

VIII. DAILY PROCEEDINGS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING

June 4, 2017

Laity Session

First United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas, 3:30 p.m.

The laity session of The North Texas Conference was held at First United Methodist Church of Plano. It featured Joseph Bradley, Conference director of Camping and Retreat Ministries, as its keynote speaker. Keeping with the Annual Conference's theme, "A New Creation," Bradley spoke of innovation in faith formation by inviting churches to consider a Wesley Life Map in employing a developmental approach to nurturing the faith lives of United Methodist believers. Throughout the life cycle, relationships are central to fostering faith, and lay members are in a special position to create a "Constellation of Mentors" for young people and for one another. Lay members may hesitate to offer their gifts – thinking they are unqualified or untrained for nurturing others in faith, but Bradley used Mark 2:1-5, Jesus' healing of a paralytic man, to reveal how all the faithful are called to bring people to Jesus. Mentoring anyone begins with three simple words – "Tell me more."

Conference Lay Leader Jeff Bouis presided at the Laity Session. Head Delegate to the 2016 General Conference Tim Crouch described the constitutional amendments on which Annual Conference members would be voting. Crouch encouraged everyone to stay for the Tuesday afternoon vote and participate in the process of shaping the rules in the Book of Discipline.

Youth members of the conference remembered lay servants who died during the past year. The gathering celebrated the lay recipients of the Harry Denman Evangelism Awards – youth Caroline Farish of Flower Mound UMC, and adult Susan Anderson of Lake Cities UMC.

A memorial service recognized lay members Beverly Bell, Bill Hays, Marilyn Chandler, Jim Heath, Jayla Parker, and Mabel Troutt.

Clergy Session

Spring Valley United Methodist Church, Richardson, Texas, 3:30 p.m.

The North Texas Conference clergy gathered at Spring Valley United Methodist Church, Dallas, and Bishop McKee called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Host pastor Paul Gould welcomed the clergy and opened with prayer. Vic Casad moved that local pastors be included throughout the business session. The motion was seconded and the body approved.

Bishop McKee welcomed Joell Stanislaus, administrative assistant to the bishop, and Pam Liston, chancellor for Annual Conference. He then read scripture about a new creation from Revelation, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." He encouraged the clergy to be open to the moving of the spirit, to listen to the wisdom. He stated that he had learned from those in the Central Texas Conference and that tomorrow he would share what he has learned from some of the younger clergy.

He then introduced Tim Morrison, Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) Chair. Morrison moved the approval of the Conference Relations Committee of the BOM. The motion passed. Morrison then introduced Jill Jackson-Sears, Candidacy Registrar.

Jackson-Sears called attention to question 19, the list of certified candidates, and asked that any corrections be submitted in writing. Jackson-Sears then introduced Marsha Middleton for the Local Pastors' Report. Middleton noted the list of those who have been licensed and appointed as local pastors – full time and part time. Clergy voted to approve those for whom licenses are approved including those not appointed. They then voted to approve those who will be appointed. Middleton called attention to students from other annual conferences serving as local pastors and enrolled in a school of theology listed by the University Senate. Bishop McKee gave a special word of appreciation to Middleton and to local pastors.

Larry George addressed question 24a and b, as well as questions 25a and b and 26, concerning those who have been appointed from other Annual Conferences or Methodist denominations and those who have been approved to serve from other Christian denominations. The body voted to approve. George then introduced Billy Echols-Richter, Chair of Preparation and Qualifications.

Echols-Richter read the name of Peter McNabb to be elected as an associate member. He then read the names of those recommended as Provisional Members, both deacons and elders. They came forward, faced the body, and each was voted on individually. They were all approved as provisional members, were received with a standing ovation, and Bishop McKee shook their hands.

Echols-Richter called attention to question 29, those being continued as provisional members, and question 30, those coming from other Christian denominations who have had their orders recognized.

Echols-Richter then read the names of those recommended to be elected as members in full connection, deacon. They came forward and Bishop McKee asked them the historic questions. Each was voted into conference membership and introduced to the body. All new members in full connection received an extended standing ovation.

The following persons were presented for election into full membership and ordination as deacon: Phil Thomas Dieke, Maria Dixon Hall, Benjamin David Hensley.

Echols-Richter then read the names of those recommended to be elected as members in full connection, elder. They came forward and Bishop McKee asked them the historic questions. Each was voted into conference membership and introduced to the body. All new members in full connection received an extended standing ovation.

The following persons were presented for election into full membership and ordination as elder: Richard Davis, Jonathan Lee Grace, Donald Haywood, Amy Spaur, Pamela Elaine White, Alex Jay Williams, and Jonathan Perry. Rachel Baughman was approved to transfer from deacon to elder.

Larry George addressed question 38 concerning those who had been received by transfer from other annual conferences of The United Methodist Church. One person, Sarah Roberts, transferred from the Central Texas Conference to the North Texas Conference. George addressed question 41 as well concerning those transferred out to other annual conferences.

Paul Gould addressed question 42 – 43. Bishop McKee called for a vote on question 44, those granted the status of honorable location-retired. The question passed. The body then voted on question 46b, approving the withdrawal from the ordained ministerial office of Julie Mielke Macpherson. The Bishop reminded the body that those who died during the year would be remembered later in the evening. He then called for a moment of silence and Paul Gould offered a prayer for those elders who died during the year.

Bishop McKee then recognized those provisional and ordained members who have received appointments in other Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church while retaining their membership in the North Texas Annual Conference. Those are Judith Brandt, Gloria Fowler, Elizabeth LaBella-Foster, JoAnne Pounds, Troy Sims, Martha

Myre, Erika Fadel, and Marji Bishir Hill.

The body voted to approve those ordained members on personal, family, or medical leave.

The names of those retired elders, deacons, and local pastors were read. Their retirement was approved. They were invited to the front of the session where the Bishop shook their hands and they received a standing ovation. Those were Terry Jones, Paul McKay, William J. Bryan, Alice Gant Coder, Nancy DeStefano, Larry Wayne George, Paul Q. Goodrich, Sara Hardaway, Kenneth Hildebrand, Anna Hosemann-Butler, Barbara Weems Marcum, Michael Loy Nichols, James P. Ozier, Diane Presley, Larry D. Tinsley, Preston Weaver, David B. Weber, Claude P. Whittemore, Larry Gene Wisdom, Jerald Clay Womack, and Larry Davis.

Elizabeth Moseley presented questions 58-62 regarding specialized ministry and lay ministry.

Question 63 was presented by Tim Morrison regarding those who have been certified as lay ministers. Morrison then presented question 70 for a vote allowing Alan Hitt to return to active status from extended leave. The status was approved.

Morrison reported on those elders and deacons approved for less than full-time service. Morrison concluded his report, and the body approved the BOM report. Bishop McKee thanked all the members of the BOM. The clergy session concluded at 4:43 PM with a benediction from Bill Bryan.

The full reports of the divisions of the Board of Ordained Ministry are printed in this journal in Section XIII. AGENCY REPORTS under the heading, Center for Leadership Development.

Worship Service First United Methodist Church, Richardson, Texas, 7:00 p.m.

At opening worship, the music of the evening began with the Ubuntu Violins, a ministry of Grace UMC and Lakewood UMC. The combined choirs of First UMC Rockwall, Lake Highlands UMC, Tyler Street UMC, and Creekwood UMC, directed by Michael Crawford, Nicki Lyford, and Alan Clark provided the music throughout the remainder of the evening. A dramatic reading from Genesis 1 and Revelation 1 was accompanied by the combined choirs, a string quartet, and Clara Lindh, soloist.

Senior Pastor at First UMC Hurst, Philip Rhodes was the speaker for the evening. Rhodes' "Last Things First" was based on the dramatic scripture reading. He proclaimed that, when something stinks, you cannot cover it up. According to Rhodes, the little green paper trees infused with fragrance for automobiles were created because of the stench of spoiled milk in a milk truck. The creator of those trees wanted to cover up the smell, not remove it. Referencing Revelation 21, Rhodes observed that John's desire was to address a problem in the church rather than cover it up.

Rhodes went on to say that the question of the day is, "What do we do now that Jesus has not returned?" First and Second Timothy and Titus ask that same question. In fear, said Rhodes, we close our hearts and minds, all in the name of self-preservation. You can't cover it up. The people of the biblical era preferred to blend into the Roman culture to survive but self-preservation is a sin that cannot be covered up. It must be removed. Church members live in fear because they fear change, but Christianity was never a movement grounded in self-preservation, rather in self-sacrifice. John's vision of a new heaven and a new earth became the "burden" for the church. Rhodes challenged the congregation to look around; vision is always birthed through burden. Our burden cannot be self-preservation.

Rhodes noted that Project Transformation grew out of "burden." The founders of Project Transformation got a "burden" for college students, for children in underserved areas, and for churches to deepen their connection to the community around them.

Rhodes counseled the congregation to take note and remember that the home of God is among mortals.

Larry George led the congregation in the Litany of the Saints, remembering those who have been influential in so many lives. George recalled all the saints whose lives were being remembered and the love of the life of service to others they had lived. He ended by quoting Brian Andreas, saying that “Anyone can slay a dragon, but try waking up every morning and loving the world again. That takes a real hero.” Those kinds of heroes were remembered during the worship service.

George gave thanks for those departed companions in faith who dedicated themselves to the ordained and lay ministries of the church, believing that God had called them to be real heroes.

