

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023
WRAP-UP

Friday,
June 16, 2023

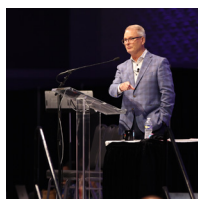
Order of the Day with Rev. Adam Hamilton

The Friday afternoon session began the Order of the Day with inspiring teaching from Rev. Adam Hamilton, author and pastor of The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Kansas.

Rev. Hamilton framed his speech around three tasks:

- looking at where we are as a church now and who we are going forward,
- considering some essentials of creating vital, vibrant congregations, and
- calling us to a Jesus revolution.

First, Hamilton shared encouraging statistics about the current state of The United Methodist Church. His vision for the future of The UMC is mission-driven rather than conflict-driven. He gave several examples of how the loss of churches through disaffiliation is leading to exceptional growth in churches remaining United Methodist and the birth of many new faith communities.



The conflicts we've experienced have helped us to clarify what it means to be United Methodist.

Leading us in reciting the Apostles' Creed, Hamilton challenged those who claimed that United Methodists are changing their historic doctrines. He affirmed the values that make us United Methodist – critical thinking, living both the evangelical and social gospel, and faithful biblical interpretation that considers the Bible's historical and cultural context in the light of other principles of scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

Hamilton also shared his thoughts on what might happen at General Conference 2024. He believes we will approve a regionalization plan, ultimately remove the language related to the "practice of homosexuality" from The Book of Discipline, agree to disagree, and all agree to love all people.

Continue reading at nccumc.org/ac2023

SPECIAL OFFERING FOLLOW UP. Gifts for the Congregations for Children offering on Thursday total \$5,205.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Glow in Greenville Walk/Run 5K kicked off Friday at AC 2023
- Luke 7:36-50 was explored through Biblical Animation
- Dean Edgardo Colón-Emeric brought greetings from Duke Divinity School
- The Clergy Spouse Association highlighted their mission

For all news and photos, visit nccumc.org/ac2023

Conference Statistician Report

Rev. George Speake presented the Statistician's Report Friday afternoon.



The first report reflects the data for all 780 churches for the 2022 calendar year. The Conference began 2022 with 213,576 members and ended with 162,625, including 628 members in The United Methodist Collective. This reflects a loss of ~52,000 members.

The second report considers only the 531 churches remaining after last year's disaffiliations. Those 531 churches had a total membership of 166,285 at the beginning of 2022 and ended the year with 161,997. This number, plus the 628 members of the UM Collective, represents a loss of only 5,353 members, not including disaffiliations.

Following the report, Dr. Christine Dodson thanked Rev. George Speake for over 32 years of service as the NC Conference Statistician.

Trustees Report Approved Friday

Dr. David Peele, Board of Trustees Chair, continued the session from Thursday, speaking to the consideration of the Conference Trustees report and the three remaining motions.

Much of the work of the Trustees over the last year has focused on managing Conference properties, Conference legal matters, and continuing our work on local church disaffiliations in accordance with paragraph 2553 of The Book of Discipline.

Two church closures were brought for individual vote. The first motion was the closure of Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church in Wilmington, NC. "In accordance with paragraph 2549.3(b) of The Book of Discipline and with the recommendation and consent of Bishop Shelton, the unanimous Cabinet, and the Harbor District Board of Church Location and Building, the Board of Trustees moves for approval of the formal closure of Fifth Avenue United Methodist Church."

Several members of the Annual Conference asked questions of clarification, including the timeline in which the closure and disaffiliation process took place, as well as the financial health, membership, and worship attendance trends.

Rev. Paul Stallworth requested a decision of law by asking the following questions about the closure of Fifth Avenue UMC Thursday afternoon.

Continue reading on page 2, top right

Finance Reports

Dr. Christine Dodson provided an overview of the presentations of the financial reports proposed in the Conference Workbook.

