committee proposed the Standing Rules for in-person meetings of the Annual Conference and for online meetings of Annual Conference. During the discussion of the in-person rules, an amendment from Rev. Paul Stallworth was passed that going forward, the Rules Committee

*See Rules Debate, page 2*

# Health Programs and Free Mental Health Talk Space at AC22

The NC Conference Health Team is making health services available to conference members.

- ECU Medical School is providing screenings for blood pressure, BMI, and glucose on Thursday until 5pm.
- On Thursday and Friday, the Goshen Medical Van will have a primary care provider onsite for walk-in visits for adult/children on the Hampton Inn side of the Convention Center. They also offer rapid and PCR Covid testing. Please bring your insurance card and co-pay.
- A free, confidential Mental Health Talkspace is available Thursday and Friday for anyone who would like a 30 minute listening session with a trained, licensed professional. These sessions are completely private.
- Stop by the display tables for Partners in Health and Wholeness and the Health Team to learn more about healthy aging, mental health, stress reduction, and opioid response in our state.

## Rules Debate from page 1

shall strike through text that is deleted and bold text that is added to the proposed rules for each session of Annual Conference. Additionally, the rules should be published in the Conference Workbook and on the Conference website 30 days prior to Conference. The conference accepted the amendment.

A second amendment was made by Rev. Tim Russell regarding an Assistant to the Bishop position which was added last year when it was announced that our conference would be sharing a bishop with other conferences. The new position was added to the Cabinet to assist the Bishop since they would be unable to serve 100% of their time in North Carolina. Russell proposed that going forward, if the Annual Conference wants to add a position like this, the financial ramifications should be disclosed, a job description shared, and the Annual Conference should be responsible for voting on the

matter. The motion passed 434 to 350. The amended Standing Rules for in-person meetings were adopted. In his speech for the amendment, Russell also pointed out that the Committee on the Episcopacy did not have diverse membership as outlined in the Book of Discipline.

New Standing Rules for online meetings were also adopted to address issues brought before the Judicial Council after the 2021 online Annual Conference was held. The denomination's Judicial Council ruled that our Annual Conference was out of order when the 2021 Rules were voted on electronically before the Conference session was called to order. Judicial Council ruled: "Under ¶ 605.1, an opening session always precedes the business delineated in ¶ 605.4 because an annual conference session, to be in order, must be called to order first." The Judicial Council decision summarized: "An annual conference may not approve changes to its standing



*Conference Chancellor Eric Stevens shares information during the Rules debate on Wednesday.*

rules or conduct any other business prior to the opening session as defined in ¶ 605.1. The bishop's ruling is reversed in part. This holding shall be prospective and not affect any actions taken by the North Carolina Annual Conference at its 2021 session."

In preparation for any other circumstance where we must conduct the business of the Annual Conference online, the Rules Committee proposed standing rules that include wording for online facilitation of information and voting. These passed with majority approval.

## Challenged to Love as Jesus Loved

With an energetic and fast-paced oratory, the Rev. Dr. Janet Wolf, an Elder from the Tennessee Conference, challenged those gathered for Wednesday night's Evening Worship to be the church and live out the radically-inclusive love of Jesus. Wolf cited ways in which she sees the church as complicit in the racist, misogynistic, empirical, and economically oppressive nature of human governments, and she encouraged the church to follow the Lamb who is by no means...a lamb.



Rev. Dr. Janet Wolf

Using scripture from the book of Revelation, Wolf acknowledged that change is hard. She has seen this first-hand as a poverty rights organizer, a community mediator, a pastor of prison ministry, and expert in the study of non-violent movements.

"Worship in Revelation is not silence in sanctuaries," said Wolf. "It is stunning joy erupting in the middle of the chaos and confusion. It's cosmic holy wonder and delight. It's hand clapping, soul singing, toe-tapping dancing in the streets. It is praise and celebration in the middle of hardest hurt. It's not an escape. It's not sloppy sentimentality. This is a thundering explosive earthquake of alleluia... This is not a denial of evil...not a theological treatise but a lived experience."