George invited people to stand in grateful memory of each one who had particularly touched their life. The names of the 15 North Texas Conference clergy and clergy spouses who died in the last year appeared on screens during a time of remembrance, while the string quartet played String Quartet #12 in F Major, Movement #2 by Antonin Dvořák. Those remembered included elders Ralph Edward Burke, Wallace Edwin Chappell, James A. Gwaltney, Joseph R. Hale, John T. Lancaster, Merwin K. Turner, and clergy spouses Lawrean Isaacks Chappell, Faye Katheryn Day, Dorothy Elliott, Faith Gatlin, Mary R. Houseman, Janet Mayo, Sandra McNabb, Stella Ruth Mooring, and Marnell Upchurch.

At the end of the service, more than 100 young adults were commissioned as interns at local churches, Bridgeport Camp and Conference Center, Connect to the Kingdom, GO Camp, Lydia Patterson Institute, Project Transformation, and QuadW. The offering for the evening went to support Project Transformation and the Camping Ministry of the North Texas Annual Conference.

A reception followed the service hosted by Bishop and Mrs. McKee honoring Rev. Philip and Lynne Rhodes and the families of those remembered in the service.

MONDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

June 5, 2017

Organization of the Conference

Clayton Oliphint welcomed everyone to First UMC, Richardson.

Conference Secretary Judith Reedy then organized the conference. Reedy moved that the bar of the conference be established as the chancel area and the entire floor of the sanctuary, and that the balcony be established as the visitors' section. The motion was approved. Reedy moved the election of persons to serve the 2017 business sessions as assistant secretaries: Kenny Dickson, Adam White, and Marsha Middleton; and as head teller, Dretha Burris, and the teller group as appointed by each of the district superintendents. They were elected.

Reedy moved the approval of Legislative Item #1 [LA 1] in the conference workbook for the equalization of clergy and lay members. The motion was approved.

Bishop McKee then called on Larry George to introduce the consent calendar. George explained that the consent agenda would facilitate the business of the Annual Conference and that if any items needed floor debate, a written request signed by five voting members of the Annual Conference must be presented to the Conference Secretary within twenty-four hours.

Standing Rules

Anne Todd introduced Legislative Items #2-3.

Legislative Item #2 [LA 2] addressed a proposed change from the Conference Nominating Committee to provide additional conference-wide representation to the Committee, as well as selecting the Chair from at-large within the conference to provide the most effective leadership. The change proposed that the Conference Nominating Committee be comprised of the Assistant to the Bishop who shall serve as Chair, the Conference Lay Leader who shall serve as Vice-Chair, the Conference Lay Leader elect, the District Superintendents, and one at-large lay member from each district.

Legislative Item #3 [LA 3] proposed a request from the Conference Nominating Committee to remove the Courtesy and Resolutions Committee from the Standing Rules. The tasks have been absorbed by the Annual Conference Planning Team.

The Standing Rules' changes were approved.

Diana Masters offered a prayer.

Episcopal Address

In his Episcopal Address, Bishop McKee recalled being a part of First United Methodist Church, Van Alstyne's 100th anniversary celebration. There he learned that there would be 300 children in VBS and 100 on the summer mission trip. Their church was serving not only as a congregation but as a way to tell the story for others in the community. Encouraging the North Texas Conference to move beyond traditional frameworks in dealing with the complexity of our lives, Bishop McKee recalled the Wesleyan idea that innovation and authenticity go hand in hand. He encouraged all to move with strategic passion and purpose toward cultural intelligence.

Illustrating what cultural intelligence regarding refugees looks like, Bishop McKee told the story of his mother and stepfather's sponsoring and caring for a Vietnamese family. The next child was given his stepfather's last name as a first name, and his mother is treated like royalty on every special occasion. "The riches that fall to us, because of our own personal journey with refugees, are rich."

"We are about creating new things. We must move from death to resurrection. How do we move from what has been to what can be? Take the chances." Bishop McKee then cited two examples in the North Texas Conference of innovation. The first was White Rock UMC in Dallas. Confessing that years ago, he doubted that young adult pastor Mitchell Boone could revitalize the dying church. He recalled cabinet members urging him to take a chance. This year, Bishop McKee gave Boone a hug and apologized for doubting it could be done. Boone confessed that he had had many sleepless nights of doubt himself.

In 2016, White Rock opened a 14,000 square foot unused basement to businesses in need as an incubator called "The Mix." The church then transformed a back parking lot into a community garden and location for Tai Chi classes.

The second example was Christ UMC in Plano where, for the past 13 years, a "House on the Corner" has been constructed on the corner of their parking lot. The House on the Corner is given to a low-income family when it is finished. The bishop told of a young man whose family received the first house. He had recently graduated from high school and was supported and mentored by members of Christ UMC through most of his life.

"Take bold risks," Bishop McKee urged. "Some will fail, but some will produce fruit." God wants us to meet people who are very different from whom we are. Yes, the work of transformation is hard work, admitted Bishop McKee,

but “we can do this.”

Renewal of Baptism

Following a litany of baptismal renewal, Deandre Johnson, worship and music leader for the Annual Conference 2017, sang “I Went Down to the River to Pray.” All were invited to come forward to a station where newly commissioned deacons and elders attended, touch the water and renew their baptism. The service ended with “Take Me to the Waters,” the congregation singing along with Johnson.

Episcopacy Committee

Clayton Oliphint was joined on the platform by other committee members of the Episcopacy Committee to make their report. Oliphint reported that the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, in their wisdom, appointed Bishop Michael McKee for another quadrennium as Bishop of the North Texas Conference. Oliphint noted Joan McKee’s particular involvement with Project Transformation. The Episcopacy Committee presented a gift in their honor to Project Transformation and something extra so that they could travel to see their grandsons. Oliphint introduced Joan McKee to the conference, and McKee was greeted with applause. She thanked the conference and recalled a sea of green at last night’s worship service, representing racial, gender, and economic diversity. This summer they are serving the community. After the summer, those interns will go out and serve the world. The conference applauded them for their service.

Bishop McKee welcomed former Bishop Eugenio Poma from Bolivia. He was received and welcomed with applause. He then welcomed Bishop William Oden, Bishop of the North Texas Conference from 1996-2004. Bishop Oden greeted the conference, reminding them that John Wesley was a bookseller bringing his books to meetings and conferences. Bishop Oden informed the gathering that he and Marilyn would be leaving for a cruise to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary but that he would be available until noon to sign his latest book and that the book would still be available at the book table of Mary Brooke Casad and Clayton Oliphint.

Board of Ordained Ministry

Tim Morrison, chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM), presented the Board’s report. The BOM joined him, and he thanked them. He asked anyone who had served or was serving on DCOM to stand and be thanked. He then called on Marsha Middleton, Director of Local Pastors’ Education.

Middleton invited all those who had completed licensing school in 2017 to come forward and be recognized. Those were: Jeff Cullen, Ryan Elms, Ashley Harmon, Lonny Hawkins, Sandra Heard, Norman Madawo, Nicholas McCrae, Griselda Montalban, Janita Phillips, Grady Edwin Price, Carlos Ramirez, and Jesse Sanchez.

Middleton then recognized five Course of Study graduates: Alvin Easterling, Paul Meyenberg, Louella Williams, Robert Williams, and Bill Lewis. She then called on all who had ever finished Course of Study to stand.

Middleton then introduced Billy Echols-Richter, chair of Preparation and Qualifications. Echols-Richter presented the associate member Peter McNabb and then ten provisional deacons: Kay Ash, Michael Flynn, Tamara Gallaway, Margaret Jenkins, Pavielle Jenkins, Evan Jones, Kathy Nations, Allison Shulman, Cathy Sweeney, and Emma Cook Williams; and ten provisional elders: Roy Atwood, George Battle III, Charles Church, James Decker, Richard Harrison IV, Allison Jean, Stephen Lohoefer, Christopher O’Riley, David Rangel, Christopher Rickwartz, Courtney Schultz, and Taylor Smith.

They were welcomed by the body.

Billy Echols-Richter then presented Martha Valencia, ordained clergy, coming from another Christian denomination, having her orders recognized as Provisional Elder.

Those elected as members in full connection deacons were Phil Thomas Dieke, Maria Dixon Hall, Benjamin David Hensley and as elders were Richard Davis, Jonathan Lee Grace, Donald Haywood, Amy Spaur, Pamela Elaine White, Alex Jay Williams, and Jonathan Perry. Rachel Baughman was presented as transferring from deacon's orders to elder's orders. They received a standing ovation.

Conference Relations Chair Paul Gould presented those who were retiring in 2017. They were: William J. Bryan, Alice Gant Coder, Nancy DeStefano, Larry Wayne George, Paul Q. Goodrich, Sara Hardaway, Kenneth Hildebrand, Anna Hosemann-Butler, Barbara Weems Marcum, Michael Loy Nichols, James P. Ozier, Diane Presley, Larry D. Tinsley, Preston Weaver, David B. Weber, Claude P. Whittemore, Larry Gene Wisdom, Jerald Clay Womack, and local pastor Larry Davis. The Conference expressed their gratitude. The bishop prayed for the six hundred years plus of ministry. He then invited retiring deacons Terry Jones and Paul McKay to come forward for a prayer.

Bishop McKee introduced Matt Tuggle and Blair Thompson-White to explain the new Residency program. Thompson-White said that they gathered best practices of other residency programs. One key distinction among them was the distinction between horizontal and vertical learning. Vertical learning is better. Their program has three key components: a retreat during which they explore family systems, a preaching mentor for every resident, and peer meetings during which they discuss verbatims and sermons. The residency program is a culture of asking for and receiving help. It is a work in progress.

Morrison moved that the BOM report be adopted. It was adopted by a show of hands.

Bishop McKee then introduced and thanked Tom Locke with Texas Methodist Foundation and Craig Hill, Dean of Perkins School of Theology.

