



2017 Journal

**Texas Annual Conference
of the United Methodist Church**

E

SECTION E

**Daily Proceedings
For the
Forty-eighth Annual Session of the Texas Annual Conference
Of the
United Methodist Church
South Central Jurisdiction
May 28-31, 2017**

**Opening of Annual Conference
Sunday, May 28, 2017**

Opening Celebration

Opening of TAC 2017

Episcopal Address (Included here unaltered from the final submission to the Secretary from the Bishop's office)

Text: 1 Peter 2:9-10

Place: Texas Annual Conference

Date: May 28, 2017

Title: Spreading Scriptural Holiness

This part of our service is labeled “The Episcopal Address” and so it will be. However, it is taking place in a worship service. Plus any statement from a bishop to an annual conference should be deeply rooted in the word of God, and so I am also reading a text that will shape what I am about to say.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Would you pray with me? Almighty God, we thank you for the presence of your Holy Spirit in this place. We trust your promise that wherever two or more are gathered, there you will be also. Yet sometimes we don't get it. So we ask: open our eyes that we might see you. Open our ears that we might hear your word. Then strengthen our hands and feet that we might be doers of the word and not hearers only. Amen.

Who are you? One of my theology professors once said that this question is the truly human question, that we human beings have the radical freedom given by God to decide what kind of creatures we are going to be. Who are you? There are lots of ways to answer, from your name to your relationships with your family to your work to your favorite sports team. But for us who are Christians, the most important answer is this one: I am a disciple of Jesus Christ and part of his body, the church.

Each of the three times I began a new pastorate in a local church my first sermon was on this text. It is absolutely crucial that we understand the amazing grace of God and how we are truly special. Once we were nobodies. Now we are somebodies. Once we were no people. Now we are God's people. How does this happen?

By the grace of God.

Paul puts the contrast starkly in Ephesians 2: we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Once you were nobodies. Now you are somebodies. But this does not happen to you as a single individual. No, baptism is always into Christ, and into Christ's body the church. So 1 Peter goes on to make it clear, "once you were not a people, now you are God's people."

We are a special kind of community. We are shaped by the grace of God, and particularly by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We continue to be shaped by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's that same Holy Spirit that changed lives at Pentecost, that built loving relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the first century, that healed the sick, provided homes for the orphans, that cared for the poor.

In the second century, a Christian name Aristides wrote a letter to the Roman emperor Hadrian, explaining this new group of people, the Christians. He said,

They love one another. They never fail to help widows. They save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something, they give freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, they take him home and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God.

We are supposed to be that community today.

Our community is defined partly by that reality of Christ's life, death and resurrection. We have a purpose. 1 Peter says it "in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Or, to paraphrase the words of Charles Wesley, we proclaim that love divine, all loves excelling, the joy of heaven came down to earth and is fixing in us his humble dwelling. Jesus who is all compassion, who is pure unbounded love, is visiting us with his salvation and entering every trembling heart.

All of us who serve Christ in the 21st century know that we are facing challenges. I want to offer three challenges we face in the Texas Conference, but also to highlight the values we hold that address those challenges.

First we are experiencing increasing ethnic diversity in our 58 counties. As of 2016, in the counties of the TAC, our ethnic distribution was 42% white, 33% Hispanic, 18% African American, 6% Asian, and 1% two or more races. The 8 counties that comprise Greater Houston are now the most ethnically diverse city in America. Diversity is also impacting our county seat downs all over East Texas. We have work to do here, because our United Methodist membership does not reflect our mission field. We are 80% white, 16 % African American, 1% multi-racial and the 3% for all of the other groups combined. We need to strengthen our Hispanic ministry, our African-American churches, and our multi-cultural congregations. How do we do a better job of reaching Asians and Africans in our midst?

We worship a God who is the God of everybody. We know the power of a Holy Spirit that descended on the day of Pentecost and everybody heard the gospel in their own language. We know about a gospel that says in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free but all are one in Christ Jesus. Once upon a time missionaries left Texas for foreign countries. Now, the mission field is on our doorstep.

The second challenge I am lifting up tonight is an increasing hostility to Christian values. There are many of these I could name, and immediately upon doing so I would please some of you and make others mad. Instead the point I want to make is that we are facing a world where the power of love, self-discipline and morality to shape individuals, communities and our whole world are held more and more in contempt. There is too much racism, too much fear of immigrants, too much sexual immorality, too much greed, too much hatred, and too much poverty. What is worse, our national consensus about how America should be a place where moral values shape our communities and our nation seems to be eroding.

But we are Wesleyan, committed to both personal and social holiness. We believe in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for those in prison, freeing the oppressed and supporting justice. We believe that God is inviting all people to personal holiness—to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, to cultivate the fruits of the spirit, to obey the laws of God and avoid the sins so easily practiced by non-believers. When the world is growing dark, we are called to be the light of the world.

The third challenge, among many that I could name, is increasing practical atheism. Yes, there is intellectual atheism of some intellectuals arguing against belief in God. But I am more concerned about practical

atheism—the behavior of everyday people who act as if God is irrelevant to their lives and to the fate of the world. They prefer to attend soccer practice on Sunday morning than to worship God. They value entertainment more than serving the poor. They make important decisions without regard to moral principles. They think they can live fulfilled lives without any kind of supportive community. They practice their atheism, often without even thinking about why.

To some extent the church, including The United Methodist Church, has to accept responsibility for this practical atheism. Dean Craig Hill, who will be with us tomorrow night, said, “the problem with the church today is not demographics. The key problem is that we are insufficiently Christian. Following Jesus and doing what he did is not the hardest thing, although that is hard enough. The hardest thing is believing what Jesus believed so that doing what he did makes sense.”

We do not strongly enough believe in the authority of Scripture, the sovereignty of God and the divinity of Christ. We value offering them Christ. Those words, “Offer them Christ” have become associated with John Wesley along with this wonderful image of Wesley bidding farewell to Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as they journeyed to America. Unfortunately this event never happened in quite this way and we cannot be sure that Wesley ever wrote or said the words. But this picture is very, very true anyway. It captures Wesley’s conviction that preaching Christ in all his offices is the essential message of the Gospel. In a society where the Christian gospel is more and more strange and irrelevant, we must become more and more centered on Jesus and him crucified. I have written that our circumstances are going to be less like the 1950’s and more like the second century as a Christ-centered community in a hostile environment.

Now let me turn to my assessment of the Texas Annual Conference. Just like a new lay member of a local church or a pastor newly assigned to serve a congregation, I have been trying to figure you all out. I have been in all nine districts, I have met with many pastors and laity in groups and individually, and I want you to hear this clearly:

We are a strong conference, with wonderful clergy and laity and God has blessed us richly. God is doing amazing things through us and I am very pleased to serve as your bishop. We are organizationally healthy with great leadership and wonderful connections. We are blessed.

I want to lift up four of our blessings.

First, I find that we have a high level of clarity about our mission. You may know that I have been deeply invested in our mission statement. I strongly urge all of you to read, mark and inwardly digest paragraphs 120, 121 and 122 of *The Book of Discipline*. It is clear that many of you all have already done so. I helped draft those paragraphs and Bishop Huie chaired the committee that approved them. As I talk with lay and clergy leaders, I am finding a lot of clarity about the Wesleyan way of salvation, and the deep connections between evangelism, intentional faith formation, the means of grace, and transforming the world. We can probably go deeper in all of those areas, but you are already in a good place.

Second, I applaud our three areas of focus. We are committed to forming transforming lay and clergy leaders. We are blessed with excellent camping ministry at Lakeview, with strong relationships with Wiley College, Perkins School of Theology, and Asbury Seminary, with UM Army.

Third, we are committed to cultivating growing, vibrant, missional congregations. Our vibrant church initiative has been effective in helping congregations find a way to greater missional effectiveness. Our small membership church workshops have shown that we care about all of our congregations, no matter how large or small. We are adding new initiatives such as Abide to strengthen them. We are aiming at creating missional congregations. We are blessed to have a strong relationship with Houston Methodist Hospital, and I applaud the Golden Care program. Golden Care has already created a network of ___ congregations. When someone is discharged from one of the 8 Houston Methodist hospitals, Golden Care will work with teams from partner congregations to help them find the right follow-up care and support to continue their physical and spiritual healing. This plan reconnects us with our long-standing Wesleyan commitment to the healing of the whole person and I hope it will be replicated in other communities. In addition, we are in a part of the world where the population is growing. We must strengthen our commitment to start new churches.

Fourth, we are committed to investing in the young. In particular, I want to applaud all that you have done to pay attention to the ecology of recruiting young clergy leaders. Right now, the median age of full-time clergy under appointment in our conference is 54. We value our second-career clergy and are grateful for experienced, older clergy. I am telling people that 70 is the new 50 and that working longer before retirement is a good thing. Nevertheless, I suspect a lot of clergy will be retiring in the next 11 years. Where is the next generation of clergy going to come from? We have good campus ministries that need to get even better with more support. We have a college intern program and a Texas Youth Academy. We have Transforming Pastoral Leadership for African American clergy and our Hispanic Apprentice Program for Hispanic clergy. We also have Advancing Pastoral leadership (Apple) to enhance our leadership development. And we have Renew and Refresh for people engaged in pastoral ministry throughout their careers.

Whew. This seems like a lot. And it is. However, we are a strong conference and we have an abundance of resources—people, networks, money, and talent. But I am aware that in the 21st century there are stresses and strains on our connectional system. Our apportionment system needs revision both at the conference level and the general church level. Yet we have all these opportunities to serve Christ even better. How are we going to do it?

I believe that the Wesleyan movement has exactly the doctrine and organization that America needs. We have an obligation to “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.” One step toward doing that is to hire a director of development to raise dedicated funds to support these initiatives. The Emerging Leaders Endowment has raised five million dollars—praise God! But we need twelve million dollars to make these leadership development programs sustainable. We also need to be more aggressive in buying land for new churches and starting more and different groups of people. We need to find the funds outside the apportionment system for reaching more people, more young people and more diverse people. The budget recommended to you by CFA has the funding for a development director, and your approval of that budget will empower me to move forward on this important initiative.