Wolf urged the church to come to the water of life, a water that seeks to quench the fires of injustice and a water that baptizes people in the knowledge that they are worthy, they are beloved and a precious child of God. She challenged the church "into creative, courageous, militant, death-defying, non-violent Kin-dom living here and now. The church is not an escape, a safe haven. It's not where we go to avoid the problems of the world. It's the community that empowers us to wade into struggles for justice in Jesus' name."



*Game Changers, a group of youth and children from All God's Children UMC (Beacon District), led the congregation in a delightful rendition of "This Little Light of Mine" during Wednesday evening worship.*

## Special Offering

An offering for Ukraine Relief was received during Opening Worship on Wednesday at 1:30 pm. The offering so far has totaled \$17,850. Your generosity supports Advance #982450 International Disaster Response & Recovery, United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) humanitarian response in the region.

## Free Resources

Visit the Convention Center Box Office where tables of gently-used resources are available and free for you to take back to your churches. These have been donated by various ministries and churches in our conference.

## Display Tables

A wide variety of ministries and programs have set up display tables located in the Convention Center galleries. Learn more about ways to engage your congregation in mission and ministry!

## T-Shirts and More

Remember your time at AC 2022 all year long with some T-shirts, hats, and blankets. Come by the table in the Convention Center lobby to make your purchase. Supplies are limited but we can take orders if we run out!

## ***Celebrating Faithful Servants and Ministry***

During Wednesday's Plenary Session, Bishop Fairley and his wife, Dawn, were welcomed by Emily Innes representing the Committee on Episcopacy. The sacrifices that they are making to serve three annual conferences were recognized and appreciated. Rev. Gray Southern offered a prayer for our episcopal family.

Southern also recognized and thanked Rev. Jerry Bryan for his decades of service as our Conference Secretary and expressed gratitude for the whole Conference secretarial team.

Conference Lay Leader John Hall shared some of the good things that happened in our conference as we continued in active ministry in the midst of a global pandemic. The Annual Conference dispersed \$2.7M in COVID grants to 635 churches.

Rev. Liz Roberts spoke of the importance of campus ministry and challenged us to connect graduating high school students to Wesley Foundations as they head to college in the fall. These personal connections to campus ministers could be the key to keeping these young adults engaged spiritually. She asked churches to share the names of students with the campus ministry team so that they could be contacted by the Wesley team at their college and also be entered into a drawing for one of eight \$500 college scholarships. Everyone was invited to join the campus ministers for a fun basketball challenge Friday night during the ice cream social.

Rev. Dr. Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Dean of Duke Divinity School, brought greetings from the faculty and students and shared how personally and professionally grateful he is for the NC Conference, where he preached his first sermon and was ordained. Duke Divinity School wants its students to develop an entrepreneurial mindset in a Wesleyan spirit.

Rev. Kristen Richardson-Frick from The Duke Endowment brought greetings via video and shared the endowment's focus on supporting leaders, reimagining church real estate, building congregational capacity, and identifying and testing selected programs. She highlighted rural churches that are hosting a summer literacy program to avoid learning loss including Salem UMC in Eastover, West Nash UMC in Wilson, and Seaside UMC in Sunset Beach.

We closed the afternoon session with the district superintendents sharing where God is at work in their districts and highlighting some of the mission and ministry opportunities churches have had in the past year.



*Rev. Jerry Bryan gives a thumbs up as he is recognized for his decades of service as our Conference Secretary.*



*Bishop Leonard Fairley and his wife, Dawn, bow their heads during a prayer for our episcopal family. Bishop Fairley frequently travels between Kentucky and North Carolina as he leads the NC, KY, and Central Appalachian Missionary Conferences.*

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## ***Change to AC Lay Equalization Plan***

A change in the wording for the Lay Equalization P—lan on pg. 25 of the Conference Workbook was approved and adds the four Administrative Assistant to the District Superintendent positions and the Director of the District Office to the lay delegation for the Annual Conference 2023.