Retiree Video

Preston Weaver was a latecomer to the ministry and so the Lord has used him to bring comfort to the poor and to serve cross-cultural appointments where he had a vision that all of God's people come together. He has often been reminded of Pentecost where all God's people came together and spoke many languages. His hope rests in this vision.

God has been creating in the church, transforming lives, especially in a young man addicted to drugs, now celebrating 12 years clean. Only God can make that happen. Weaver does not plan to retire. He will serve part time, as interim pastor or otherwise, helping in many ways. He will be serving until the day he dies.

Alice Coder has always seen the ministry in mission. Being ordained has given her the opportunity to be part of Kairos Outside and Family Promise. She has been privileged to spend time with these families.

One of the many ways that God is creating in the church is in the efforts toward mental illness. First UMC Plano began Wellspring ministry to those with mental illness in 2009. Coder just finished reading *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance. Various people in his life enabled him to break through the barriers of poverty and dysfunction. God is calling Coder to join all those already engaged in the One + One ministry or Project Transformation or another mentoring opportunity. Jesus is surely bringing about his kingdom through these and all who serve them. May God continue to create a path.

Paul Goodrich said that after graduating from seminary, he thought he knew everything. After receiving his first appointment as senior pastor at Mabank, it took him just 48 hours to discover differently. He counseled new

ordinands to watch, listen and learn from the lay people.

Goodrich has experienced God's creating in the mission work of the church in steering our focus to others rather than ourselves. Just as Goodrich began his ministry, when he did not know what God was going to do with him, he still trusted God. He kept one eye on the Bishop but he trusted God. He has no idea no what God will do with him, but he trusts God.

David Weber admitted that after about six months of phone calls to Bill Crouch, he asked if Crouch had a church that he could serve. Crouch said yes, that it was a church of misfits and he would fit right in. During his eight years serving there, the church became Cornerstone and underwent rapid demographic and cultural changes. It was both frustrating and fascinating and God was in that process as God is in us.

All the cultural changes that technology has made possible are still being discovered. We can be afraid of it or we can allow ourselves to hope. We have no excuse anymore for not knowing about refugees in Sudan. To follow Jesus, we must follow him right up to the edge of the abyss. There are new questions about God. Hallelujah!

Weber and his wife will be leaving Texas after 38 years, going where there are mountains and oceans close to two grandsons. He will hike among the Douglas firs and continue prison ministry in Portland and Washington and be a bit closer to two more grandsons in Australia. He has never been able to sit still. He is now called a different way to serve. Next spring he will walk the Camino de Santiago in Spain and at 80, he will get a six-pack of Cuban Coronas. He hopes God will be happy.

Gene Wisdom explained that God has been creating in him always, from his very first appointment where he was determined to keep the parishioner who sat three rows back in front of the pulpit and slept through his sermon every Sunday. It took him a year, but he did it.

God has been creating a new ministry through the intern program at Perkins with Gene as a mentor for the last 25 years. God has also been shaping Wisdom and his teammates for 25 years as they golf together. Wisdom's first priority is to play golf more than once a week and to spend time with his grandson, but he is not giving up on ministry.

Anna Hosemann-Butler spoke proclaiming that God is always creating in the people of God. It is the people of God who show her again and again that God is creating. She has served four churches in over 20 years, and God has never failed.

God shapes us, especially through colleagues, significantly for her through the women clergy who have been there for her in times of need. The new generation of women is a generation of smart, dedicated, and strong women clergy. Just turn them loose. The Holy Spirit is working.

Hosemann-Butler is just changing the projection of her call to conflict resolution for which she has had all kinds of training over the last 10 years. She is called to be a peacemaker, knowing that the biblical witness means some tables get turned over during the process.

Jim Ozier admitted that God had to start with raw material. Fifty-one years ago, when he was a junior in high school, he served his first church. He then served in rural churches. After coming to seminary, his eyes were opened to poverty as he served with John Thornburg in the East Dallas Cooperative. He then moved to Trietsch UMC, an affluent church, and served there for 18 years before coming to the Conference Ministry Center to become a bureaucrat and help start new churches.

God is creating anew. The church is trying to create community. When Ozier wants to be reminded of that, he goes

over to Union Coffee Shop and has a cup of coffee. He hopes that God will create in him a better husband, father, grandfather, friend. He will stay involved in the consulting business around the country. He has no fears about the North Texas Conference, especially with his successor Owen Ross. He has only deep gratitude for all who have been Christ to him.

Larry Davis gave thanks that God was creating before he was born by sending H. Grady May in 1916 to College Mound UMC. It was May's grandson who would later invite Davis to College Mound Church as a youth. Later it was Dr. Gordon Casad who put Davis back on track serving as a licensed local pastor. Twenty-nine years after that, Davis is retiring, having served as pastor of College Mound UMC.

God is continuing to create through local pastors thanks to Susannah Wesley who recognized the need for local pastors. Retiring does not mean that he will not continue to serve. Broken though he is, worn out and tired, he believes that God will continue to use him. It is all mystery.

Larry George shared that it is a very odd thing to find oneself at the crossroads of active ministry and retirement. He takes joy in the diversity of settings where ministry has called him, in the unique challenges, and his family, lovingly accompanying him on this journey. He can only praise God that he has been able to love others in God's name by doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly.

A fundamental way that God is creating in the church is continuing to call the church to be more about authenticity than answer, more about love than legality, more about acceptance than exclusion. Quoting Mary Oliver, George said, "The world I live in and believe in is wider than that and anyway, what's wrong with maybe? Only if there are angels in your head, will you actually see them."

He feels gratitude to God's will and is paying attention to how God is calling him. As long as we have life and death, God is not finished. He approaches retirement with the idea that God is waiting to astonish him, whether it is through travel, or being present as grandchildren discover stages of life, or sitting in his backyard with a cup of coffee and a book. Whatever is the assignment for the day, God is always there. He concluded with another Mary Oliver poem entitled *A Voice From I Don't Know Where*. "It seems you love this world very much. Yes, yes I do. And you don't mind living with those hard questions, the ones no one can answer. Actually, they are the most interesting.It must surely then be very happy down in your heart. Yes, yes it is."

Diane Presley learned several things while serving. She learned that whenever there is an unexpected tragedy, just wait, because something wonderful is about to happen. God is going to do the most amazing transformation.

Her whole ministry has involved God's doing amazing things. She started out as an urban missionary. Her ministry has been about building bridges with different people, different languages, and different backgrounds, to bring those people together. They have so much in common. Ministry emerges out of relationships and that is what her ministry has been.

Presley cannot imagine that God's not creating anew in all lives. God pushes us to the precipice if we are ready to go. When we are out there, we must let go and tap dance on that precipice.

Bill Bryan has discovered that God used some very lonely decision points. He found that if he took the world-denying path, God would meet him around the corner and lead. One of the biggest "yesses" occurred in 1983 because of his reading Luke's gospel and Sojourners' periodical. He asked for an inner-city church. It was a big change. He has been trying to answer the question, "What is your theology of ministry?" He is a storyteller, not so much his own life, but that of the laity. His theological study has helped him polish and tie their stories to the old, old story.

God has been in ministry based on mission rather than security. The East Dallas Cooperative was churches working

together, devoted to serving human need and renewing congregations. Bryan saw God working in cooperation rather than individual churches. He sees God in our anti-racism.

Bryan is learning how to tell the story of his cancer and death both to himself and to the community. God will continue to use him, as he teaches Sunday School and rides bikes, and journeys with his lovely wife Corinne and family. After twelve years in the inner city, he knows what the kingdom of God is. This last decade he has been working on what the Holy Spirit is. Now, he will ponder what resurrection is and what does it mean to spend eternity with God. He might even have time to listen.

Mike Nichols spoke about his journey of self-discovery. Some of the self-discovery has been through introspection, some with others. He has grown in his relationship with God, growing into a new creation.

When people actually do the work of God and go where the church identifies as most vulnerable, that is a part of God's new creation. God is not finished with him yet. He continues to look toward discovery.

Clay Womack reflected on the prayer of confession. When used in more positive language, it lets us love and do God's will; it lets us respond to the cry of the needy. He has found himself becoming more and more a builder of bridges and less and less an erector of walls.

Womack had thought this was a difficult question to answer but realized that it was not. God has been bringing in and shaping, calling the right kind of leadership, creating more and more of a welcoming community.

A mix of things will challenge him. All his life has been a journey to discovery. He has a heart for the poor and will continue to be in ministry with the poor in Garland. It will be a challenge but he is looking forward to it and to getting to know the poor. He wants to spend time giving back to creation, in terms of the environment in the state of Texas, returning to the deep Biblical theme of the stewardship of creation.

The retirees received a standing ovation.

“The End Is Our Beginning” – Keynote Address Greg Jones

Bishop McKee introduced Greg Jones, noting that Jones' presentations at a learning meeting of the active bishops was about pushing social innovation – the way the church could be. It was biblically rounded and engaging. He encouraged the body to read Jones' biography in the Annual Conference program and learn more about him.

Jones' first address was “The End is Our Beginning.” He drew an analogy to the United Methodist Church from the early days of coast-to-coast commercial plane travel when the pilot, who had descended into fog over the Rockies, told his passengers he had some bad news – they were lost – and some good news – they were two hours ahead of schedule. Jones equated this to today's church. Methodists are lost as they turn inward in a time of rapid change and fight with each other over issues of the day. He quoted from Yuval Levin's book *The Fractured Republic* about Western culture, noting that it is applicable to the denomination. It is not just that we have disagreements, rather we have two sides. In fact, we have a fracturing that is causing multiple forms of division.