And there is one last new idea I want to put before the Conference. I want all of the congregations in our conference to be widely known and respected for loving all the children. We love all the children. Let me unpack that for you.

First children. We need to evangelize our neighbors and respond to the changing demographics among us. One of the best opportunities for reaching new people is to engage in children’s ministries. By offering excellent Vacation Bible School, midweek after-school programs, mother’s day out programs, pre-schools as well as our traditional Sunday Schools, we can connect with our new neighbors and offer them religious opportunities that meet their needs. Many parents are looking for value-based opportunities to educate their children, and a church can provide that. It will not do for your church to say “But we don’t have any children.” Look around you—there are children near your community and they can be reached.

Next is the word all. The reachable children in your community may not look like you. If you are a small, ingrown community, they may be newcomers who were not born in your town. They may have a different skin color. They may speak a different language. Their parents may make less money than you do. But they are people for whom Christ died and are beloved by God. We need to adopt the Emmaus mantra, “Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ.” Look at all of the children in your community and offer them Christ.

Third is the word “love.” I believe in the whole gospel for the whole person. When Jesus said “your faith has saved you” he sometimes meant it healed a physical ailment, and sometimes he meant sins were forgiven, and sometimes meant a person was restored to a right relationship with God and the community. I think our witness to the life-changing love of Jesus includes physical healing, and so we love children by addressing their health. We also care about their developing into well-educated adults, and so we are going to continue supporting education. We also care about their souls, so we are going to offer them pathways of Christian discipleship. Loving children means health, education and discipleship.

Say it with me. “We love all the children.” Again. “We love all the children.” Try emphasizing the first word “WE love all the children.” Yes, I am talking about every congregation in the Texas Annual Conference. Now try the action verb, emphasizing love. “We LOVE All the children. Now try emphasizing the inclusive part, all. “We love ALL the children.” Who do you love? Emphasize the last word “We love all the CHILDREN.”

The Texas Annual Conference has provided each of you with a copy of Sue Nelson Kibbey's *Flood Gates: Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church*. Sue has taught many of us in this conference as well as hundreds of pastors and lay leaders all over the country, how to become coachable, how to pray and how to lead congregations to become mission-focused vibrant churches. I hope you are inspired by this conference session to lead your congregation to greater vibrancy. I think, using her eight flood gates, we can unleash the power of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We can love all the children. May it be so.

First Day of Annual Conference

Monday, May 29, 2017

Business Session I (8:30 a.m. Main Sanctuary)

Bishop Jones – “Friends I am in the habit of giving folks a 2 minute warning to wrap up your conversations...Bring your conversations to a close and move to your seats. So, please, we will convene the Texas Annual Conference morning session in 2 minutes.”

Bishop Jones – “Good morning friends. It is time for us to convene our session this morning. We opened this Annual Conference session appropriately with worship last night. We are now going to open the morning session with prayer and I call upon the Reverend Eleanor Colvin to lead us in prayer.”

Prayer – Eleanor Colvin

Eleanor Colvin – “Let us pray. Come Holy Spirit come...Holy God...we are well aware that you are here...the God that goes before us to prepare the way; so we thank you for having already prepared the way for the forty-eighth session of the Texas Annual Conference. And now oh God we pray that the words of our mouths and the meditations of all of our hearts are acceptable in Thy sight so that people might observe our business sessions and say ‘see how they love You,’ so that people might hear our conversations and say, ‘see how they love You,’ so that those might observe and leave this place inspired and empowered to be disciples and make disciples and say, ‘see how they love.’ May it be so. Bless us, this gathering of your people. All these things we pray in the name of your Son, our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.”

Bishop Jones – “As I indicated, I am Scott Jones and it is a privilege to serve as your bishop. To my left is B.T. Williamson, assistant to the bishop and he’s asked for a moment of personal privilege at this point. B.T.”

B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop, I appreciate this moment of courtesy. As we move to the business, I would like to ask those along the aisles and the back, could you please close the door so we can continue our business without interruption or exterior sound...It is our privilege this morning to call upon Karen from the episcopacy committee, Karen Dorris for a very special introduction.”

Dr. Karen Dorris – “Dear members of the Texas Annual Conference, it is my honor as the chair of the episcopacy committee to introduce you to Mary Lou Reece who is Bishop Jones beloved wife. As our committee (loud applause)...our committee has had the privilege of being with Bishop Jones and Mary Lou in a number of settings and I simply want to say to you that I am convinced that she is the source of the smiles on Bishop Jones’ face because she truly is a woman of joy and you will have the opportunity to hear from her later in the Annual Conference. We wanted you who may not have met her yet, to know her now. Thank you Mary Lou.”

Mary Lou Reece – “And so, I do a few things at Annual Conference and you don’t know yet, but you kind of need me because he’s task oriented and so if there’s a little disruption in the room...I wore red today so he could see me coming...but I also do want to say a special word to the clergy. Your spouses we’re having our luncheon today at 11:15 in the Asbury Room...yes of course there are tickets and yes, of course it is too late to buy a ticket, but there are always people that do come and that don’t come and there is always a little fluidity there and what I would ask is if you are here, come and even if its just to mingle and to visit. That’s our whole purpose to try to support and visit and mingle among each other. And so I invite you to please, please, just come. 11:15, I think we’re through and out of the room around 1:30. And we’ll have a good time and you’ll meet people and it will be a lot of fun. So just come on.”

Bishop Jones – “If you haven’t figured it out, I tend to be task oriented and boring. Which has the advantage of making me predictable. Mary Lou, on the other hand, is spontaneous and very unpredictable. Life with Mary Lou is not boring, let me assure you.”

Bishop Jones – “Let me just open the conference this morning with a word of gratitude to the people of The Woodlands United Methodist Church. Aren’t they doing a great job? There are lots of people behind the scenes helping this conference run smoothly and we’re just very grateful to this congregation, to Ed Robb and all of his staff and volunteers and others in the church who are working to make this run smoothly. We turn now to the secretary of the Annual Conference, Russell Hall, for some organizational matters. Russell.”

Roll Call – Russell Hall

Rev. Russell Hall – “Thank you Bishop Jones. Good morning Texas Annual Conference! For those that may not know me, my name is Russell Hall I serve at Tomball United Methodist Church, and this quadrennium I serve as the Secretary of this great Annual Conference. This morning I have 3 short pieces of business that I need to share with you. The first is involving the official roll of this Annual Conference. The official roll of the Texas Annual Conference 48th session of 2017 will consist of all delegates, lay and clergy, who are registered in Wesley Hall by 6:00 p.m. this evening. So if you have not registered, please be sure that you do that by the end of business today. The second piece of business involves our voting processes this Annual Conference. There will be two sessions that we will be voting and so to that end, I need to set the bar of the bar of the Annual Conference. For this session of Annual Conference, the bar will consist of all seats of the lower level. Now there are 12 sections in the lower level of this section of this sanctuary. That means for all voting purposes, there will not be...the upper level is not in the bar of the Annual Conference. So during those times of business, please be sure you’re on the floor of the sanctuary to where the Bishop and others here can see you and that we can respond and vote accurately. The final piece of business I have is that if you are presenting resolutions, if you are presenting reports, or if you are an extension ministry or a diaconal minister and need to send me reports annually, I’m going to invite you to send those to the secretary, it’s the word ‘secretary’ at TXCUMC.org. Again it is secretary@txcumc.org. If you are presenting information this Annual Conference, if you could email me your manuscript or your notes, that would be incredibly helpful to our process. Thank you so much and have a blessed Annual Conference.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you, Russell. Today is Memorial Day. Its been our habit for many, many years at Annual Conference to keep a Memorial Day. We want to take a minute to recognize this special meaning of this day in the life of our country and I call on Rev. Kevin Otto to help us celebrate Memorial Day in an appropriate way. Kevin.”

Memorial Day Recognition – Rev. Kevin Otto

Rev. Kevin Otto – “Thank you bishop. Good morning members guests, brothers and sisters friends and family of the Texas Annual Conference. I just ran into Ted Campbell a few minutes ago and he told me what a fortunate fate is was that I went to Perkins rather than Duke. You see, it was a happen stance that I was planning to go to Duke and then family emergencies required that I go to Perkins. I had one W. J. Power, professor Bible and Hebrew studies, who, when we were learning about the 10 Commandments and studying Hebrew, he said about the 5th Commandment to honor your parents, he says, ‘you will forget, you will forget, you will, you must never forget, but you will forget to honor your parents and its the commandment that comes with a promise.’ Today, I think of those words. I still remember those words. That intonation, that particular cadence and his particular style, and I thought what particular words so important to us today. I did serve the United States Navy, but that’s not exactly unique. At any one time there are about 1.2 million military men and women serving in the military forces on active duty and another 800,000 in reserves and National Guard. Today there are over 22 million veterans still alive in our nation of about 314 million folks. But over the years through countless wars about 1.2 million have died on battlefields. And today we remember, we remember, I ask you to remember. Allison Joslow is a 34 year old army captain. She served in Iraq war. She considers this weekend a work weekend. Not because she’s going to be pulling another watch, not because she’ll be out taking care of troops, but instead, she has been assigned to place wreaths on section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery. As she has prepares for the weekend, friends and families and others that know her, some have accidentally said, ‘I hope you have a happy Memorial Day.’ When she explains to them, ever so gently and thoughtfully, that it is not so much happy, it is an honor, it is a memorium; people go away feeling crushed or embarrassed. I still think of those words of W.J.A. Power, Professor Power, to you and me, “you will forget, but you must never forget that there are those who have given their lives for our country. Not that you or I individually asked them. They came to serve our country regardless of politics were or what the combat zone was. And so today we remember them. I ask you to take a moment of

silence and I'll close us in prayer. O Lord, we give you thanks. We give you thanks for those who have answered the call to serve our country. Not that our country has always been right in everything, but nonetheless, they have answered the call to serve. Whether they were drafted or increasingly volunteered in our military services, they have answered the call to serve; to go where our nation has needed them. We give you thanks for their service and for those who have given their lives – for their sacrifice. We remember them Lord and we remember their families today. Those who have left without fathers and mothers. Those who've been left without sons and daughters - all the gold star families across our nation; we remember. Help us never to take it for granted that we have liberty, that we call ourselves a nation, because of those who shed their blood. Help us Lord, to remember and then to live our lives in a way that honors them and pleases you. For it is in Jesus' name we pray and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you very much Kevin. It is a special day and we are glad to remember it and seek to honor those who have served our country. We turn now to the address from our Conference Lay Leader. John Esquivel is serving in that role. The laity of our church share with the clergy the governance of our church as so as bishop, one of my partners in ministry is the Conference Lay Leader. I have enjoyed getting to know John. We are glad to hear from you this morning sir.”

