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## The NEJ met November 1-4 to worship, elect a new bishop, celebrate, hear reports, and vote on legislation

November 7, 2022

### Key Points

- Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Salsgiver was elected to continue serving as the Northeastern Jurisdiction Conference Secretary.
- Rev. Dr. Kathleen E. Kind, along with other Directors of Connectional Ministries, delivered the NEJ Call to Action against racism.
- Susquehanna Delegate Rev. Matthew E. Lake put forth a motion to postpone the election of a second bishop after rounds of dead-locked voting.
- Rev. Rebecca L. Holland advocated for users with disabilities when debating logistics of conferencing over Zoom.
- Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and Sandra Steiner Ball will continue to provide episcopal coverage for the Susquehanna Conference.
- The next jurisdictional conference will be held in Western Pennsylvania in 2024
- General Conference will be held in Charlotte, North Carolina on April 23 – May 3, 2024
- Detailed information about the events of each day can be viewed in the Daily Christian Advocate, which was published each day of the conference. [View here.](#)
- To view photos from the conference, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nejumc/>

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference of the United Methodist Church met November 1-4 to worship, elect and consecrate a new bishop, celebrate retirees, hear reports, and vote on various legislation. While there were many moments worth celebrating, such as the election of the jurisdiction's first Hispanic bishop and the retirement of four bishops, the delegation grappled with dead-locked voting during the election of a second bishop and a vital but difficult discussion about racism. The specter of COVID lingered as evidenced by masked participants and legislation regarding the future of online conferencing. Full inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community was at the forefront of discussion and featured heavily in the questions asked of the endorsed candidates. A resolution entitled, "Queer Delegates' Call to Center Justice and Empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ People in the UMC" passed with 75% support.



Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Salsgiver

The Susquehanna Conference actively participated in the various happenings, with numerous delegates speaking to a number of motions during the plenary sessions. The Rev. Dr. Thomas L. Salsgiver provided guidance and organization throughout the entire conference as the NEJ secretary. He was subsequently elected to continue in this role.

Alongside other Directors of Connectional Ministries from the Northeastern Jurisdiction, Rev. Dr. Kathleen E. Kind delivered a report on progress made on the Call to Action (CTA) adopted by the NEJ in 2016, which charges the conferences of the NEJ to “engage in the important work of creating an anti-racist, diverse, equitable and inclusive United Methodist church.” Progress throughout the jurisdiction was celebrated throughout this report and demonstrated the work being done to dismantle racism. A plan was laid out for the NEJ as it seeks to live into anti-racism work, including progress reports, learning opportunities, and a platform for discussions.

A discussion on racism emerged from this presentation and many BIPOC people shared the hurt and trauma they have experienced as part of the church and society and the racism they still see every day. Systems of oppression were examined, and white people were called upon to examine these systems and their own privilege.

Bishop John Schol delivered the State of the NEJ Address. *“As the Northeastern Jurisdiction, we gather together to be in ministry with the world. Yet there are those who are troubled among us,”* he began.

*“There are United Methodists among us today and in our congregations who feel harmed, unheard and unseen. They feel the United Methodist system oppresses and devalues their gifts, their calling and their service. There are United Methodists among us today and in our congregations who are seen and yet feel their income, race, sexual orientation, gender, ableness, theology, nation of origin, have relegated them to second class status or even no status. There are United Methodists among us today and in our congregations who are pandemic exhausted, anxious, burned out, fearful of whether or not their congregations will come back. There are United Methodists among us who are tired of the fight, of the continual push and pull, of rulemaking, rule bending and rule breaking, who would rather disaffiliate or feel the church is trying to push them out. We are turning on each other, rather than turning to each other and turning together toward God in ministry to all the world. Let us be honest: the state of the church, of ministry, of our people is beaten down. We are weary, anxious, frustrated and some are angry.”*

His address held some optimism for the present and future of the church, however. He highlighted a number of ministries throughout the jurisdiction, including the recent Civil Rights Journey embarked on by the Susquehanna Conference Cabinet, along with clergy and laity.

Bishop Schol closed by saying, *“Emerging from a pandemic, ending the sin of racism, living with differences and raising up and developing leaders is hard work, deep work. Deep work, hard work can lead to making judgements, or it can lead us to be more curious and seek to discover*

*the signs all around us that God is ready to do a new thing. It will take the mind of Christ Jesus and humble hearts to see others as better than ourselves and to move into our communities together...to truly be in ministry with all the world together. Yes, together. Let it begin with us?"*

*Read his full remarks in the November 3 edition of the Daily Christian Advocate.*

## **Election of Bishops**

Endorsed candidates interviewed with delegates all day Tuesday, November 1. After the conclusion of interviews, the delegations convened to discuss their impressions. The Susquehanna delegation met for some time to gather their thoughts and express their hopes for the future bishops in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

Initially, the body reaffirmed the October 15 decision to elect two bishops after a motion to increase that number to three failed.