Methodists are lost as they turn inward in a time of rapid change and fight each other over issues of the day. Churches and institutions trot out new strategies and leaders to reclaim ground, attempting to “fix it” rather than getting clear about where we are headed and why.

Jones referenced the book of Numbers, more accurately called “In the Wilderness,” to describe the Israelites' struggles. Their generic whining about annoyances turned into complaining about the basics, then about leadership. Some of them began to want to turn back to Egypt in spite of facing suffering, slavery and oppression. Similarly,

present-day Methodists steer toward the familiar “even when it’s killing us.”

Jones drew from the Ted Talk of Simon Sinek, “Start with Why.” Steve Jobs was late to the MP3 movement of listening to music, but Apple’s iPod was much clearer on the purpose of music on electronic devices. The Wright brothers started with why. They were bicycle shop people who beat out a Smithsonian-sponsored rival who got trapped in “what” and “how.” MLK Jr. filled the Washington Mall because he tapped into the deeper sense of yearning, that sense of why.

The Wesleyan tradition has been to dare to do what seems against the odds – start hospitals, found colleges, but we have lost sight of our own best story, said Jones. Even believers act as if there is no God, not expecting much from God, wanting to go back to Egypt. Jones advised us to look to UMW, and small groups in the Ivory Coast and see how effective their small groups are in staying on course. He counseled a kind of reverse evangelism.

Commission on Archives and History

The History and Archives Commission attended the Jurisdictional convocation of Archivists and Church Historians and sponsored a workshop for local church historians. They worked all year to encourage churches to remember and celebrate their 150 year heritage of sharing Jesus Christ to the hearts of North Texas. Before the lunch break, they presented a fast-paced and upbeat arrangement of “Old Time Religion Melody,” sung by choir directors across the NT conference and directed by Bonnie Bridger-Coffman and Ben David Hensley.

Bishop McKee introduced Bruce Weaver as the oldest surviving clergy member of the North Texas Conference and recalled wanting to attend Weaver’s church in Ft. Worth when he was a youth. He then invited Weaver to pray before the lunch break.

MONDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Kwan Bae Park opened with prayer.

A Providence Place video narrated the history of Providence Place. A brothel madam had been transformed by a pastor of Travis Park UMC in San Antonio in 1895. She had begun to focus on the women who were there and those who would come, so many of them with child. The goal was to teach them life skills and give them confidence. Everyone was invited to come visit and “see the Place.”

“Love Made Me an Innovator” – Keynote Address Greg Jones

Greg Jones opened with a story about Charlie Brown and Lucy, citing Lucy’s commitment at the beginning of a new baseball season to focus. Charlie Brown was excited but when the ball went to the outfield to Lucy, it hit her on the head. She apologized and explained that she had meant to start anew but the past history of all those missed balls got in her eyes. Quoting Wallace Stevens’ poem “The Well Dressed Man with a Beard,” Jones said, “After the final no there comes a yes and on that yes the future world depends.” Jones went on to reference II Corinthians 1 that says that Jesus Christ is God’s definitive yes, that in the power of the resurrection, God takes all of the past and redeems it and sends the Holy Spirit. In II Corinthians 5, “If anyone is in Christ. . . new creation.” There is a whole new world here with the power of the Holy Spirit to transform our lives.

Innovation is not like putting the past away. It is more like Preservation Hall which builds on tradition. Improvisation builds on and learns from the past. Adaptive leadership is drawn from the theory of evolution where we preserve the continuity and learn how to build on that. The genius of transformation comes when we have an improvisational approach. Jones’ coined word was “tradition innovation.” Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living, whereas tradition is the living faith of the dead.

Referencing the Daughters of Zalophehad, Jones recalled that God and Moses collaborated on tradition innovation when Zalophehad's daughters were in crisis after their father's death and they had nothing. Traditional innovation provides a new lens onto everything. That is what John Wesley did with class meetings – formed disciples for transformational living.

Jones concluded with the story of Maggie, a Burundian who had more yesterdays than almost anyone and was looking for a tomorrow at the end of the civil war in Burundi, where she had been forced to watch a massacre by machete in her village. She ended up with five children her mother was raising in addition to two children of her best friend who had been killed. Over the next twenty years, she practiced social innovation, scraping up enough money to buy the freedom of twenty-five more children and building houses for them. She then built a swimming pool over the massacre site. She wanted the children to swim so that they could have their vision cleansed, "like the waters of baptism, so they could see a future with the light of God rather than being traumatized by all the brokenness of the past."

Maggie built a school, hospital, movie theater, and morgue, because "Unless we learn to care for those who have died, we will not know how to live." When asked how she accomplished so much, she told Jones, "Love – the story of God in Jesus Christ – made me an inventor." She is always looking for what is possible to live into a Christian life with hope. She prays every day, "Lord, let your miracles break forth every day and let me not be an obstacle in any way."

"Reclaiming the E Word" – Keynote Speaker Matt Miofsky

Bishop McKee introduced Matt Miofsky, lead pastor of The Gathering in St. Louis, who founded a church in St. Louis in 2006 that has grown to 1,500 in worship in four locations in St. Louis. Miofsky grew up in rural Missouri, went to Candler School of Theology, served 4 years in country churches as an associate, and started The Gathering in the old part of St. Louis. When considering what The Gathering is doing that bucks the trend, Miofsky referred to the title of his first address, "Reclaiming the E Word: Evangelism," that is, hospitality to people who are not yet in church.

Using John 1: 35-47 as an example of how evangelism works, he shared five takeaways on evangelism. Evangelism is invitational. It is not knocking on doors and presenting the gospel. "All you need is something that excites you and a few friends." Statistics tell us that 85% of people go to a church because they are invited. It should be a specific invitation, followed by an offer to pick them up or go to brunch. A way to get people to come to Sunday school is to start a new class.

Evangelism is relational. People are uncomfortable talking to strangers. It is easier to invite friends. Another statistic says that 82% of people who do not go to church would go if someone they knew invited them.

Evangelism is Christological. It is about Jesus. Miofsky said that we do not ever quite get around to inviting them to Jesus. We invite them to a dinner or Trunk or Treat, but what about after that? We have to have a discipleship process.

Evangelism is transformational. In John, Nathaniel is a skeptic. Skeptics are at all our churches. They will tell you exactly what they think. Jesus loves Nathaniel. There is no deceit. Jesus welcomes people exactly as they are, and he never leaves them there; he changes them. Churches must do the same. They must welcome and challenge and lift up people's conversion stories.

Evangelism is incarnational. It has to make sense in the mission field. "Our job is to move God into the neighborhood." Even John Wesley moved outside the walls of the church and ended up preaching to 3,000 people, more than would have ever shown up in his sanctuary. Miofsky said it is about Jesus and people, not about us. We cannot present

the gospel in the same way we received it. We must take it and make it make sense – however – to the next person.

Christ's Foundry Celebration Moment

Christ's Foundry, a mission church that reaches the growing Hispanic population in Northwest Dallas, celebrated its fifteenth anniversary as many Foundry members gathered at the chancel to tell the story and witness the passing of the baton from its founder Owen Ross to its new pastor Amy Spaur.

The celebration began with a story shared by Leslie Silva, a member almost since the beginning of Christ's Foundry/La Fundicion de Cristo. Silva shared being a member of the youth group, taking guitar and piano classes from the pastor, becoming a worship leader, and being the first person in her family to go to college. The arrival of her son interrupted her education, but when she and her husband and son moved back to Dallas this year, they found that Christ's Foundry is still there for them. She joined the staff as administrator of mission and got back in college, making the dean's list. She was representative of every person on the chancel as a testimony of how Christ's Foundry powerfully impacted and changed each life. They were all present to say "Thank you/Gracias!"

Amy Spaur, at Christ's Foundry eight years as a lay person, and later employed with GBGM, heard the call to ordained ministry at Christ's Foundry and was nurtured there. Owen Ross handed the baton to Spaur as the congregation applauded with a standing ovation.

Recognition of Attendance

Conference Secretary Judith Reedy recognized Buist Wilson, retired elder, who had attended 71 consecutive Annual Conferences. His first four were in Tennessee from 1946-1949 and from 1950 to 2017, Buist has attended every single Annual Conference in the North Texas Conference.

Toolbox Sessions

Following the afternoon break, conference members were invited to choose one of the six toolbox sessions offered for the afternoon. Gregg Jones answered questions about how to practice traditional innovations in a local context. Matt Miofsky led a session on how to create a discipleship process. DeAndre Johnson addressed issues around why multi-cultural worship is important, saying that worship must be counter-cultural and do the crazy things that Jesus did. He counseled those with resistant congregations to be patient, to start slow and simple but not chicken out. Conference Lay Leader Jeff Bouis led a session on best practices of lay leaders, networking and brainstorming, and what is available to help laity. Neal Christie shared with those in attendance about the connection of church and society, and Debra Hobbs Mason shared a model for communities' working with interfaith partners.

MONDAY EVENING

Service of Ordination

First United Methodist Church, Richardson

Reverend Clayton Oliphint welcomed the conference to First United Methodist Church, Richardson, for the service of ordination, recognition of orders and commissioning. Music was provided by First UMC, Richardson Chancel Choir, organ, brass, percussion, children, piano and handbells. Thirty-four servants of God were presented, on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry in this Annual Conference, for commissioning, ordination, recognition of orders and associate members.