Conference Lay Leader – John Esquivel

John Esquivel – “My dear brothers and sisters of the Texas Annual Conference: First I want to tell you what an honor and privilege it has been to serve as Lay Leader for the Texas Annual Conference this quadrennium. It has been a time of learning for me as well as a time of transition from Bishop Huie to Bishop Jones.

My first year as your Conference Lay Leader has been dedicated to learning, and my primary group for instruction has come from the Cabinet.

Having worked at a multinational company for over 32 years, I have engaged with numerous teams of varying effectiveness. I can assure you that the Cabinet of the Texas Annual Conference, under the leadership of Bishops Huie and Jones, is a highly effective team laser focused on our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping the local church for ministry. It is a team that has fun along the way and cares for each other.

I am extremely thankful to my brothers and sisters of the Cabinet in welcoming me to their team as well as the assistance they have given me over the course of the year.

I have learned of numerous great things that are going on in the Texas Annual Conference. I have seen where clergy and laity have turned around a church with declining attendance.

I have also seen congregations become even stronger as they lift each other up in the face of natural disasters. I have also seen an entrepreneurial spirit among some churches, trying new and innovative ways to reach people in need.

I have also observed some challenges facing the Texas Annual Conference. However, I prefer to refer to these challenges as opportunities. One observation I have from the District surveys as well as listening to the needed skill sets of pastors in the appointment process, is that there has been, and continues to be, significant demographical change in the Texas Annual Conference.

For many of our churches, they find themselves with a much different mission field surrounding their location than what they experienced 5, 10 years ago. Unfortunately, too often the current mission field is not reflected in their congregation. I find this to be true in urban as well as suburban churches; in large as well as small churches and city as well as county seat churches.

Many churches are in the midst of these changing demographics. For those churches not currently experiencing those changes, I believe that it is a matter of time before they too will be in the midst of change.

However, I believe this creates an opportunity for the church to re-engage the community in which we live and serve.

My commitment to you, as your Conference Lay Leader, is to ensure that the laity, in partnership with clergy, have the tools and resources available to re-engage the community.

At the Laity Session later today, we will have Dr. Jesse Brannen, Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence, and Rev. Arturo Cadar, the newly appointed Coordinator of Mission Field Development, lead us in a discussion of the numerous tools and resources available to the local church to reach out into our diverse communities. I hope that we will continue this dialogue well after Annual Conference as we continue these discussions at a District Level.

There are some churches that have been effective at engaging the communities surrounding their church. Clearly we want to learn from them. Others are struggling with this opportunity. We want to lift them up and empower those churches with tools and resources.

I also know that change can be difficult. In some instances change can generate fear (fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of trying something new). However, I believe that our greatest blessings are often found on the other side of fear. Through prayer and faith, we can overcome the obstacle of fear.

Certainly, each church will have a different strategy for re-engaging the community; however, one area that I believe will be fairly universal for all churches is engaging the community through loving all the children.

This phrase, 'Loving all the Children' may sound familiar.

Certainly, if you were at last night's opening ceremony, you will recall how Bishop led us in reciting together "WE LOVE ALL the CHILDREN". You might also remember it from reading the document entitled Bishop's Vision of Strategic Directions for the Texas Annual Conference found at page 40 of your pre-conference journal.

Among other things, Bishop Jones has identified the following as strategic opportunities for the Texas Annual Conference:

To strengthen local churches' mission with a focus on loving all the children-health, education, discipleship; and

Reframe the United Methodist brand through a study, perhaps moving toward a branding slogan of "United Methodists Love All the Children"

So, my agenda as Lay Leader is to empower the local church with the tools and resources to re-engage the ever-changing communities in which our churches find themselves.

One means may be through Loving All the Children. I am confident that if we love the children, parents and extended families will not be far behind.

In fact, I am living proof of that. The short version of my story is that I am a Methodist today because the Wesley Community Center in San Antonio extended unconditional love to my immigrant grandparents. This resulted in my grandparents wanting to know more about these people called Methodist. My grandparents became Methodist, my parents are Methodist, my wife and I are lifelong Methodist, our children are Methodist and now my 10 month old granddaughter, will hopefully be raised in the Methodist tradition. Five generations of Methodist from the expression of unconditional love. If you love the children, communities will know that you love them as well.

I believe such a strategy of re-engaging the community through Loving all the Children, positions us in alignment with the Bishop's vision and will bear much fruit throughout the Texas Annual Conference for God's Kingdom.

I look forward to continuing this journey with you.

May God continue to bless you and your ministry."

Bishop Jones – "Thank you John. Friends, part of what we do at Annual Conference is recognize those among the clergy of our Conference who have reached that stage in their ministry where they are going to take a retired relationship with our Conference. One of the things I taught as a seminary professor and now I keep reminding people of this as a Bishop: United Methodist clergy live within their Conference. That is a deeply important relationship to be nurtured and cared for. And so as a gathered community, we are going to be celebrating the retirement of some of our sisters and brothers. Partly we want to hear from them and we choose to do that by video. So at various times through the life of Conference I will take a pause and invite you to watch a video

where we hear from those brothers and sisters who are moving in that direction. And so we have our first retirement video now.”

Retirement Video #1 (Honoring Carol Clifford Turner)

Bishop Jones – “For some of you this may be your first Annual Conference and you’re wondering what is this all about and what are we doing here? Well, I want to quote a colleague of mine Russ Richey, a great historian on American Methodism who says, ‘The Annual Conference session serves 5 functions: In part it’s a revival – we will experience that in powerful worship. Secondly, it is partly a family reunion when we get back together and see old friends and former pastors and colleagues and former parishioners. Partly it marks time. We sometimes talk about, ‘well do you remember that conference in such and such a place when something happened?’ It is partly a business session and as we are talking about business, we have come to handle that in a variety of different ways. So that some of the routine business that we can get handled on a consent calendar and so we turn now to B.T. Williamson who is going to present this consent calendar so that some of the necessary business of our Annual Conference can be cared for. B.T.”

Consent Calendar – Rev. B.T. Williamson

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop. Good Morning, Conference. It is a pleasure to be with you again to see friends in this time of family reunion. One of the items of business that we do early on of each session of the Annual Conference is to bring forward the preliminary consent calendar. These consist of reports from our centers of excellence, as well as our institutions. They are not action items. At our Pre-Conference meetings, we remind all of the delegates to please review and be prepared, if you want to, to send them to record by vote at this point in time. So that is before you. It is found 33 and 34 of Pre-Conference Journal. I move the adoption of the Consent Calendar with the caveat that if you wish to remove an item and place it on the agenda, if you make that motion and 25% of your fellow delegates concur, we will place it on the agenda for Wednesday morning. Bishop, I move the adoption of the Consent Calendar.”

Bishop Jones – “If there’s anybody that wishes to remove something from that Consent Calendar, our procedure is if you wish to make a motion or address question, you should move to microphone. I don’t see people moving to microphone. I think you are ready to vote. Alright, if you will approve the Consent Calendar as it is properly before you, will you say yes? If you oppose it say no. And it’s done.”

**there were two no voices on the left side of the sanctuary

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you B.T. An important part of our connection is the United Methodist Women and we have a video in celebration of their 150 years in ministry. Let’s watch.”

UMW – A Celebration of 150 Years in Ministry (Video Presentation)

Bishop Jones – “If you are a member of United Methodist Women would you please stand so we can honor you in place. We are thankful for the tremendous work that UMW does in so many places and so many parts of the world.”

Bishop Jones – “Another key report that needs to come before our Conference session is the report of our Conference Chancellor. This is the attorney who advises me and who advises other leaders of our Conference. We have a Co-Chancellor system here. Frank Jones does some of the work for us, but over the last nine months, the Co-Chancellor that has done the most work on our behalf in supporting me is Mary Daffin. Mary works tirelessly behind the scenes in terms of interpreting *The Book of Discipline*, relationship with Judicial Council, as well as the occasional times we have together in the sector facing the legal system. Mary we are thankful for your service to the Texas Annual Conference and you have a report to share with us and we will hear you now.”

Chancellors’ Report

Mary Daffin – “Thank you Bishop. Rev. B.T. Good morning Texas Annual Conference. I am so pleased to stand before you this morning and say there are no lawsuits pending against the Texas Annual Conference.

There were a few activities that your Chancellors were engaged in at the end of the 2016 Conference and the beginning of this Conference. One of them we did get a lawsuit. AVATAR COMPUTER SOLUTIONS INC.

sued The Texas Annual Conference in the 129th District Court of Harris County. The lawsuit alleged a breach of contract with respect to a termination with the contract with Avatar Solutions. We were able to abate that lawsuit because, as a condition precedent to filing the lawsuit (based on a provision of the contract), was that there would be a mediation. That the parties would attempt to mediate the dispute before going to court. Having not done that, we were able to abate that lawsuit and actually go to mediation. We went to mediation and we were quite successful in that mediation. As a result there of, the Texas Annual Conference ended up paying only \$10,000 to settle all of the disputes that were remaining as result of terminating the relationship with Avatar Computer Solutions. So that relationship, of course, has been terminated and there is another IT provider for the Texas Annual Conference. So we were very successful in that particular lawsuit – one that never should have been filed.

