Annual Conference Concludes With Baptismal Renewal

This was the first year of our new quadrennial theme for Annual Conference: A Future With Hope. And hope was in abundance as the gathered people celebrated exciting ministries going on across our Conference. Even amidst especially difficult economic times, the Conference retooled and adjusted to face the future with confidence in the hope of God.

The 2009 subtheme was Learning. With the teaching sessions of Rev. Adam Hamilton and the workshops on Thursday evening, the clergy and laity were enriched in heart and mind. In addition, worship was led with earnestness by special Conference music and worship leader Elise Eslinger. Joining her was a vocal ensemble, pianist, organist, and other instrumentalists.

Saturday’s closing worship and sending forth included a new form of witness instead of the traditional Methodist Lovefeast. This year, four speakers came forward to share stories of God’s good work amongst us, followed by reflections from members of the congregation.

Reverend Dr. Roger Elliott delivered the final sermon on the priority of the church being the making of disciples of Jesus Christ. The people were called forward to participate in a service of baptismal renewal, reminding them of their first calling to be disciples of Jesus Christ as they go forth to serve.

Bishop Al Gwinn commended the body on their holy conferencing and read new pastoral appointments for 2009. Joining him were the District Superintendents and Lay Leaders, including two new Superintendents: Rev. Jon Strother to the Raleigh District and Rev. Francis Daniel to the Wilmington District.

The Annual Conference will return to Greenville in 2010 for year two of A Future With Hope.

New 2010 and 2011 Conference Budgets Approved

Our Conference Committee on Finance and Administration presented a revised 2010 budget and a 2011 budget for the Conference. Usually, budgets are determined one year, raised the next year, and spent in the following year. While this is still the normal practice, unusual economic conditions have necessitated adjustments to the 2010 budget. Therefore, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration brought forth a budget with reductions totaling $367,409.

After considering the new 2010 budget, the Annual Conference body determined that the salaries of District Superintendents for 2010 should remain at the 2009 level of $100,388. This means that the total for the 2010 budget will be $19,590,427.

In addition, the Conference approved a 2011 budget of $20,276,199. This represents a 3.5% increase over the newly approved 2010 budget. The budget is brought to the Conference session by the Council on Finance and Administration in consultation with the Connectional Table.
Resolutions and Reports

Saturday morning was the occasion of the report from the Committee on Resolutions and Reference. They delivered four resolutions that came from the people and committees of the Annual Conference.

Resolution 1: The substitute resolution from the Committee on Disability Concerns in “Favor of Tobacco-Free Environments” was passed by the Conference without amendment.

Resolution 2: The Conference and General Church Boards of Church and Society resolution was on the “Priority of Health and Wellbeing.” The sponsors made one change by deleting a phrase in part 6: “on a single payer basis.” With this change, the resolution passed.

Resolution 3: A resolution to “Evaluate and Overhaul the Criminal Justice System,” proposed by the Committee on Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries, passed as written.

Resolution 4: This resolution from Rev. James E. Malloy, Jr., asked that churches place a wheelchair in their lobby. The body did not adopt this resolution.

Conference to Return to Greenville

The 2009 Annual Conference determined the location of the 2010 Annual Conference as the Greenville Convention Center. The Bishop sets the time of the Conference and it was announced that the dates will be June 10th through 12th, one day shorter than usual, as a way of being good stewards of our funds.

Online Ministry Sets Records

The Online and Web Ministry of the Annual Conference event went to a new level in 2009 and a record number of persons logged on to watch the Conference live and read about it. According to computer records, there were 1,848 views of the live stream. The average viewer watched for 22 minutes.

The Conference blog and new Twitter updates were especially popular this year too. Many thanks to the efforts of the Information Technology and Communications staff as well as the media company MCR that provided audio and video technology.

Conference Nominations Approved

Reverend Carol Goehring, Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, presented the nominations to Conference teams and committees and the officers were elected. District officers and committee members were also elected as nominated in the handouts on Saturday.

Appointments Fixed By Bishop

Bishop Al Gwinn fixed the pastoral appointments for 2009 to 2010 including 172 new changes. The Conference body prayed over these pastors and churches.