Those persons commissioned as provisional members were: Roy Garrett Atwood, George LeRoy Battle III, Charles William Church, James Michael Decker, Richard Thomas Harrison IV, Allison Grace Jean, Stephen Eric Lohoefer, Christopher Ross O'Riley, David Eli Rangel, Jon Christopher Rickwartz, Courtney Rose Schultz, Taylor Garrett Smith, Virginia Kay Ash, Michael William Flynn, Tamara Lynn Gallaway, Margaret Kay Jenkins, Pavielle Chriss Jenkins, Evan Marshall Jones, Kathy Thompson Nations, Allison Hayes Shulman, Cathy Rene Sweeney, and Emma Elizabeth Cook Williams.

Martha Patricia Valencia was presented for Recognition of Orders in The United Methodist Church, and Peter Hyer McNabb for Recognition as an Associate Member.

The persons ordained as elders were: Rachel Griffin Baughman, Richard Steven Davis, Jonathan Lee Grace, Donald Keith Haywood, Amy Diane Spaur, Pamela Elaine White, and Alex Jay Williams.

Those ordained as deacons were: Phillip Thomas Dieke, Maria Dixon Hall, and Benjamin Anderson David Hensley.

Bishop McKee's sermon for the evening was based upon Ephesians 4: 1-16. This was the fifth time for Bishop McKee to ordain persons, and he said that each year, he remembers his own ordination. He had been married two weeks before his ordination. He encouraged those being commissioned, recognized, and ordained not to let the "shiny" wear off, for everyone needs to be reminded every year where they are.

He challenged them to read Ephesians 4 every week and carry with them the memory of their baptism because out of our baptism comes hope. And if there is anything the world needs now, it is living in the hope that comes from believing in Jesus Christ.

Bishop McKee said the most difficult question is, "How do we minister in this secular world?" Even though some of us may not like one another, when one is missing, we are not complete. He warned that ministry can be difficult. "There are difficult people, and you will be their pastor. But you are the very presence and the very person they need in their lives. You are the very person God has called to be a witness in their lives. Every church has them. People are not always at their best. You are not always at your best." Bishop McKee encouraged them to acknowledge their God-given gifts, to learn how to claim them with humility, knowing that we are all tied together by the grace of God.

As Bishop Michael McKee placed his hand on the each person, he called upon Christ Jesus to "pour out your Holy Spirit" upon these messengers of God's Word as we send them out to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

The offering for the evening went to support the Zip Code Connection. The Zip Code Connection is a way to connect the Word to communities and to each other. The current communities being served by the Zip Code Connection are in South Dallas/Fair Park and in Red River County.

A reception honoring the Commissioned, Recognized and Ordained followed immediately after the service in the Bartula Family Life Center.

TUESDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

June 6, 2017

DeAndre Johnson led the conference in song and Cheryl Murphy opened with prayer.

Bishop McKee paused the agenda to speak to the commitment of the conference to insure the safety of all who serve in the church, especially clergy women. Any time there is a breach, the Congregational Assessment Response and Transformation Team is called to investigate and help. The CART team consists of trained clergy and laity.

Bishop McKee went on to explain the process. If a violation comes to his desk, it immediately goes to the Center for Leadership Development and to the District Superintendent of the district involved. “We do not back away from these issues.”

Bishop McKee informed the body that the complaint about which information was being distributed is being processed but that it would be inappropriate to talk about it at this time. There are days that are difficult, he said. In response to Clara Reed’s concern, he asked the body to trust that the conference is continuing to work on this. Bishop McKee then offered a prayer.

Videos of Newly Ordained

Alex Williams has noticed that we spend so much time trying to set ourselves apart. His ministry is trying to find the thing that brings us together. One of his favorite hymns is “Forward through the Ages.” He is excited to be a part about what God is doing to maintain that unbroken line. He is hopeful about the church.

Amy Spaur is always thinking about seeds that have been planted, both in creation and at Christ’s Foundry where she received her call to ordained ministry in 2009. She expressed her love of Spanish and Hispanic culture. When she thinks about creation, she sees her role as planter of seeds. Wherever she is sent, she will plant seeds and she will water them, reveling in all the different colors of flowers.

Ben David Hensley declared that God is making a new creation, often throwing him into situations where he feels inadequate. He is a music minister, but he has a comfort with facilitating conversation and teaching. God is calling him to advocate, to create safe space for LGBTQ people. Whatever the church’s tradition looks like, the LGBTQ community will be a part of that tradition.

Donny Haywood reflected that we are forever changing and that we grow a little each day where we serve. If there is any injustice, any poverty, he intends to work to meet the actual needs of the community he serves, believing that we are forever being recreated to minister there. He recalled getting out of the ministry and returning, saying that the church of the future is going to depend on our allowing the Holy Spirit to work.

Jonathan Perry believes God awakens in us who we have always been and begins to work through that. We are co-creators with God. When God begins to work in us, God is creating new life in the places we go, in unexpected ways. We become a new creation at that intersection of who we are and the Holy Spirit. In Methodist theology, we believe that God is at work in all of us.

Pam White said that when we are called into ministry, expecting to bring God’s word to others, we sometimes unexpectedly receive God’s word for ourselves. That happened last year when she was diagnosed with breast cancer right before preaching on Rahab’s proclamation that God is the true God, and realized that she would trust in God’s promises always. Three years ago she felt the weight of the bishop’s hand and found herself the very next day in the hospital with a family in crisis, a couple for whom she would help with a wedding and a funeral within the span of ten days. Our narratives are different, said White, but when we come together as a community of faith, we are repeating over and over God’s promise to us.

“Forming Christians” – Keynote Address Greg Jones

In his final keynote address, Greg Jones turned to “holy friends” and their importance in forming Christians. As Wesleyan Christians, we have a great tradition on which to rely. Holy friends do three things to hold Christians accountable. They challenge the sins we have come to love. When challenged on being a workaholic, Jones’ response was “I do the Lord’s work.” Then Jones asked Bishop Desmond Tutu how it was he strictly observed the Sabbath even during the most intense part of the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Methodist leader Peter Story, who worked with the bishop, said that when Tutu was ready to get back to work, he came back more “settled and ordered.”

Holy friends also help us affirm gifts that we are afraid to claim. Sometimes that means developing a gift if even the person resists the call, such as the CFO and church finance chair who was good with little children. His church friends – his holy friends – encouraged him to teach first-grade Sunday School, but he said, “Oh no, I’m a finance guy.” He gave it a try, however, and the church rejoiced as he came to life around the children and the children came to life around him.

Finally, holy friends help us dream dreams we otherwise would not have dreamed. They put the pieces together for us and expand our imaginations, stretching us further than we could hope or imagine. Jones said that it will take a lifetime for holy friends to help unlearn sins, affirm gifts, and dream dreams. Sometimes world transformational events can result.

In South Africa in the mid-1970s, a black teen, Tsietsi Mashinini, began attending an ordinary discipleship group at Central Methodist in Johannesburg. For him, it meant he was surrounded by a circle of holy friends. The sin he loved was that he was of no value. Over the next year or so, the holy friends assured him that he was a beloved child of God. They affirmed a gift he did not see – that he was a charismatic leader. They challenged him to dream his biggest dream – a free South Africa where color did not matter. “Social innovation,” concluded Jones, “happens when we recognize our purpose and our mission.”

Union Coffee Shop

At break, a video of Union Coffee shop played, spotlighting the essence of Union, including “the divine spot,” a special place there to be creative. Union needs every kind of person in the coffee shop. 57,000 have walked through the doors of that small coffee shop. Everything there is designed for people-building.

The Union Way is creating and doing something, breaking down the doors between what divides the secular and the religious, breaking down barriers. Their goal is to speak across boundaries. The early Methodists began with a handful of college students and young adults who decided to try and live a holier life. That is the model of Union.

Center for Leadership Development

Marti Soper addressed the conference and explained the purpose of the CLD – to recruit, form, equip, and sustain diverse, transformational church leaders, in a time when Christianity is no longer the center of Western cultural life. Rather, it is a world described by experts as a VUCA world: volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This is uncharted territory. We need leaders who can lead “off the map.”

Soper referenced Tod Bolsinger’s definition of leadership in this type of world as all about “energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission.” Transformational leadership begins with Technical Competence – the skills learned in seminary and the first years as pastors and lay leaders, being a faithful steward of scriptures and traditions that are foundational to the congregation’s identity, being a compassionate shepherd that truly loves and cares for the people, and being a competent manager of the church as an organization.

The next step is relational congruence which requires emotional health and spiritual maturity. When these are proven, a leader is able to move a congregation into unknown territory. This journey requires Adaptive Capacity, the leader’s ability to help his or her community grow, face their biggest challenges, and thrive. To be adaptive, a leader must develop the ability to: stay calm, refuse to be tempted by quick fixes, engage others in learning and transformation, ask powerful questions rather than give answers, stay relationally connected even with those who are against the changes you are making, explore resistance and engage your detractors in dialogue, but then help the congregation make hard and sometimes painful choices in order to fulfill the mission of the church.

Soper then celebrated the transformational leadership of Mitchell Boone, Neil Moseley and staff, and the courage of White Rock UMC which today is a vibrant, faithful community that is living into its identity as a missional church. The White Rock story shows that an adaptive leadership process of experimenting and learning is required for innovation. Boone emphasized that this is not work to be done alone.

In order to promote effective and adaptive leadership, the conference is building a new coaching resource this fall, Co-Active Peer Coaching Network, based on the idea that the one being coached is “creative, resourceful and whole.” The coaches are a group of nine excellent pastors who have received 60 hours of training towards certification and are committed to asking powerful questions rather than giving answers.

The second responsibility to form new Christian leaders comes through strong support for children, youth and young adults. One of the most effective tools for this work is our Camping and Retreat Ministry utilizing our two traditional camping sites – Bridgeport and Prothro. The newest mobile camping model is Go Camp, an innovative way to bring camp to those who, for whatever reason, are not receiving a traditional camp experience. Go Camp kicked off the summer at Paul Quinn College in South Dallas and is partnering with the Clarksville zip code connection in the East District. A camping video showed the unique opportunity for older high school students and young adults.