One of the other things that you will recall, at the 2016 Annual Conference, this Conference voted to request a Declaratory Decision from the Judicial Council on the constitutionality of lay members on the Board of Ordained Ministry voting on the final disposition of penalty resulting from a church trial; and also as a part of that request, it asked about the legality of a final penalty resulting from a church trial without the respondent being afforded a 30-day appeal right. While Judicial Council granted an oral hearing on that request and I appeared on behalf of the Texas Annual Conference to argue and Rev. Jason Burnham appeared on behalf of Petitioner to argue. The Judicial Council rendered its decision holding that it had no jurisdiction to consider the question that had been presented. Pursuant to 2610.2(j) of the Discipline the Judicial Council does have jurisdiction to rule on petitions for Declaratory Decision from any annual conference on matters relating to the annual conferences work that is taken up during a particular session. The petitioner actually acknowledged that the purpose of the petition was to seek an appeal from the decision of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and it was really undisputed that the issues of the underlying petition were judicial in nature. So, in holding that the Judicial Council had NO JURISDICTION to consider the matter because it was a judicial matter. It was a judicial matter submitted as a petition for Declaratory Decision. The allegation that the petitioner was not afforded a 30 day right of appeal, the Judicial Council held that there was nothing preventing the petitioner to actually appeal the matter. So, based on the finding that the Conference that no one had done anything to prevent the appeal, the Judicial Council held that the right of appeal, the constitutional right of appeal, had been forfeited and once forfeited, the right of appeal could not be revived by any appellate body. So the basis of the opinion is that on a judicial matter, a declaratory decision is not the correct avenue to bring that forth. Now the Judicial Council has been very consistent in holding and even admonishing Annual Conferences not to bring it judicial matters in the form of Declaratory Decisions. Those judicial matters are to be handled in accordance to the Discipline and there are particular bodies that are to handle that. The Judicial Council reiterated and admonished Annual Conferences about bringing judicial matters to it in the form of a Declaratory Decision as opposed to following the regular appellate route.

A few weeks ago, I was privileged to attend the Legal Forum. Your Chancellors throughout the United States, annually will hold a legal forum. I want to tell the Texas Annual Conference, that sitting in that legal forum, we hear issues that Chancellors are dealing with in all of the Annual Conferences are dealing with throughout the United States. And as I sat there and participated in those discussions, I was just absolutely amazed and again very proud of the Texas Annual Conference. And what I am about to say, I want you to hear me, it is not with any sense of boasting or puffed up pride, but the issues that I hear my fellow Chancellors dealing with, we don't have them in the Texas Annual Conference. I say that, not with any puffed up pride but with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness for the people of the Texas Annual Conference and the way, through our leadership, we are able to deal with the issues that come up. And we can deal with them in a different manner than the way that I see they are being handled throughout our connection and I thank you for that and I thank our leadership. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you Mary, we thank you for your service on our behalf in these complicated matters. We turn now to our next retiree video. Let's watch.”

Retiree Video #2 (Honoring Cecil McDowell)

Bishop Jones – “It is great to hear from our colleagues in this way. We turn now to our morning devotional and this year we are going to do a little hymn singing.”

Morning Devotional (9:20 a.m. Bishop Jones)

Bishop Scott Jones led us in a time of studying and singing hymns.

Laity Session (10:00 a.m. Harvest Worship Center)

The following notes come from Assistant Secretary Kit Pfeiffer (lay delegate from Tomball United Methodist Church) who observed the session first hand.

Laity Session: Equipping the Local Church

Lay Leader John Esquivel facilitated an interactive panel discussion outlining tools and resources to help local congregations interested in revitalization as well as engaging or re-engaging their diversified communities.

Several realistic challenges for local congregations -- and opportunities -- were addressed in the laity session, with input from Lay Leader John Esquivel and two panelists from the Center of Congregational Excellence (CCE): Center Director Rev. Dr. Jesse Brannen and Rev. Artie Cadar, incoming Coordinator of Mission Field Development.

How do churches access resources and tools from the CCE?

“We have tools and resource people that are specialists in a number of areas to help the local church with just about anything,” explains Jesse, “but it is best to call or email me as a first step. I will then set up a meeting with your church leadership to better understand what you need, and we will make a plan.” Churches seeking to look more like their immediate communities can contact Artie for assistance in outreach to a changing demographic. “It is my dream to be able to help congregations and train leaders to do the job that needs to be done to understand different faith traditions and cultures, meet needs and edify those in your respective mission fields,” adds Artie.

What is the greatest barrier to church revitalization?

“Many congregations do not have a realistic view of who they are in 2017,” shares Jesse. “Some churches may not realize they still live in the 1950s, but when you stop and notice how much people have changed you realize the church has to do less *talking* and more *doing* to adapt. My grown children, for example, don’t carry cash, and this major shift in social norms has an impact for churches passing the offering plate. I have visited churches with members more concerned about someone in their seat than saying good morning to a visitor.” According to Artie, “Pastors who are serving in churches that are frozen in the glory days can love their congregations and pray for the Holy Spirit to warm their hearts.”

Why is the demographic environment important to a church?

“The community tells us if we are relevant or not, and if what we are doing has an audience, or any potential,” shares Jesse. “If parents choose soccer over church, then perhaps the church has not done its job demonstrating the importance of young people learning life lessons at church. And, likewise, if churches are wanting a lot of kids to attend church in a predominantly retired community, they could spend years working for something that isn’t there.”

How does a particular mindset impact the church?

Panelists reminded attendees that churches should not exist to serve members. Adds Jesse, “We need to be in ministry *with* others, not ministry *to* others. When you minister *with* people it is much harder, messier and more time consuming, but these relationships are what we are there for.” According to Artie, “Everyone has a role to play. If we want to save the lost, whatever the cost, we need to know who they are, what cultures they follow, and what they need before we introduce them to the church.” Responding to a comment from the crowd, John noted that some congregations prefer not to be inconvenienced by noisy children or others who do not know the norms of church behavior, but those congregations that are not inclusive will struggle with growth and vibrancy. Shares Artie, “The church can decide to be ‘we four and no more’ or decide to pursue what God is calling them to be, because it only takes a spark to get something new going.” Jesse explains, “Size does not indicate health in a church. The churches that offer small groups, provide some kind of outreach to youngsters in the community, build on their strengths and look to the future are the ones that will typically be healthy.”

Clergy Session (10:15 a.m. Main Sanctuary)

Bishop Jones – “Somebody at the back of the room, please close the doors of the sanctuary...(microphone not on)...I welcome you as we do the business that pertains to this part of the Annual Conference. If you would join with me in the spirit of prayer:

Almighty God, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve. You have called us into ministry. You have called us to serve your church. You have given us the credentials and a group of colleagues to do this work. God we thank you for the blessings that have been showered upon us and we ask that as we conduct the business of your church, because indeed it is your Holy Spirit that is guiding us and leading us, help us to hear you. Help us to see clearly your vision for our lives and the lives of the Texas Annual Conference, that we might guide its work with faithfulness, love and courage. All these things we ask in Jesus' name and all God's people say - Amen.

We are privileged to have, as chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry Dr. Jeff McDonald and he's going to now provide his welcome in addition to my opening of the Conference. Jeff."

Dr. Jeff McDonald – "As we work through our Clergy Session this morning, I want to thank all of you for downloading the Guidebook app. The Business of the Annual Conference report will be there for you to look at. If you were unable to do that or need a paper copy, there's a few paper copies in this white box up here next to the altar if you need that. I want to say a word of thank you to the people that serve on the Board of Ordained Ministry. If you all would stand please and let folks see you and say a word of appreciation for your work. This is a hard working group of laity and clergy and they not just meet in an interview, but they serve in triads and RET's and help to prepare and get people ready for ordination and for commissioning and I thank them for the work that they do. I want to invite Mary Daffin, our Conference Chancellor, to come and share a couple of words with you all. You all say a word of welcome to Mary."

Mary Daffin – "I have a little report that I need to give to the clergy session, and then Bishop, I'm going to go to the laity session. At the regular business of the 2016 Clergy Session, Bishop Huie received in writing the following request for a Decision of Law:

DURING THE DISPOSITION OF THE PENALTY IMPOSED BY THE TRIAL COURT, DOES THE DEFENDANT (RESPONDENT), MAINTAIN THE FAIR PROCESS RIGHTS GUARANTEED BY THE DISCIPLINE (PARTICULARY, THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD; PARAGRAPH 2701.2 OF THE 2008 DISCIPLINE) BEFORE A FINAL DECISION IS MADE.

And that was a request for a Decision of Law that was received during your clergy session last Annual Conference. Bishop Huie issued her ruling within 30 days after the close of the session as is permitted by the Discipline. She ruled that the question was an improper question for a decision of law in that she lacked authority to make substantive rulings on questions of fair process, judicial and administrative processes. In accordance with the Discipline, also, this ruling had to be submitted to Judicial Council for review.

So upon review, the Judicial Council affirmed the Bishop's decision, holding the question was not a proper question to be addressed in a substantive ruling by a bishop in that it related to substantive matters relating to a judicial process. The Judicial Council cited a string of decisions, wherein the Council has reiterated that in judicial or administrative matters are left to the purview of the judicial administrative bodies such as Committee on Investigation, Trial Court, Committee on Appeals or Judicial Council.

In all of these kinds of decisions, Judicial Council has continued and consistently upheld the principle of separation and balance of powers between the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches as set forth in the Constitution. So that is the ruling that was issued pursuant to the request for a decision of law from last year.

There's one other thing that I would just like to point out to this body and that is a new Disciplinary provision that became effective January 1, 2017. A new provision of the Discipline. And it is found in paragraph 2718 of the *2016 Book of Discipline*. So I want to just draw your attention to this very important change from the *2016 Book of Discipline*. Paragraph 2718 now has two new sub-paragraphs: sub-paragraph 3 and sub-paragraph 4. So it is now 2718.3. and 2718.4. The new provision 2718.3 makes it possible to appeal decisions of the conference relations committee to the conference administrative review committee to the Committee on Appeal, and from the Committee on Appeals to the Judicial Council on questions of procedure in an administrative process. So questions of procedure in an administrative process can now be appealed pursuant to this new sub-paragraph that became effective January 1, 2017.

Now, 2718.4. sets out the mechanics of the appeal, such as time limits for the appeal, certain rights of appellant, and questions to be decided by the appellate body, and also how the records and documents that are a part of the administrative process are to be delivered as the records on appeal.

