

2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church

Bishop Jeremiah Park opened the 2015 Susquehanna Conference, The United Methodist Church with these words, "Praise be to God for the journey we've been taking together; we've come this far by grace and faith." Acknowledging the challenges within the United Methodist Church the Bishop said, "Unity is worth keeping at all costs and is the goal to pursue. Disagreement is an opportunity to grow in maturity, to overcome disagreement with a bond of love and peace. God is larger than any disagreements we have."

The annual gathering of 1,500 persons for celebration, holy conferencing, and worship was held at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania on June 12-14, 2014. The theme "Equipping Vital Congregations" was the third under a quadrennial theme: "Alive in Christ, Together."

Bishop Park highlighted three areas of focus in the work of vitalizing congregations: equip, empower and engage-

EQUIP: The purpose of the hierarchy and structures of both conference and denomination is to equip local congregations for ministry.

EMPOWER: Without spiritual vitality, there is no congregational vitality. Now is the time to build and reconnect with the Holy Spirit.

ENGAGE: Vital congregations must engage communities and culture. There is no shortage of people and mission.

"We are Jesus' plan for such a time as this," the Bishop concluded. "Our God is a missionary God. We are a missionary people. Here I serve you as a missionary bishop. Everyone is qualified. Everyone...is...qualified."

Reflecting the "Equipping Vital Congregations" theme, the leadership report focused on the on-ramps that will lead to vitality. Discipleship is the on-ramp that is measureable through baptisms and affirmations of faith. Each of these celebrations represents a life transformed.

Ordination sermon was given by Bishop Neil Irons. "God walks in the middle of the flock, not beside or behind. Leadership in the Church is living in the middle of the people for awhile and giving heart to the places where they are." Rev. Arun Andrews was the Saturday morning Bible Study speaker. "We need to break away from past failures to fresh obedience", he said. "Simon Peter did that when he cast his net on the other side of the boat."

Mission Central launched a capital campaign under the banner of "Mission Central: An Unfolding Story." Activity data for the year 2014 revealed: 1,807,486 total lives reached, total warehouse output of \$7,533,985 (59% Pennsylvania, 26% United States, 15% International.) Mission Central operating donations totaled \$533,165 with operating expense of \$510,992. The number of warehouse volunteers in 2014 totaled 8,108. Total number of Mission Central in the Northeast is 30.

The Conference celebrated the ministries of twenty-two retiring clergy and the lives of forty clergy or spouses who passed to their eternal reward during the year.

Rev. Dr. Dennis Keller, speaking in the Service of Celebration of Death and Resurrection remembered "the great cloud of witnesses" who have gone on to glory. "They are not spectators; they are cheering witnesses. They've been down on the field where you and I are; they know the trials and temptations we face."

Legislative action addressed:

- 1) Mental wellness – Adopted
- 2) Support of positive investment – Not divestment – Not adopted
- 3) Shares of ministry – Adopted, as amended
- 4) Welcoming of LGBTQ people – Adopted
- 5) A Change in the guidelines for the chairperson of Administrative Council – Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 6) A change in the guidelines for the lay leader in the local church - Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 7) Eating habits - Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 8) Styrofoam containers - Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 9) Extractive industries - Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 10) Fossil fuel investment screens - Forwarded to General Conference with no comment
- 11) Transfer of the Fishing Creek and Riverside United Methodist Churches – Approved by 2/3 vote

Five persons were commissioned as provisional elders, one was commissioned as a provisional deacon and five persons were ordained as elders. Also commissioned were twenty-eight Licensed Local Pastors.

ELECTION RESULTS:

GENERAL CONFERENCE CLERGY

Rev. Larry Leland
Rev. Matthew Lake
Rev. Beth Jones
Rev. Dr. Thomas Salsgiver
Rev. Anna Layman Knox

GENERAL CONFERENCE LAITY

Lisa Bender
Eileen Vizthum
Warren Heil, Jr.
Milton Loyer
Layne Miller

NORTHEAST JURISDICTION CONFERENCE CLERGY

Rev. Dr. Dennis Keller*
Rev. Dr. Kathleen Kind*
Rev. L. Fitzgerald Reist
Rev. Catherine Boileau
Rev. Mark Reisinger

NORTHEAST JURISDICTION CONFERENCE LAITY

Anne Horton*
Kirby Hickey*
Paul Ilyes, Jr.
Toni Oplinger
Eleanor Loomis

*Alternates to General Conference

NORTHEAST JURISDICTION CONFERENCE ALTERNATES

Jon Konieczny
Lucy Obrzut
Rev. Charles Sprenkle
Rev. Paul Amara

Special offering totals to date were: Bishop's Partners in Mission, \$57,042.71; UMCOR, \$20,772.86; Mission Central, \$23,857.60; Youth Activities, \$7,060.70.

Membership: 2013: 152,413 - 2014: 150,436, down 1.3%.

Worship attendance: 2013: 62,369 - 2014: 61,015, down 2.2%.

Professions of faith: 2013: 2,501 - 2014: 2,096, down 16.2%.

Young adults in small groups: 2013: 3,386 - 2014: 3,215, down 5.1%

Other adults in small groups: 27,018 - 2014: 26,509, down 1.9%

Amount given to mission: 2013: \$9,305,262 - 2014: \$9,717,931, up 4.4%

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