The Wesley Life Map that will guide the development of camp curriculum and Christian formation was presented at the Laity Session by Joseph Bradley. More details will be on the CLD website in the coming days; in addition, CLD will continue to invest in children and youth through Discipleship trainings and exploring a conference-wide system of summer internships. Soper gave thanks for the ministry of outgoing Associate Director Becky David Hensley, incoming Associate Director, Kelly Carpenter, and for the amazing team who will be leading the ministry of leadership development in the coming year.

Center for New Church Starts and Congregational Transformation

Jim Ozier shared the report from the Center for New Church Development and Congregational Transformation, which is all about making new places for new people. The center is all about birthing new creations. Ozier referenced the earlier video about Union Coffee shop and then asked the conference to imagine what it would be like to start a new Union in a new location...Paul Quinn College. Imagine a new collaboration in South Dallas between Paul Quinn, Highland Hills UMC, Union and Go Camp, strengthening the church and the community.

Ozier spoke of the new creation that happened a few years back under the leadership of James Minor while he was senior pastor at Casa Linda. The congregation courageously transformed itself into a multicultural church truly reaching its changing mission field. In July, 2017, Casa Linda will be birthing a new creation: a new Hispanic Multi-Site.

A video told the story of Casa Linda and one of the members saying, “We send missionaries to Mexico. How will this work?” The video tells the story of success as Spanish-speaking families who wanted Spanish or English or bi-lingual came and were welcomed. David Rangel then recruited Juan Carlos Ramirez out of Mexico three years ago and became his mentor, pastor and boss. With the help of the Path 1 residency program, Ramirez completed a rigorous two year training under Casa Linda. In July he will be planting a satellite campus of Casa Linda – the first Hispanic satellite campus in the nation.

The Conference has planted over 21 new churches in the last 8 years and has helped close to 100 existing churches reach their mission field through large and small church initiatives. In doing so, they have learned that birthing a new creation takes more than innovation. It takes resilience, a lesson Ozier said has been demonstrated by Christ Church in Princeton. Three years ago, the Princeton campus was birthed by Christ Church Plano. Despite lots of hard work, investment and leadership, it was not getting traction. A video showed the current success of Christ

Church Princeton. When Cathy Partridge discovered that a local barbecue place was going out of business, she quickly rushed downtown to measure and see if there might be room for locating the campus there. There was room, and it has happened. All of Princeton knows Partridge and the only problem now is space.

Ozier thanked Christ Church in Plano for daring to birth a new creation and voiced an appeal for more mother churches to plant new congregations. He concluded his final report by thanking Gloria Fowler, Liliana Rangel, and Suzy Cass who do all the behind the scenes work and are wonder women. As he handed Owen Ross the baton, he said that he must decrease as he retires so that Ross might increase. Ozier's picture diminished on the screen as Ross' picture zoomed up to fill the screen. Ross took the baton and announced that an additional staff person would be S. Dianna Masters as she joins them to strengthen the black church.

Center for Missional Outreach

Larry George began by noting that several Center members will be leaving. Marji Bishir Hill, Associate Director, has been the one to answer questions about missions. She and her husband Rick are moving to North Carolina where they will continue their ministry through the programs and outreach of the Hinton Rural Life Center. Lynn Parsons is retiring as leader of the Zip Code Connection. George thanked Hill and Parsons for their leadership.

George referenced Bishop Janice Riggle Huie's spring lecture at FUMC, Wichita Falls as she spoke of "dusting for God's fingerprints." That is what the CMO has been about since its inception in 2010. George said it had been his privilege to watch the CMO partners – the Committee on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, the Board of Church and Society, the Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns, and the Board of Global Ministries as they have "dusted for God's fingerprints," looking for God's activity among all types of people, in all kinds of places, during all sorts of times, in order to discern how to be a church for all people.

A video of a church for all people in Columbus showed how to start. John Edgar told the story of a ministry grounded in the concept of an assets-based community development, asking the question, "What can we do to improve quality of life?" It began in 1999 with the United Methodist Free Store. They stopped focusing on needs and started focusing on the divine economy of abundance and dreams. A liquor store was in the process of becoming a produce stand. Through partnerships, in 12 years, they have produced 50 million dollars of affordable housing in their efforts to provide church for all people.

George commented on the video to the conference, saying that if something there caught your eye or awakened your heart to do a new thing with God, right where you are in your local church, your next step would be to start with the new and continuing leaders of the CMO. Andrew Fiser will become the Associate Director of the Center and the Director of the Zip Code Connection. George Battle III will continue to coordinate the Zip Code Connection in South Dallas/Fair Park with specific emphasis on the entrepreneur center. Cassie Randel will continue to coordinate the Zip Code Connection in Clarksville and Red River County. Catana Yarnell will continue to work with Cassie on community activities, especially parental/community and church involvement with schools. This team is trained and eager to help with innovative ministry. An example from the Zip Code Connection is the South Dallas/Fair Park Entrepreneur Center, "The District." A video showed "The District," a neighborhood of people who want to start businesses and enjoy being around like-minded people.

In "dusting for the fingerprints of God," said George, we get to change the trajectory of lives that we might all rise in the name of Christ and the power of God's Spirit to be God's new creation. Just imagine, said George, as he introduced Denise Lee to sing "Imagine."

Award Presentations

Marti Soper and Jeff Bouis announced the presentation of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award. The recipients are

committed to introduce others to Jesus Christ. They are exceptional for the number of Christ followers who credit their relationship with this person as critical in helping to start or reignite a personal faith journey.

Vic Casad presented the 2017 Harry Denman Award for Evangelism. The award was given in conjunction with One Matters, which urges each conference to use the award to recognize one church that is turning zeros into positive numbers with a renewed focus on discipleship. This was awarded to Debbie Lyons, clergy, and Caddo Mills UMC. Referring to Greg Jones' "back to Egypt" address, Casad said that Lyons was assigned seven years ago to Egypt. Seven years later, Caddo Mills is worshipping 75 and is in the Promised Land. Lyons is known throughout the area for her involvement with the city, civic organizations, and the people. She went to the mission field and became very much a part of that kingdom.

The Harry Denman Laity Award for Evangelism was presented to Susan Anderson of Lake Cities UMC. Anderson has served on almost every committee in the church and many at the conference level. She is regarded as a super leader and teacher. She is a "package of love, a package of faith, a package of Christ."

The Harry Denman Award for Evangelism to an outstanding youth was presented to Caroline Farish of Flower Mound UMC. Farish attends Shelton School. She goes the extra mile to insure that all people are treated as children of God.

Larry George presented the Bishop Oden Ecumenical Award, named for Bishop William B. Oden who forged pathways to worldwide peace through interreligious cooperation and tighter connections with other churches through ecumenical dialogue that opened the door to full communion with other denominations. The Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns honors Bishop Oden's work with this award presented to Faith Forward Dallas, a broad and diverse coalition of Dallas' faith leaders who are dedicated to service, hope, and a shared vision for our entire North Texas community through relationship building, community education, celebrating diversity, providing interfaith support, and offering solidarity.

Rabbi Nancy Kasten and Omar Sulieman received the award for Faith Forward Dallas. Kasten said that we strengthen our own faith when we see the best of what we love about our own faith reflected in others.

Center for Connectional Resources

Jodi Smith came forward to present the report from the Center for Connectional Resources. She thanked all those who have worked on CF&A and Board of Pensions and Health Benefits and introduced Todd Harris, chair of Pensions and Health Benefits.

Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

Todd Harris said that the work of the BOPHB is not glamorous but it is essential. He reported that we were able to increase the HRA provided to retirees for their supplemental insurance by up to \$40 per person and still maintain fully funded plans so there is no impact on the budget. He also reported plans to discuss health insurance funding in greater detail in the fall to confirm we are on the right track with the needs of both the local church and the participants. The increase in premiums is set at 3% for those in the default plan so the churches can expect a 3% increase in their health insurance rates for 2018 for their clergy.

Harris then presented two legislative items for consideration. Legislative Item #7 [LA 7] recommending the Pre-82 service rate be set at \$765 as a percentage increase known as the "Cost-of-Living Adjustment" as published by the Social Security Administration. It is the established rate for the annual increase at the rate of 0.3% for this year for pre-1982 service years. The resolution carried.

Harris then presented Legislative Item #5 [LA 5] regarding the 2017 budget recommendation. The Board worked to keep the budget flat for 2018, acknowledging the importance of maintaining adequate reserves to meet all of our pension and retiree benefit liabilities. Harris announced that we remain fully funded on our pension liabilities and are able to accomplish a recommended flat budget. The item carried.

Harris thanked Jodi Smith and her staff for their diligence and careful eye in managing our resources. He encouraged young clergy to invest in their pensions.

Smith referred to Legislative Item #11 [LA 11] concerning the designation of UMC owned property as cultural, historical, or architectural landmark and Paragraph 2512 in the Book of Discipline that a policy be established for local congregations to follow. Smith recommended that this item be referred back to the Board of Trustees of the Annual Conference. The item passed.

Smith referred the conference to the two church closures on the consent agenda – Owenwood UMC and Caney UMC. Bishop McKee recognized them as legacy churches, reminded the conference that Owenwood will now be part of the White Rock UMC mission field, and that the conference is still seeking ways to be in ministry with the remaining members of the two legacy churches.