Now, since the Conference has always guarded the confidentiality of personnel records and minutes of Board of Ordained Ministry proceedings, we really have to think through the implications of this provision as to confidentiality and devise appropriate means whereby we can comply that provision in the event it is triggered. So we want to make sure we can comply with confidentiality and all of the requirements of applicable law as we are required to produce those records in the event that they are needed. Also, Jeff, I think, this could create additional work for committees and it has to be done rather quickly because the Discipline says all of these kinds of appeals have to be completed in 180 days from the notice. So these are things that we will be looking at as we go through this Conference year in the event that this provision is every triggered. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you Mary, we appreciate your work on our behalf. This report about the decision of law from the last clergy session is given for your information. These are very complicated matters. If you have questions about exactly what the Judicial Council has done, please you may speak with Mary or you may speak with me because she has kept me fully informed throughout this whole process.

The agenda allows for some time for some remarks from me to you all as a body of clergy and I want to lift up something that I think is very important for the quality of our life together. Some of you know that I have strongly recommended a book by Robert Putnam called *Bowling Alone* that talks about decline of community in America. That’s something that has been going on since, in his estimation, 1964. But it even impacts the quality of community among us as clergy and the Annual Conference. In this book, he talks about the importance of social capital. Social capital is the network of relationships that gives life meaning, that allows us to know who each other is, and to be in relationship with each other. And part of his thesis is that social capital is what has really declined in the last 50 years. Well, I want you to pay attention to the social capital that you have with your clergy colleagues in the life of the conference. Putnam describes two types of capital. One is what he calls bonding capital, where it builds deep relationships of trust, of mutual affection, of knowing who you are. It is the sort of friendship that allows people to be in a deep relationship as a part of their ongoing life – day in and day out. The other type of capital he talks about is bridging capital. The capital that allows for people to cross barriers, allows people to build relationships with people who are different from them. And he says that both types of social capital are declining in America and we need to pay attention on how to re-invent them. Well, I want to suggest to you that in my years as a bishop, the clergy that have gotten into the most trouble in various ways, are people who have allowed themselves to drift into isolation. Their not in relationship with other United Methodist clergy near them. Their friends have given up on them in one way or another. They don’t have the kind of relationships with other clergy who a friend can look at them in the eye and say, ‘what in the world are you thinking? Are you out of your mind?’ Now friends you need to know that I served two appointments in the same district in the North Texas Conference. And there was a group of clergy in that district, all of whom...all of us served two appointments in the same district...and those are the people that I hang out with today, who still call me by my first name and look me in the eye and say, ‘Jones, you are crazy.’ I need more of that in my life. But what I am trying to say to you is that all of us need it. You need a group of clergy that you can go to to complain about the laity in your congregation safely. You need a group of clergy you can go to to complain about the bishop. I highly recommend that. I used to do that all the time. We also made appointments regularly. You all know what I am talking about. But what I am trying to suggest to you is that the conditions of twenty first century life, often militate against the maintenance of those kinds of relationships. And you really need to pay attention to having an accountability group, having somebody who is going to ask you how is it with your soul? Somebody who is going to give you advice. Sometimes it is for personal support and accountability and sometimes it is for professional. The best ideas I used as a pastor were ones I stole from other clergy that I met with and listened to what was working in their places. So part of my strong advice for each of you, is to tend to the clergy relationships you have. To look around and find new ones. I’m also mindful that our church is going to be headed into some times of turmoil over the next 3 years. It is not an easy time to be a United Methodist leader. There are controversies and there’s principled disobedience and there’s all kinds of stuff going on that’s really unprecedented in our church; at least in the last 170 years. During that period of time it is increasingly important that the bridging capital be something you pay attention to as well. If there are people in this conference that you think are different than you – either for theological differences or racial differences or age differences or whatever they are – we are a diverse conference and we really need to reach across some of those barriers to build those relationships so that when the time comes, a tough conversation is not the first time you’ve ever talked to that person. Figuring out how to increase the bridging and bonding capital within the body of the clergy of the Texas Annual Conference, is an important effort.

I want to assure you that the District Superintendents and Conference Directors and I, pay attention to this. But there is only so much we can do. The quality of your life together as a conference is your responsibility. Its how you handle yourself day in day out, how you build relationships, how you treat each other, and doing that with the highest level of our love for Christ and love for each other and our common commitment to the mission of the church is absolutely vital and important.

Again, I say some phrases over and over again, that's partly because I know I need to listen to them and think about them and understand all their implications. But when I say that clergy live in their annual conference, that's a really, really important statement. Tending to the quality of your life as a community is really important as well. I want you to know that one of the most important things that I do in my annual scheduling of days, is, there's a group of active bishop...well all of the active bishops of the South Central Jurisdiction meet for a peer learning group twice a year. It's one of the most important things I do because it is those other bishops I go to to complain about you all. (laughter) Not really, I brag on the Texas Annual Conference, but it is a place where we talk about how we do our ministry as bishops and how we really work and try to figure out how to best serve Christ with the authority as well as the responsibility and the obligations that the church has entrusted to us. So I hope you are finding those kind of generative conversations important and that they continue to nurture you and help you serve Christ to the best of your abilities. So that's my word for you all as clergy this morning. Thanks for listening.

We now turn to Teresa Rossy to make a presentation. Teresa.”

Teresa Rossy – “I'm Teresa Rossy, the chair of Professional Certification on the Board of Ordained Ministry. And today the board would like to recognize and thank Rev. Mary Tumulty for her years of service for directing the Certification Program at Perkins School of Theology. For these 22 years, Mary has carried the mantle of Dick Murray, who many of you knew, and to the next generation of Christian Education leaders of adult, children, and also some youth ministers as well. Mary, her service will bear fruit for years to come. And many of you in this room and many of your congregations have benefited from her ministry. So Mary, we would like to thank you and recognize you today. (Applause) I want to be clear, Mary is not retiring. She is still serving at First United Methodist in Conroe and she is still teaching Spiritual Formation to pastors in training at Perkins here in the Houston area. So Mary thank you very much. We love you.

Rev. Mary Tumulty – “I'm speechless.”

Applause

Bishop Jones – “We do thank you for your service and that's an important part of the life of our conference. We're grateful Mary, so thank you very much. Jeff, I think we are down to the business of the Annual Conference, is that right?”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “That's correct.”

Bishop Jones – “O.k.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “I would like to invite Gail Ford Smith, Meredith Mills, Irv White, Linda Christians, Marilyn White to come and help me with this report.”

Bishop Jones – “As you are aware, we do this by question, and so the first question is mine. Are all clergy members of the conference blameless in their life and in their official administration?”

Clergy present responded – “Yes, by the grace of God.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “Who constitute the Administrative Review Committee? As listed.”

Bishop : If you will elect these persons to the Administrative Review Committee would you say yes? Any opposed, no? And it is done.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “B, The Conference Relations Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry? As listed. C, the Committee on Investigation? As listed.”

Rev. Meredith Mills – Who are the certified candidates? This is as listed with one correction; Casey Estler is moved from this list to letter C and could we recognize all of the certified candidates and candidacy mentors at this time if you could stand.”

Applause

Bishop Jones – “Meredith, let me interrupt you for a minute and say as a matter of procedure. As we are going through this list, if you have substantive corrections to make – meaning we are about to vote on somebody inappropriately or there’s somebody completely left off – please move to a microphone. If you have what I would call typographical corrections – name spelling, or year that’s different, or district that’s different – those are not substantive, those are sort of editorial. We have a form for that. Where is the form? Where can people get the form for that? Deann has them at the information table in the entryway. Just let us know that way. We do work hard in keeping our records accurate, but occasionally mistakes get listed in the record so you can help us out in that way. That’s the way we make the changes we need to make. O.k.”

Rev. Meredith Mills – “Under letter ‘B,’ who have had their letter of candidacy for ordained or licensed ministry accepted by a District Committee on Ordained Ministry in another Annual Conference? That is listed. And letter ‘C,’ who have been discontinued as certified candidates for licensed or ordained ministry? This is where Casey Estler is added to this list and otherwise, as listed.”

Bishop Jones – “Irv.”

Irv White – “Under question 20, who have completed the studies for the license as local pastor, are approved , but are not now appointed? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “This requires a vote and occasionally friends, the Discipline says there’s a certain percentage required and so I will ask you to raise the hand. If you will approve the persons on this list, would you raise the hand? Down. Opposed, same sign? And its done.”

Vote was unanimous

Irv White – “Question 21, who are approved and appointed as a full time local pastor? As listed with these changes: The addition of Kaylea Fleming. Otherwise, as listed. Under ‘B’ part time.”

Bishop Jones – “wait, wait. We’ve got to vote on that one Irv. Well, actually we could vote on all of them together it looks like, so keep going, my apologies.”

Irv White – “Thank you. ‘B,’ part-time local pastors? As listed with these changes: The addition of Steve Killam and Pam Lundburg, and the removal of Gary Hayes. Otherwise, as listed. And under ‘C,’ ‘D,’ and ‘E’ there are none.”

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve the persons on this list for this role would you raise the hand? Down. If you’re opposed, same sign. And its done.”

Unanimously passed

Irv White – “On question 21, who have been discontinued as local pastors? As listed. And under question 23, who have been reinstated as local pastors there are none.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “24, what ordained ministers or provisional members from other Annual Conferences or Methodist denominations are approved for appointment in the Annual Conference while retaining their conference or denominational membership? ‘A,’ Annual Conferences, as listed. ‘B,’ other Methodist Denominations, as listed.

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “25, What clergy in good standing in other Christian denominations have been approved to serve appointments or ecumenical ministries within the bounds of the Annual Conference while retaining their denominational affiliation? As listed.

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve the persons on this list for service in our Conference would you say yes? Any opposed, no? And its done.”

Vote was unanimous

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Question 26, who are affiliate members? With vote there are none. Without vote, Alexandra M. (Sandy) Burley.”

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve this person for this affiliate membership would you raise the hand? Down. Opposed, same sign. And it is done.”

Approved unanimously

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Question 27, there are none. Question 28, who are elected as provisional members and what seminary are they attending, if in school? Provisional Deacons: Russell Warren LaGrone; and provisional elders, Trey Burns, Michael Ryan Gienger, Stephen Goldsmith, Andrew Kelly Hook, David W. Johnson, Joseph Denson Klam, Daniel Lumpee, Patricia Marie Lund, Joel C. McKinnon, John Wayne McMann, Michael R. McVey, Steven C. Newcomb, Carla Price, Johnnie Simpson, Jr.”