In only a few rounds of voting, the delegates elected Rev. Hector Burgos to be consecrated as a bishop in the Northeastern Jurisdiction. As the room erupted in cheers around him, he sat quietly with his eyes closed before standing and celebrating with his colleagues and family. When later asked about this moment, he shared that he heard the voices of his mother and grandmother and the encouragement they had given him in the past during hard times. The atmosphere in the room was joyous as people clapped and danced in celebration.

*"Dios es bueno,"* Burgos spoke to the crowd. *"Todo el tiempo. God is good, all the time, and all the time, God is good."*

The election of Bishop Burgos was historic, as he is the first Hispanic bishop to be elected in the NEJ and the first Puerto Rican in the entire denomination. He was the endorsed candidate of MARCHA, the Hispanic/Latino Caucus of The United Methodist Church.

The election of the second bishop was less fruitful. Rev. Dr. Jay Williams from the New England Conference, while not an endorsed candidate, had enough votes to allow him to circulate his biography. In subsequent votes, he and Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn from Western Pennsylvania alternated for the most votes but neither achieved the necessary majority. Multiple endorsed candidates removed themselves from the ballot over the course of voting. Other candidates vied to be elected, including a write-in, but it became apparent after 18 rounds of voting that the body was dead-locked.

Various motions explored to address this issue were explored but not passed. Ultimately, delegate Rev. Matthew E. Lake from Susquehanna put forth a motion to suspend the rules in order to postpone the election of a second bishop until 2024. This motion ultimately passed, and a second bishop was not elected.

Rev. Alyce Weaver Dunn, Rev. Dr. Jay Williams, and Rev. Cristian De La Rosa gave heartfelt speeches from the floor after this decision.

A consecration service was held early Friday afternoon for Bishop Burgos.

## Episcopal Coverage

On Friday, Bishop LaTrelle Easterling announced the assignments for episcopal leadership. Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball will continue to provide shared coverage for the Susquehanna Conference. Bishop Moore-Koikoi will also continue to serve the Western Pennsylvania Conference and Bishop Steiner Ball will continue to serve the West Virginia conference. See the full list of episcopal assignments:

- Baltimore-Washington: Bishop Latrelle Easterling
- Eastern Pennsylvania: Bishop John Schol
- Greater New Jersey: Bishop John Schol
- New England: (servant leader to be announced very soon)
- New York: Bishop Thomas Bickerton
- Peninsula-Delaware: Bishop Latrelle Easterling
- Susquehanna: Bishops Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and Sandra Steiner Ball
- Upper New York: Bishop Hector Burgos
- Western Pennsylvania: Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
- West Virginia: Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

Newly elected Bishop Burgos will serve the Upper New York Annual Conference. The New England Conference has not been assigned a bishop yet, but discernment is under way to find coverage for that conference.



*Susquehanna, Western PA, and West Virginia Conference delegations meeting together after it was announced that both bishops would continue to share coverage.*

## Approved Resolutions

The body voted on and approved legislation during the plenary sessions over two days. The resolutions can be read in their entirety in the Daily Christian Advocate. Summary of passed legislation:

- **APPROVED:** Resolution #1: Relating to Child Care during Jurisdictional Conference Sessions The resolution was brought by Bethany Amey of the Greater New Jersey Conference, who said that safe, affordable, accessible childcare during the session is needed in order not to disenfranchise delegates who are parents of young children, particularly women and younger people

- **APPROVED:** Budget Delegates approved the jurisdiction's budget after hearing from Treasurer, the Rev. David W. Simpson, who offered an update to the balance sheet printed in the ADCA to \$1,141,016.26.
- **APPROVED:** Boundaries Committee budget request for proposed Task Force.
- **APPROVED:** Apportionment structure (outlined in the ADCA).
- **APPROVED:** Resolution # 2: Endorse Christmas Covenant (with amendments). This resolution calls for the Northeastern Jurisdiction to endorse the Christmas Covenant legislation, including the creation of a U.S. Regional Conference, and urges all Northeastern Jurisdiction delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference, including alternates, to support the Christmas Covenant and to make such legislation a priority for the delegation; and
- **APPROVED:** Resolution #3: Leading with Integrity. This resolution reads, in part, "The Northeastern Jurisdiction expresses both respect and gratitude to those who have voluntarily stepped away from positions of leadership as they journey away from membership in The United Methodist Church ... as we continue this period of transition the Northeastern Jurisdiction calls upon every United Methodist, as a disciple of Jesus the Christ, to move forward in fairness and with integrity."
- **APPROVED:** Resolution #5: Queer Delegates' Call to Center Justice and Empowerment fo LGBTQIA+ People in the UMC. This resolution supports and amplifies the queer delegates' call to justice and empowerment for the LGBTQIA+ community in the jurisdiction, within and beyond our churches and agencies, amongst other resolves.

This article summarizes the major events of the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference. However, please note that this summary is not all inclusive and detailed information about the events of each day can be viewed in the Daily Christian Advocate, which was published each day of the conference.

[View here.](#)