Committee on Finance and Administration

Jodi Smith introduced Larry Womack, the new chair of the Committee on Finance and Administration (CFA). Womack introduced Legislative Item #9 [LA 9]. Item 1 recommended that we continue with Ratliff and Associates as the auditor for the Annual Conference. This will be our 5th year with this firm. Item 2 recommended a budget which reflects an increase of 2.3%. One quarter of the budget is affected by the General Conference apportionment, a 3% increase. The Annual Conference Budget increase is 2%.

There are 1¼ additions to the Conference staff, one an addition of an individual to administer the SBC 21 initiatives and the other a full-time administrative assistant to help with the needs of the Center for Missional Outreach that include Disaster Relief, Emergency Response teams, Amigos Day, Zip Code Connection and other items. There are 2½ full time reductions/restructures in staff at the Conference Office, located in the Center for Connectional Resources and Center for Leadership Development. The first occurred during the summer of 2016 and the savings was redirected to cover the cost of the CCLI licenses for all churches. The other reductions came in 2017 as the Center for Connectional Resources opted not to replace a retiree and to absorb the work of this employee through the administrative assistants in all of the centers.

CFA has constantly looked for ways to reduce costs and streamline budgets while still achieving the goals of the conference teams. They recommend an increase in the budget for Go Camps which provide camping experiences to kids in both urban centers and outlying areas that are not able to attend regular camps whether due to finances, waiting lists, distance to travel, parents' work schedules, and more. Staff salaries are being recommended at the Conference Center with a 2% increase, including benefits. District Superintendent salaries, in accordance with Standing Rule II.A.10, are recommended with a 1.93% increase. The budget for P&Q is increasing due to the large increase in prospective candidates. The increase for IT infrastructure is due to continuing cyber security threats. The Episcopal office and the Communications office budgets are recommending no increase for the 2018 budget.

Womack submitted the recommended budget with confidence that it puts the North Texas Conference in a great position to do what Bishop McKee reminded us last night that God wants us for us: “to introduce us to people that we don't know yet, so that we can, in turn, introduce them to the God that loves us so much.” Then Womack asked, “Will any of us here today see the work of the church completed? No. But working together, and with God's help, we will find a way.”

Bill Gavitt from Greenland Hills UMC rose for a point of order. He thanked the committee and encouraged celebration, expressing the need for more detail. Legislative Item 9 [LA 9] passed.

Laity Address

Jeff Bouis' talk was entitled "Are We There Yet?" Bouis is a numbers guy. He had slides with statistics on NTC membership. There are 137,300 lay members and 649 clergy. In other words, 99.5% of the NTC is laity. Clergy is 0.5%. To further illustrate what the lay/clergy ratio looks like, Bouis invited six people to stand up in front and imagine those six people as the only clergy. He then emphasized that business gurus will tell you that an organization of any size needs 10% of its people in leadership positions, so with 649 clergy, there is a need for 13,146 lay persons to be leaders throughout the NTC.

Bouis described the various kinds of lay leaders and gave specific examples on slides. Jerri and Bill Savuto served as missionaries and worked at a Methodist hospital in Kenya. There Jerri trained the local nursing staff on quality control while Bill served as director for computer systems. They eventually retired and Jerri passed away from cancer in October, but they left a legacy behind of people around the world who have been taught to run hospitals and provide critical care for local people.

Howard Grove, Flower Mound UMC, and his teams prepare a meal every 2nd Sunday monthly and take it to Ft. Worth where they serve a worshipping community of over 100 homeless, recovering addicts, living on the margins of society. Howard serves them with a plate, a smile, and conversation, showing them the face of Jesus. Howard also participates in Kairos Prison Ministry and has led Flower Mound to start its own prison ministry.

Dana Effler, long-time choir director at First Dallas, formed partnerships throughout the Dallas Arts District and Dallas ISD and founded a theater at First UMC Dallas to keep her church connected with their own mission field of downtown Dallas, bringing hundreds of new faces into the church. People in the choir have described how their faith has been deepened through Dana, and her work has led young people over the years to discern their own life of ministry in music.

Bouis said that lay persons like those he mentioned are in every congregation doing something unique to them and their space, yet we do not yet have all the leadership we need. He reminded the laity that they do not have to do this alone. There are conference centers there to help. CMO offers ways for laity to become involved in missions and ministry to people outside our walls. CLD offers the Luke 4 Initiative, discipleship processes which lead to leadership, coaching opportunities and more. New Church Development and Congregational Transformation center offers initiative training to turn churches into vital places of growth and service.

Beyond the centers, said Bouis, is much more. There is a vital and important tool called Lay Servant Ministries (LSM). Lay speakers, lay servants, and lay ministers are well-trained and certified to work with their pastors in preaching, teaching and worship. They can lead or support ministries in the church or in the surrounding community with the underserved. Bouis encouraged the laity to consider being involved in LSM.

United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men provide opportunities for service and growth in discipleship and leadership. The task of the Board of Laity is to help equip and train the laity for service inside and outside the church as well. Bouis said that there are many examples of leadership, but that there are always new people in the world which means there are always new mission fields. So, we continue to need new leadership from the laity and help lead the way in reaching our mission fields.

Young Persons' Address

Outgoing chair Sidney Weidenbach from First UMC, Rockwall, addressed the conference. She expressed her

gratitude for all those young men and women standing with her as CCYM members. She expressed her gratitude to the NTC laity who set such good examples for them.

She said that it is important to realize that each generation has something unique to offer. The senior members are strong, wise and resilient. The middle-aged are almost like a second set of parents, and the young adults are the cool people they hope to be in a few years. The youth are like all of them and the children are young, innocent and fun-loving and not so far removed from them. She challenged everyone to get to know individuals rather than generations, to spend time with individuals of other generations in order to break away from generalizations.

In turn, she challenged everyone there to spend more time with youth and with children. She thanked everyone for their support and specifically Bishop McKee who reaches out to other generations. She personally thanked him for following her on Twitter.

Clergy Spouse Report

Alyssa Womack, president of the Clergy Spouses' organization, expressed their thanks for allowing them to share a glimpse of their group. They are women and men, some with spouses commissioned and ordained as recently as last night and some with spouses that are retired. Some are clergy married to clergy, some are lay leaders, and some serve outside the church in ministry. Some are volunteers and some are voluntold. Some have lived in parsonages and some have not, but all are fun and supportive.

The highlight of their year is when they all gather at Prothro for their annual retreat for rest and refreshment along with worship and learning. This year Mary Brooke Casad introduced them to a fun game called Life Stores. They share a unique bond. Womack encouraged others to join their Facebook group for details on upcoming social events.

In closing, Womack reminded the NTC that many spent years in seminary and church preparing for their role in ministry, but they are mostly learning as they go for their roles. They appreciate everyone showing them the grace and encouragement they always extend to them.

Brian Deirrof offered the prayer before lunch.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON BUSINESS SESSION

Bryant Phelps opened with prayer.

Perkins Video Report

Bishop McKee introduced the Perkins video report in which Dean Craig Hill thanked the NTC. He stated that more than 40% of the students at Perkins School of Theology are from the NTC. Building on a strong foundation, they are called to serve and prepared to lead. That service comes in many forms, non-profit work, deeper theological understanding, serving local churches, working for social justice, and more. The faculty and staff is there to serve students so that they many serve the church.

Bishop McKee expressed his admiration for Perkins School of Theology as president of their executive board and as a graduate.

“Generosity for New Generations” – Keynote Speaker Matt Miofsky

Matt Miofsky shared eight virtues of churches that grow. Rapidly growing churches are invitational and put a

disproportionate amount of time, energy and resources in inviting people to Christ and to church. They focus on discipleship. They teach tithing and effectively talk about money. They have miracles in the which the Spirit shows up in surprising and game-changing ways. They are simple, doing one or two things with excellence. They have pastors who are deeply rooted in that community. They have teamwork, and they know how to speak to unbelievers, outsiders, and skeptics.

Miofsky said that we must teach why to give. It does not just happen and the mission of the church will depend on generosity as an aspect of discipleship. When pastors aim for generosity, there are conversations of investment, values, priorities, faith, and prayer. We must do this for our people.

We have to connect generosity with purpose because young people are exploring questions of purpose. The latest science shows that we are hard-wired to be generous. The more we give, the more the frontal lobe release oxytocin and the better it feels, according to a recent study published in the Wall Street Journal.

We have to connect generosity to happiness because young people want to be happy. Happiness, balance, satisfaction is strongly correlated with giving and note keeping. If you are a recipient of a good deed, you may have momentary happiness, but your long-term happiness is higher if you are the giver, according to Dan Ariely, professor of behavioral economics and psychology at Duke University.

Connect generosity to impact because young people want to make an impact and giving is the means by which we make an impact.

Connect generosity with simplicity because young people want simplicity.

Miofsky said that we must make the case then for why people should give to the church. People are skeptical of giving to church. He learned this in 2009 when his church took a Christmas Eve offering to dig wells for safe water in Mozambique and suddenly there were people giving that had never given before. It taught him that people want to give; they just do not want to give to church. Why give to a church? Because if there is to be hope for change, nothing can change hearts and minds like the power of Jesus. Miofsky once had someone trace the stories of great organizations to which people give money, each started by a simple person whose heart was changed by Jesus. Those included: Salvation Army, YMCA, Red Cross, Kingdom House, schools and universities and countless hospitals. Each were started by a person whose life was changed by the message of Jesus Christ.

The final step in teaching generosity is to teach why a person should give to a particular church. It is not about funding a budget. For all generations, it is about having a vision large enough to deserve peoples' resources. It is about inviting people to give, asking them to a practice that will change their lives and the world. It is about teaching how, by steps and a pathway to giving rather than tithing or nothing. It is about celebrating and lifting up the stories of impact.