Bishop Jones – “Friends, these are persons who are moving into provisional membership in our Conference by a vote we will take in a few minutes, but remember what I said about bridging capital? We need to reach out and build relationships with new members of our community. I remember when I was a provisional member in an annual conference and didn’t know many of the people who were there. We need to figure out how to welcome them. I know that some of you are working on that already, but as just a step in that process, I want to let them introduce themselves by name, so I’m going to pass the microphone down the line. Tell us who you are and where you’re serving.”

Russell LaGrone – “My name is Russell LaGrone and I will begin my appointment at St. Mark’s on Pecore Street on July 1st.”

Trey Burns – “I’m Trey Burns and my first appointment will be Faith United Methodist Church in Spring as the Associate Pastor.”

Michael Gienger – “I’m Michael Gienger and I’m serving at Central in Galveston.”

Stephen Goldsmith – “I’m Stephen Goldsmith and I’m serving at Journey of Faith in Humble.”

Andrew Hook – “I’m Andrew Hook and I’ll begin serving at Christ Church Sugar Land.”

David Johnson – “I’m David W. Johnson and I’m serving at Trinity in Beaumont.”

Joseph Klam – “Joseph Klam serving at Chapelwood in Houston.”

Daniel Lumpee – “Daniel Lumpee and I’ll be serving at Christ Church College Station.”

Patricia Lund – “Patricia Lund and I’ll be serving at First Athens.”

Joel McKinnon – “Joel McKinnon and I continue to serve at Cypress.”

John McMann – “John Wayne McMann and I serve at Kingwood UMC.”

Michael McVey – “Michael McVey and I’ll be appointed as the Associate at Crossroads in Pearland.”

Steven Newcomb – “Steven Newcomb, currently at Jefferson and Smithton, but moving to Longview and Winterfield.”

Carla Price – “Carla Price and I’m serving as the hospital Chaplain at MD Anderson.”

Johnnie Simpson, Jr. – “Johnnie Simpson and I’m serving at Faith UMC in Dickinson.”

Bishop Jones – “If you are (applause) Wait, wait, wait! They’ve not been elected yet. If you all will approve these persons for provisional membership would you raise the hand? Down. If you’re opposed, same sign. And its done. Now applaud!”

Linda Christians – “Question 29, who are continued as provisional members, in what year were they admitted into provisional membership, and what seminary are they attending if in school? As listed. ‘B’ and ‘C’ none. ‘D,’ Provisional members who transferred from other conferences or denomitaions: Rahel Lee-Yoo. Question 30, what ordained clergy, coming from other Christian denominations, have had their orders recognized? Brent Parker.”

Bishop Jones – “We will introduce Brent in a minute, but if you would vote to approve his recognition of orders would you say yes. Any oppose no. And its done.”

Vote was unanimous

Linda Christians – “31 – none.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Question 32, who are elected as members in full connection? As deacons, Heather Theresa Gates, Cynthia Ann Riddick, Lindsay Jane Smith, Heather Ann Velez. As Elders: Jacob Paul Breeze, Daniel E. Childs, Roger Graham Clayton, Jr., Trey Williams Comstock III, Todd Anthony Cooper, Thomas Earl Harper, Tammy K. Heinrich, William Douglas Lucas, Brent Eric Parker, Paul Bradley Richards-Kuan, Raegan Elizabeth Seaton, Stephanie McFall Snyder, Deborah DeFrank Tipps, Andrew Travis Wolfe, Trisha Lynn Woodruff, Daniel S. Yang.”

Bishop Jones – “Again I would like for you to introduce yourselves to the Conference by giving your name and where you’re serving.”

Rev. Heather Theresa Gates – “I’m Heather Gates. I serve at Moody down in Galveston as the youth pastor and a volunteer chaplain with the Galveston Police Department.”

Rev. Cynthia Ann Riddick – “I’m Cindy Riddick. I serve at Bay Harbour Methodist Church in League City.”

Rev. Lindsay Jane Smith – “I’m Lindsay Smith and I serve at St. Stephen’s United Methodist Church.”

Rev. Heather Ann Velez – “I’m Heather Velez and I serve at Pattison United Methodist Church.”

Rev. Jacob Paul Breeze – “My name is Jacob Breeze and I’m pastor of Holy Family one of Chapelwood United Methodist Church’s worship communities in Houston.”

Rev. Daniel E. Childs – “I’m Daniel Childs and I serve at Lakewood in Northwest Houston.”

Rev. Roger Graham Clayton, Jr. – “I’m Roger Clayton and I serve at Livingston First.”

Rev. Trey Williams Comstock III – “I’m Trey Comstock and I’m the pastor at Lexington and Blue United Methodist Churches.”

Rev. Todd Anthony Cooper – “Todd Cooper, John Wesley United Methodist Church here in Houston.”

Rev. Thomas Earl Harper – “Thomas Harper, I serve at St. Luke’s United Methodist Church as Associate Pastor in adult ministry.”

Rev. Tammy K. Heinrich – “Tammy Heinrich, I’m serving at Chapelwood, Houston.”

Rev. William Douglas Lucas – “William Lucas and I serve at West University Methodist in Houston.”

Rev. Brent Eric Parker – “Brent Parker and I serve here at the Woodlands United Methodist as the Pastor of our Wood Forest Campus.”

Rev. Paul Bradley Richards-Kuan – “Paul Richards-Kuan, I serve at Holy Covenant in Katy.”

Rev. Raegan Elizabeth Seaton – “My name is Raegan Seaton and I serve at St. Marks United Methodist Church in Baytown.”

Rev. Stephanie McFall Snyder – “I’m Stephanie Snyder and I serve at Bering Memorial United Methodist.”

Rev. Deborah DeFrank Tipps – “I’m Debbie Tipps and I serve at the First United Methodist Church of Henderson.”

Rev. Andrew Travis Wolfe – “I’m Andrew Wolfe and I serve at Athens First United Methodist Church.”

Rev. Trisha Lynn Woodruff – “Trish Woodruff and I serve at Lakewood United Methodist Church in Northwest Houston.”

Rev. Daniel S. Yang – “I’m Danny Yang and I serve at Westbury UMC.”

Bishop Jones – “I’m going to put two questions to you in 1 vote. If you will elect these persons for full membership in the Annual Conference and for ordination as deacons and elders appropriately, would you raise the hand? Down. If you’re opposed same sign. And it is done. Congratulations.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “You all have taken care of question 32 and 33 A, or 34 A, but we have question 34 B: transfer from deacon to elder, Stacy Lee Auld.”

Bishop Jones – “Stacy, you are the only one in this category so you don’t have to introduce yourself to everybody. We are welcoming you in this new relationship. If you would vote to approve Stacy Lee Auld’s transfer from deacon to elder would you lift the hand? Down. Opposed same sign. And its done. Congratulations.”

Bishop Jones – “Who have been received by transfer from other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church? It is as listed. If you will approve these transfers would you say yes. Any opposed no. And it’s done.”

Bishop Jones – “Who are transferred from other Methodist denominations and who have been ordained as a courtesy to other conferences? The list is none. Who have been transferred out to other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church? The list is there. I happen to know that Ben Trammell is here. Ben, are you present? He told me he had come back to this conference to vote against this, but Ben there’s no vote here. So I’m sorry. But I told him that we are viewing him as a Texas Conference missionary to a sister conference and so we wish you the best Ben. There you are. Linda, you’re up next.”

Linda Christians – “Question 42: who are discontinued as provisional members? None. By voluntary discontinuance? Trenten Clifford Oliver.”

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve this voluntary discontinuance would you say yes. Any opposed no. And it is done.”

Linda Christians – “‘C’ and ‘D’ none.”

Marilyn White – “Question 43: who are on location? Who has been granted honorable location this year? None. Previously? As listed. And as you review your report this year and if you see someone’s name and we don’t have their charge conference membership and you know where that is, would you please let the Board of Ordained Ministry know. Who are on honorable location ‘B’ and ‘C’ as local pastors or who have been placed on administrative location? None. Previously? As listed. Question 44: who have been granted the status of honorable location retired? This year Randel Thomas”

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve the granting of this status to Randel Thomas would you say yes? Any opposed no? And it is done.”

Marilyn White – “Previously? As listed. Question 45: Who have had their status as honorably located and their orders terminated? None.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Question 46: who have had their conference membership terminated? There are none in ‘A’. ‘B’ by withdrawal from the ordained ministerial office Rosemary Behrens, Robyn Kay Bishop.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve this withdrawl, would you say yes? Any opposed no . It’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Question 47: who have been suspended under the provisions of paragraph 362.1d, 2704.2c or 2711.3? None. We are going to ask you to stand this morning as we read the names of our deceased clergy members since our last Annual Conference. What associate members have died this year? Active: Elwyn Dwayne Dillard. Retired: Jimmy Steele. What provisional members have died during this year? Active: none. Retired: none. What elders have died during this year? Active: Velosia Ledet Kibe, Suzanne Reedstrom. Retired: Bernard Beaman, Jr., Ferdinand D. Dawson, III, John W. Edgar, Thomas Philip Edward, John William Rainwater, Sr., Frank M. Richardson, Jr., Robert Hamlin Robinson, Herbert Richard Rohloff, Jr., Melvin Rowland, Carmine Stahl, D. Orval Strong. What deacons have died this year? Active: none. Retired: Wineva Kathryn Hankamer. What local pastors have died during the year? Active: James Bowie. Retired: Ned Alexander, Elvis C. Davis, Jr. Would you bow with me for a word of prayer. Father in heaven we praise your name for all who have finished this life loving and trusting you. For the example of their lives, the life and grace you gave them, and the peace in which they rest. We praise you today for your servants and for all that you did through them. Meet us in our sadness and fill our hearts with praise and thanksgiving for the sake of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “49: what provisional or ordained members have received appointments in other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church while retaining their membership in this Annual Conference? As listed.”