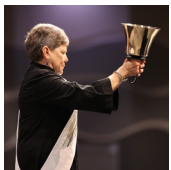
The first report presented was from the Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), presented by Chairperson Anne Lloyd. The report included a 2025 budget proposed at a 24.52% decrease from the approved 2024 budget. Lloyd noted the Council's commitment to present a budget that does not exceed the current apportionment levels of churches remaining United Methodist, so that apportionments of disaffiliated churches would not be added to the churches that remain.

A motion was made to add \$205,000 for NC UM Camp & Retreat Ministries and \$120,000 for the Methodist Home for Children to the 2025 budget proposal. The motion was approved to be referred to CFA for consideration, with a report back to the body on Saturday morning. The rest of the report was approved, which included no increase in salary for district superintendents for 2024, but does include increases to moving expense reimbursement limits for clergy moving due to appointment changes.

Other financial report highlights included:

- Approval of the report of the Insurance Committee recommending continuing with the Wespath HealthFlex insurance plan for active clergy and lay employees with a 6% premium increase for both churches and participants
- Approval of the Board of Pension report, including a 2.52% increase in the pre-1982 service year rate (increased to \$855) and a 3% increase to retiree health insurance reimbursement accounts with a maximum funding level of \$4,306 per participant (actual payment based on years of service at retirement)
- Approval of the report of the Commission on Equitable Compensation, including a 3% increase in the minimum salary for 2024, resulting in a minimum salary for full-time pastors of \$49,770 and 65% of that (\$32,351) for student pastors.
- Approval of the report of the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave with no changes in policy or benefits as presented in the Conference Workbook.

All Saints Celebration and Memorial Service



Rev. Dr. Edgardo Colón-Emerić preached on John 14:15-31. Rev. Rhonda Grant Jordan led a responsive litany and prayer. Joy Butler Clayton offered a solo performance. As the name of each faithful servant was read, a bell rang, and family members were invited to stand in silent prayer.

Honoring Retirees



The retiree recognition on Friday was an opportunity to thank the clergy retiring class of 2023, and their spouses, for their dedication and service to the conference. The 21 retiring pastors were also recognized earlier on Friday at the retiree luncheon.

Trustees Report Approved Friday, Continued

Bishop Shelton has 30 days from the close of Annual Conference to make a ruling, which will then go to the denomination's Judicial Council. In accordance with our Conference Rules, after three speeches for and three against, the motion was passed.

The motion to close Community UMC in Raeford, NC also passed based on the detailed information provided in the Conference Workbook. Finally, the complete Board of Trustees report, as printed in the Conference Workbook, including the list of closed churches on page 89, was approved by a vote of the body.

Rev. Jim Bolyard offered a prayer for healing as we continue our shared and often difficult work, acknowledging our lament at churches that have closed or have chosen to disaffiliate.

See the full article at nccumc.org/ac2023

Youth Ministry, Camp & Retreat Ministries, Methodist Home for Children



Conference Youth President, Will Rouse, shared a glimpse of Conference Youth Ministry, which begins in local churches and extends to annual Conference Youth events.

Rev. Jason Villegas, Director of Conference Youth Ministries, shared his excitement as he lives into his new role with the Conference, making connections between youth and the Annual Conference, but also helping to identify and share the needs of youth moving into the future.

Dail Ballard brought laughter and joyful play to her report as Executive Director of Camping & Retreat Ministries, Inc. This year, Camping & Retreat Ministries celebrates 75 years of ministry in the North Carolina Annual Conference. Each year, 35,000 people participate in programs and camps occurring at three camps: Camp Chestnut Ridge, Camp Don Lee, and Camp Rockfish. Attendees enjoyed child-like joy when playing with beach balls during the update.

Rev. Bruce Stanley brought greetings from the Methodist Home for Children (MHC), sharing glimpses of the work they do with over 1,200 children, youth, and their families each year — which includes foster care ministry and a focus on interrupting generational participation in the criminal justice system.