Miofsky concluded by asking everyone to consider a dream they have for their church, for their ministry. Generosity is the discipleship practice most linked to the reality of that new vision. That ministry is not far away.

Videos of Newly Ordained

Phil Dieke has been made new by God's call on his life to be in ministry with people on the outskirts. It is a privilege to be a part of God's church. Being creative requires taking risks.

Maria Dixon Hall is now an advisor to the provost for cultural intelligence, and her job is to make sure that everyone who walks through the doors of SMU is comfortable and has the ability to manage conflict. It is a lot of fun, as well, because every four years there is a new creation. Part of her job is allowing the blossoming.

Jonathan Grace is often asked if he has always had a heart for the homeless. His answer is that no, his heart was a lot more with Jim Beam whiskey, but God introduced him to the homeless and he was brought to this new life. Co-creating with God includes being a part of people's housing journey. It is housing first which relies more on grace. He is thrilled that Christ has put him here.

Rachel Baughman believes that God is creating and recreating in every facet of life. She loves that being called to order the church feels connected to God's creating order. We are all called to be co-creators with God through the ministry of reconciliation, called in each new place to imagine how God has called us to create in that new place.

Rick Davis is thankful for the opportunity to be places that he has never been before through the power of the Holy Spirit. Archer City helped him become a preacher, and he is learning to depend on God. Being a co-creator with God is very humbling, as we are actually given the privilege to work with God in a new creation. That God wants us to participate in this divine creation is beautiful.

Addressing the Process of Sexual Harassment Complaints

Bernice Washington, SPRC chair at St. Luke's Community Church, made a motion to allot 4-5 minutes not on the schedule to discuss the sexual harassment process of the conference as well as any concerns. Bishop McKee opened it up to the body asking them to decide. Don Wiley of Lovers Lane UMC made a motion to table the conversation until the ongoing process has been completed. He expressed concern about exposing all those involved before the process is complete. Roy Atwood of Greenland Hills asked for a point of clarification on what the process is, including all the steps, and when it would be complete. The bishop called on Marti Soper to speak to the issue.

Soper explained the process, noting that when a complaint comes before the conference CART teams are sent to the church within 24 hours. This did occur in this instance and subsequently the aggrieved decided not to return to that church. Resources and support were offered to the aggrieved, some of which she used. However, she continued to feel outside the church. Soper explained that the process is outlined in the BOD.

Darlene Kay LeBlanc from Hamilton Park UMC spoke against the motion to table asking for a discussion about how these happen rather than the specific instance. Robert Mathis from Pleasant Valley UMC rose in favor of tabling as he had spent twenty years in law enforcement and felt that privacy should be protected. He asked for a forum at a later date that would explain to everyone what the process involves.

Janie Covington from Kirkwood UMC is a former counselor. She has a concern for the victim and her privacy and supported tabling the conversation until the process is complete.

Bishop McKee clarified that the police have made a criminal investigation and have found no criminal activity, so the complaint is that the pastor who received the complaint did not take enough action to protect.

Adam Young from Spring Valley UMC spoke against the motion to table. There were now three against the motion and three for the motion. The motion for tabling a conversation about the sexual harassment process and concerns was passed by a 2/3 vote. Bishop McKee affirmed again that there will be meetings in each district at some point to educate everyone regarding the conference process in addressing sexual harassment complaints.

Stacey Randle rose to question the appointment/promotion of the pastor against whom the complaint has been filed. Bishop McKee responded that the appointments rest with the bishop and the cabinet.

Consent Agenda

Larry George presented the consent calendar. No items had been removed, and the consent calendar was adopted.

Legislative Item

Marti Soper addressed Legislative Item #4 [LA 4] on Equitable Compensation. The primary purpose of this is to assist local churches in moving from part-time pastoral positions to full-time pastor positions. These funds are meant to be transitional funds rather than long-term subsidies. The CLD requests that Equitable Compensation for Conference Members be set at \$47,934, a 1.93% increase, for the minimum equitable compensation. The legislative item was approved.

Constitutional Amendments

Bishop McKee invited Clayton Oliphint and Tim Crouch, delegates to General Conference, to explain each of the five constitutional amendments. The bishop reminded the NTC that very little legislation made it out of the gridlocked General Conference, but these five passed by at least 2/3 and in some case by a very lopsided margin.

Judith Reedy explained that each person with a blue, yellow, or green nametag would receive a ballot. After explanation and discussions on each amendment, there would be the opportunity to vote.

Crouch explained that the amendments come to the NTC for ratification and requires 2/3 of the aggregate vote of all conferences so they will not be reporting the results of the conference; rather the General Conference will report the aggregate vote.

Clayton Oliphint presented the first constitutional amendment. Legislative Item #15 [LA 15] is about gender justice patterned after racial justice as in paragraph 5 of the BOD.

John Dorff of Highland Park UMC spoke against the amendment, specifically the phrase that says “The United Methodist Church recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female...” He concluded that God is represented in Scripture as male.

Wendy Thomas from FUMC, Carrollton also spoke against the amendment for the same reasons. Oliphint announced the General Conference vote and the body voted.

Oliphint presented the second constitutional amendment. Legislative Item #16 [LA 16] has to do with membership and who is welcome at your church. It is about being more inclusive.

Katie Kaiser from FUMC Carrollton spoke against the amendment on the basis of three words/phrases not being defined clearly enough: gender, marital status, and age.

Cynthia Astle of St. Stephen UMC spoke for the amendment, affirming it’s moving the church in a more inclusive direction.

Shirley Ison-Newsome of St. Luke’s Community Church spoke for the amendment, saying that Mother/Father God wants us to be inclusive.

John Astle of St. Stephen UMC spoke for the amendment, saying that the church needs to be even more intentionally inclusive.

Oliphint announced the General Conference vote and the body voted.

Tim Crouch presented the third constitutional amendment, Legislative Item #17 [LA 17], regarding an attempt to more clearly define how delegates are elected in the Central Conference, including nominations from the floor and

the majority required to elect.

Crouch announced the General Conference vote and the body voted.

Crouch presented the fourth constitutional amendment. Legislative Item #18 [LA 18] provides that elections of episcopal leaders in the Central Conference shall be held at regular, not extra, sessions of the Central Conference.

Crouch announced the General Conference vote and the body voted.

Crouch presented the fifth constitutional amendment. Legislative Item #19 [LA 19] adds a sentence to the BOD as a result of a decision by the Judicial Council in which the Council of Bishops tried to hold a conference accountable. It creates authorization for the Council of Bishops to hold each other accountable.

Ben David Hensley of Oak Lawn UMC spoke against the amendment, saying that paragraph 413 has already addressed the same issue and therefore the amendment is redundant.

Brianna McKay of St. Luke “Community” Church asked how this amendment will hold the bishops accountable.

Don Wiley from Lovers Lane UMC spoke in favor of the amendment, clarifying its purpose, stating that this is legislation that gives another General Conference the opportunity to consider legislation for control.

Melba Harris of Oak Park UMC asked that, if there were a violation of process by a bishop, would the Council of Bishops be able to hold a bishop accountable.

Crouch announced the General Conference vote and the body voted.

Payton Parker offered a prayer.

Nominations Committee

Serena Eckert brought the Nominations Report, thanking Jeff Bouis for all of his help and Linda Parks for her records passed on to her. Eckert explained that the nominations committee used the same process as previous years, posting on the website the opportunity to be nominated for a committee and compiling the nominations.

The nominations came as a motion. Janet Bell Odom spoke to the motion. She stated that there are not enough people of color on the nominations list, and there are no African-American women clergy on the BOM. Odom moved that the nominations report be referred back to the nominations committee with the task of representing diversity and be presented again in 2018.

Kerry Sumpter Smith came to the microphone to note a change that needs to be made in the nominations list: the ethnicity of Ugonna Onuoha should read B/A rather than C/A in that Onuoha is African.

Eckert spoke to the statistics of the conference and of the nominations. She gave the statistics of the conference: 2% Asian; 6% African-American; 89% Caucasian; 2% Latinx; 1% other. The statistics of the nominations are: 3% Asian; 17% African-American; 75% Caucasian; 5% Latinx. There are 48% females and 52% males nominated.

The motion to refer back to committee failed. The nominations report passed.

Bishop's Report on "A Way Forward" Commission

The Bishop announced that there will be nine meetings of the commission. The Bishop shared a slide that charted a spectrum of where people are on their views of gays and lesbians and how that can be lived out in faith communities.

Using the word "non-compatible," based on the BOD's phrase describing practiced homosexuality as incompatible with Christian teaching, the bishop talked about a chart used by both ends of the spectrum.

There are Traditional non-compatibilists who agree with the current BOD and would leave the church if this stance changed. There are Traditionalists who agree with the BOD but would not leave the church if this stance changed. There are Progressives who disagree with the current BOD but would not leave the church if the BOD language did not change. There are Progressives who disagree with the current language of the BOD and would leave the church if it does not change.

Bishop McKee then reported that every group he has visited with has 70-80% of the group that falls in the middle two categories. Whether they agree or disagree, they would not leave the church.

He will continue making rounds, working on a way to communicate about this issue. He reminded the body that the commission is not just about sexuality. They have been charged to look for ways in which we organize and employ our resources as well.

Bishop McKee asked everyone to think about the heart of the church and to be in prayer about this.

A video of Wesley Village played while the Conference business session was converted to a worship space for Holy Communion and "reading" of appointments.

Closing Worship of Communion and Sending Forth with "Reading" of Appointments

Bishop McKee, the newly ordained, and the cabinet served Holy Communion to the Conference as the names of churches and those appointed appeared on the Conference screens.