Marilyn White – “Question 50: who are the provisional, ordained members or associate members on leave of absence and for what number of years consecutively has each held this relation? ‘A’ voluntary, personal, 5 years or less? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you will approve these leave of absence statuses would you say yes? Any opposed no. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Personal, more than 5 years? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve this raise the hand. Down. Opposed same sign. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Family, five years or less? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve this say yes. Any opposed no. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Family, more than five years? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve this raise the hand. Down. Opposed same sign. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Transitional? None. Involuntary? None. And who are granted sabbatical leave? None. Who have been granted medical leave due to medical or disabling conditions? Names as listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve these medical leave relationships would you say yes? Any opposed no? And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Question 53: what members in full connection have been retired? Deacons, this year? Charles Bagley.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would vote to approve this retirement would you lift the hand? Down. Opposed same sign. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Previously? As listed. For the elders, this year? Bert Bagley, Minnie Baxter, Charles Bratz, Terry Brown, Randolph Carrion, Dale Chance, Michael Deaton, Karen Dorris, Darwood Galaway, Bill Gandin, Roy James, Denise Jones, Robert McGee, James McPhail, Patrick Papp, Mark Pickett, Nona Taylor, Carol Turner, David Urban, Jim Welch.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would vote to approve these persons retirement, would you raise the hand? Down. Opposed same sign. And it’s done. Would all of those persons who have just retired deacon and elder please stand where you are. (Applause)”

Marilyn White – “Previously? As listed on pages 19 thru 24. Question 54: what associate members have been retired? This year: Ralph Hale and Doug Howell.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would vote to retire these persons would you lift the hand? Down. Opposed same sign. And it’s done.”

Marilyn White – “Previously? As listed. Question 55: What provisional members have been previously retired? None. Question 56: who have been recognized as retired local pastors? This year? Cecil McDowell, Curley Laster, Larry Shows, Joseph Wilson.”

Bishop Jones – “If you have been retired as an associate member or a local pastor would you please stand in place. (Applause)”

Marilyn White – “Previously? As listed. And would you join me again for just a word of prayer for the retired. We thank you Father for the service of your faithful servants in ministry in the United Methodist Church and your kingdom. Bless them as they go forth on the second half of the journey looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. In Jesus name. Amen.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “Page 29, question 72: who are approved for less than full time service? ‘A’ What associate members, provisional, or full elders are approved for appointment to less than full-time service, what is

the total number of years for which such approval has been granted to each, and for what fraction of full-time service is approval granted? As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve this status for these persons would you lift a hand? Down. Opposed same sign. It’s done.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “‘B’: what deacons in full connection and provisional deacons are approved for appointment to less than full-time service? As listed. 73: who’ve been appointed as interim pastors under the provisions of paragraph 338.3 since the last session of annual conference, and for what period of time? We don’t have appointed interim pastors, but we have listed those who are assigned as interim for a short time and we’re grateful for their service. Number 74: what elders, deacons (full connection and provisional), associate members, local and supply pastors are appointed to ministry to the local church and where are they appointed for the coming year? You can find that appointment list in the Journal, Section H. What elders (full connection and provisional), associate members, and local pastors are appointed to extension ministries for the ensuing year? ‘A’ within the connectional structures of the United Methodist Church: As listed. None for ‘B.’ ‘C,’ to other valid ministries under the provisions of paragraph 344.1d: As listed.”

Bishop Jones – “If you would approve these extension ministries under that paragraph number would you lift the hand? Down. Opposed same sign. It’s done.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “77, who are appointed as deacons (full connection and provisional) for the coming year? ‘A,’ through non-United Methodist agencies and settings beyond the local church: As listed. ‘B,’ through United Methodist Church related agencies or schools, within the connectional structures of the United Methodist Church: As listed. 78, who are appointed to attend school: As listed. And 80, what other personal notations should be made: As listed. Would you like to do number 81 (directed to Bishop Jones)?”

Bishop Jones – “Well sure. You know the deep logic of United Methodism assumes that bishops hold multiple annual conferences which meant that the annual conference got to pick the place of meeting and the bishop got to pick the time of meeting, because the bishops were riding trains all over the country and you had to arrange the schedule so you could do 5, 6, 7 annual conferences in a year. Well, we’ve combined conferences to where there’s just one for me to do. We’re of a size that signing contracts far in advance becomes important with hotels and facilities. So we’re in a position to announce that the annual conference next year will be held May 27th-30th. We’re coming back to the Woodlands United Methodist Church, with the host hotel at the Waterway Marriott. So there you go. (Applause) There will be feedback forms for annual conference for your input about that, but we’ll tell that to the whole plenary session as well. Jeff, anything else we need to do here?”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Might I have a quick word?”

Bishop Jones – “You can have as many words as you want. You’re the chair of the board.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “It is an honor to serve as the chair of Board of Ordained Ministry for next 4 years. I’m excited about that. I did want to say a word of thanks to the people in the office of Clergy Excellence, to Gail Ford Smith and Elizabeth Duffin and candidacy manager Deann Saxton. Also to the vice-chairs of the board: DeAndre Johnson and Deborah Proctor. You stand up here and see what you can see. It is a great honor and I am honored to serve with you Bishop Jones and thank you and thank all of you for your work here this morning.”

Bishop Jones – “I guess there’s one more thing I might say. Because we did not really lift this up. What you all...you all got a lot of things when I became bishop and you’re still trying to figure those things out. But, one of them that came along with me is that I am the bishop of the mission work in Laos and Thailand. (Applause) Every United Methodist Christian in the world has a bishop and we’re planting churches in those two countries. The mission work in Laos is farther along than the mission work in Thailand and so we were in a position to interview and lay hands on 12 candidates for the ministry in the Laotian United Methodist Church. Four leaders of the Board of Ordained Ministry went with me. Because I don’t decide who gets ordained, I simply am the leader of the conference, but it’s the leaders of the Board of Ordained Ministry in the Texas Conference that is responsible for interviewing those people and credentialing them. Jeff McDonald, Linda Christians, Meredith Mills and Jeff Olive were the people from the board that went with me. It was an inspiring time because these people, these men and women, were literally putting their lives on the line. Laos is still a sort of semi-communist country where freedom of religion is highly restricted. The United Methodist Church is not yet recognized as a

legal entity. Which allows local officials to harass our pastors as they wish. And so, listening to these people talk about their faith in Christ and their willingness to preach the Gospel under these circumstances has been an inspiring time. But I just want you to know that our Board of Ordained Ministry is supporting me in that work. It's not an official tie. There's not an official partnership, because our churches in the Texas Annual Conference have international missions partnerships in a lot of different places. But, in order to support my work as the missionary bishop in those two countries, I'm grateful to the board. I have bragged on this conference to say what good shape we are. Part of that is just the Board of Ordained Ministry and the way it does its work and the way that the Center for Clergy Excellence does its work. So again, I want to echo what Jeff said to you all as leaders of the board and to all the members of the board to the quality of the work that's being done in addressing our issues so that the Wesleyan movement in these 58 counties can be as strong and vital as it absolutely possibly can be in the future. That concludes my comments. Jeff, I think we're through. Thank you all very much. We're adjourned for lunch."

Memorial Service (1:30 p.m. Main Sanctuary - Dr. Karen Dorris)

Keynote (3:10 p.m. Main Sanctuary – “Cultural Intelligence” Dr. Maria Dixon Hall)

Business Session II (4:10 p.m. Main Sanctuary)

Board of Ordained Ministry – Jeff McDonald

Bishop Jones – “I think I told you all that Annual Conference has 5 purposes. We just had the educational part, now we're turning to the business part and that means the report of the Board of Ordained Ministry and so we turn to Jeff McDonald.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Good afternoon Texas Annual. It is my honor to serve as the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. I saw her in red headed this way...o.k. The Board of Ordained Ministry consists of some 65 members who are clergy and laity, they are local pastors, they are elders, they are deacons. Their vision is to have faithful ministerial leaders in every charge in the Texas Annual Conference. Their mission is that the Board of Ordained Ministry for the Texas Annual Conference recruits, discerns, and guides individuals who feel called to ministerial leadership and credentials fruitful leaders.

This morning during the clergy session we voted and I would like to introduce to you this afternoon a group of people first those who were elected as provisional members...provisional deacons: Russell Warren LaGrone.

Those elected as provisional elders: Trey Burns, Michael Ryan Gienger, Stephen Goldsmith, Andrew Kelly Hook, David W. Johnson, Joseph Denson Klam, Daniel Lumpee, Patricia Marie Lund, Joel C. McKinnon, John Wayne McMann, Michael R. McVey, Steven C. Newcomb, Carla Price, and Johnnie Simpson, Jr.

I would like for you to greet them and welcome them and I hope that tomorrow night you will be back for the service of commissioning and ordination. You'll see them again, but welcome these newly elected provisional members.

I'd like to introduce you to those now who were elected into full connection with the Texas Annual Conference. Those that we recognize as deacons are Heather Theresa Gates, Cynthia Ann Riddick, Lindsay Jane Smith, Heather Ann Velez. Those elders elected into full connection: Jacob Paul Breeze, Daniel E. Childs, Roger Graham Clayton, Jr., Trey Williams Comstock III, Todd Anthony Cooper, Thomas Earl Harper, Tammy K. Heinrich, William Douglas Lucas, Brent Eric Parker, Paul Bradley Richards-Kuan, Raegan Elizabeth Seaton, Stephanie McFall Snyder, Deborah DeFrank Tipps, Andrew Travis Wolfe, Trisha Lynn Woodruff, Daniel S. Yang, and transferring her orders from deacon to elder: Stacy Lee Auld.”

Bishop Jones – “An important part of your journey toward ordination are the list of questions that have been asked of United Methodists since the time of John Wesley. I ask you these questions in front of the entire conference, mainly for the same reason we ask a couple getting married in front of their friends and family. Because some day somebody may want to remind you saying, ‘wait a minute, cause I was there when the bishop asked you this and you said yes.’ Right? It's a public commitment. These are things that you've been studying; they're not any surprise to you. And yet, I want to ask you these things in front of this new conference family of yours so that we know your heart and you've made a public declaration of the commitments you already hold, the Board of Ordained Ministry has examined, but as your bishop this is my job to sort of lead you through this public

declaration of these things. Most of the questions are for all of you. There's one question just for the deacons and one question just for the elders and I'll make that clear when we get there.

Have you faith in Christ? (all answered yes)

SPONTANEOUS LAUGHTER

They got the answer right, it was just a little slow, it's ok. It really is o.k.

Are you going on to perfection? (all answered yes)

Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? (all answered yes)

Are you earnestly striving after it? (all answered yes)

Are you reserved to devote yourself wholly to God and God's work? (all answered yes)

Do you know the General Rules of our church? (all answered yes)

Will you keep them? (all answered yes)

Have you studied the doctrines of the United Methodist Church? (all answered yes)

After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures? (all answered yes)

For the elders only, will you preach and maintain them? (elders answered yes)

For the deacons, will you exercise the ministry of compassion? (deacons answered yes)

Now friends, quite frankly the deacons need to preach our doctrine and ya'll elders need to be exercising compassion too. But I'm simply following the list and the order as it's given to me, o.k.?

Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity? (all answered yes)

Do you approve our church government and polity? (all answered yes)

Will you support and maintain them? (all answered yes)

Will you diligently instruct the children in every place? (all answered yes)

Will you visit from house to house? (all answered yes)

Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example? (all answered yes)

Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? (all answered yes)

Think about this one: Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work? (all answered no)

SPONTANEOUS LAUGHTER

They're getting them all right. That's really pretty good!

Will you observe the following direction? Be diligent, never be unemployed, never be triflingly employed, never trifle away time, neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary, be punctual, do everything exactly at the time, and do not mend our rules, but keep them not for wrath, but for conscience sake.

Will you follow these directions? (all answered yes)

Friends welcome to the Texas Annual Conference. We are glad to have you. Give them one more greeting, would you please."

STANDING OVATION

Dr. Jeff McDonald – "Once again, I hope that you'll join us tomorrow evening at the service of commissioning and ordination, you'll see this group again. I have been serving as chair of the board for coming up on a year now; since Annual Conference last year. I have found that there are lots of things that Carol Bruse did an excellent job – and gave me boxes and files and all sorts of things – to help and to prepare me for this job. Where is Carol? Thank you Carol for your work in preparing us, but there seems there are some things that she left out.

Not long, last fall I got an e-mail from Nancy Hinshaw and she said the bishop is setting up some meetings and could I come and meet with him. And I said yes and we set up a time and then she sent me an email that said is your passport current? And so I began to worry a little bit. Then I learned that our bishop, Bishop Jones, is also the bishop of Laos and Thailand and every United Methodist has a bishop. The conference in Laos is a missionary conference. Laos is a communist country where they do allow Christianity, but only for religions that are registered and right now the United Methodist Church has not been approved by the government. So the church is starting there, although it is illegal and last year the group of the Board of Ordained Ministry went and we commissioned their first 12 pastors in that Annual Conference. It was amazing work. I've said on my ten places I need to go before I die Laos was like 99 on the list. But it was an amazing trip. And to hear those pastors talk about the villages where they serve and the work that they do - all with fear of being arrested - so they work with the village chiefs - and are doing the things Methodists are called to do there and it was great work. I hope in the coming years you will continue to pray for our work there and for the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry as we continue to help that church get started and get moving there. Bishop thank you for this time."

Bishop Jones - "Thank you for your service."

Mary Lou Reece - "Hi, I'm Mary Lou Reece...and..."

Bishop Jones - "I want to know if anybody has given you privilege of the floor?"

Mary Lou Reece - "You know, I kind of worried about that because B.T. didn't actually spell that out this morning in the rules...I'm only kind of worried."

Bishop Jones - "If you would grant Mary Lou the special privilege of speaking, say yes."

Conference: "Yes"

Mary Lou Reece - "Thank you and that needs to be ongoing. You haven't see the last of me yet. I just thought it might be appropriate - I'm going to turn this way - I thought that it might be appropriate for me to help you all get to know your new bishop. And you know I have a pretty good vantage point on that and so I'm going to start...you know Scott I am just going to be so gentle in this first round. Well, kind of. I'll start gently at least. I'm going to start gently. So, one of the things you are going to want to know is that he is a wonderful Papa to our grandkids. We have three granddaughters, although only two are there. Only two are big enough to come visit us on their own. He is just so great at helping me and Taylor - that little peek up there with the yellow shirt - every time Facetime comes on, and I'm of course always the first one and I'm nanny - she goes Papa, Papa and he has to come on. And they have been to Houston and we have had a blast with them and he is a great Papa. O.k. Item #2. Scott is particularly hecklable. And I see my job as keeping him humble and providing all the heckle that is needed. If nobody else steps up to the plate, I am always there to do it. This particular day, just to tell you, he was raising money for Nothing But Nets. And I don't even know, was it a thousand free throws you did? (Bishop Jones responds that he shot 1,000 free throws). He didn't make very many. But we had some extra money riding on how few he would make. And so, to really build him up well, and to make sure every free throw counted, I stood in front of him and heckled him for every single free throw. And it was pretty hilarious. And one of the other men that was there from the church that was doing it, about half way through looked at me and said, 'I would kill my wife if she did that.' He didn't kill me. And so, you know I've told a few people, and maybe some of you have heard me, that in keeping him humble one of the chores is to make sure that he turns red. That is really low hanging fruit. It is so easy to turn him red, all I have to do is heckle him a little bit. Item number three, just to know how he got into this whole thing of being the bishop, the conference asked him to do it, but the one person that was adamant and absolutely against him doing it was our second son, who is a pastor. Now he wasn't a pastor then, he was in college. But I finally said, 'Arthur, why don't you want your dad to do this?' Because he was...I don't want it. He said, 'every bishop I know is old and sad.' So the first Christmas after he had been elected bishop, there was an ice storm in Kansas - and I don't know how many of you know this but I am a ridiculous, diehard Jayhawk basketball fan and so I watch every game with intent - but there was an ice storm and we had a satellite on the top of our house and we couldn't get the game. And so I was being my normal dumb self, and I was running around the house and I was asking, 'how am I going to watch this game? How am I going to watch this game?' He called the cable company and asked them how. And they said well if you have an ice storm then that's a problem. And he said to them, 'well, will it hurt it if I dump hot water on it?' Cue the picture. We had four college students iced in on the other side of the house. He does have a ski helmet on,

because as soon as I realized he was going to do this I started running around the house saying, ‘I don’t need to watch this game. Quit! Stop!’ And he said, ‘I’m doing this to prove I’m not an old, sad bishop.’”

Bishop Jones – “I just want you to know from that camera angle, the four college students were actually ready to catch me if in fact I did fall. And so, Jeff, you’re back...”

Mary Lou Reece – Interjecting: “And like that was going to work?”

Bishop Jones – “...Certifications.”

Dr. Jeff McDonald – “Thankful that we serve a God of second chances. I want to recognize those who are getting their certification in specialized ministry and bring Teresa Rossy forward. She serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry for specialized certifications.”

Bishop Jones – “The Apostle Paul wrote, ‘Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of activities but the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.’ And in Romans we have gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us. Brothers and sisters in Christ, this woman stands here today having discerned the special gifts of God’s Holy Spirit to give them to specialized ministry to the church and the world. She has sought and met the standards of training, experience, and continuing study necessary to achieve and maintain excellence in specialized ministry. She has met the standards of the United Methodist Church for personal certification and has been approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and your friends and peers on the Board of Ordained Ministry for certification. It is fitting and appropriate to recognize her achievement and bless her for specialized ministry.”

Linda Christians – “Stephanie Priscilla Novak has received her professional certification in Christian Education and Children’s Ministry.”

Bishop Jones – “We’re going to pray. Gracious God, by the gifts of your Holy Spirit, you have blessed your servant to bring grace, healing, hope, mercy, and love to your children. Help her to understand and to live into the mystery of your love. Deepen her sense of purpose as she fulfills her gifts in ministry. Stephanie Priscilla Novak I bless you to be a faithful servant among people. Fulfill your gift given to you by God’s Holy Spirit. Strive to excel in them and serve in the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ and all God’s people said, amen. Would you join with me in a spirit of prayer. Gracious and Holy God, whose Spirit fills the universe and holds all things together; we thank you that your grace has been revealed in the special gifts given to Priscilla. Continue to bless her and to keep her as she goes forth and serves in the light of your sacred kingdom. And all God’s people said, amen. Congratulations. Alright.”

Applause

Bishop Jones – “We turn now to the report of the Board of Pensions. Jerry Neff. And friends, it looks like.”

Benefits

Pensions – Rev. Jerry Neff

Rev. Jerry Neff – “Bishop Jones or Bishop Papa and members of the Annual Conference, I greet you on behalf of your board of pensions. I am remiss if I didn’t say thank you to the people behind me, who will answer any of the questions that you may have. Gail Ford Smith is Director of Center for Clergy Excellence and I couldn’t do this without her. Ted Carlson is our consultant, Barbara Kilby – also one of our consultants, and Mark Hellums is not here because of surgery that he had to have. Our Report can be found on page 73 of the Pre-Conference Journal. We recommend the following for 2018 budget:

CRSP funding rate remains at 13.8%. Past service rate for Pre-1982 Pension Plan presently second highest in the denomination, would be \$867 up from \$858 in 2017; which indicates an increase of 1%. Surviving spouse rate remains at 75%. Continuation of funding the Pre-92 retiree Group Health Benefits subsidy totaling \$34,000. Pension Apportionment set at \$500,000. Retiree medical contributions are projected to total \$1.1 million.

Along with the transition to OneExchange, the Pension Reserve will fund a subsidy of \$3,600 per year for clergy appointed to Medical Leave – and – who have Medicare as primary insurance.

The United Methodist Personal Investment Plan contribution is once again 3% - and – extended an additional year for the period 2019 through 2021.

Due to the termination of the retiree medical subsidy for individuals age 55 or younger as of 1-1-17, the 3% contribution is guaranteed for the three-year period.

Wespath Mandatory funding of the retiree medical unfunded liability will begin in 2018. The contribution amount for 2018 is projected to total \$1,741,000.

Funds will be transferred from the Pension Reserve to the Group Health Plan's Retiree Medical Reserve during the second half of 2018.

Going forward, the Pension Reserve will be evaluated on an annual basis as an appropriate funding source for this funding requirement. Wespath's objective of this funding strategy is to eliminate the unfunded liability for the retiree medical plan over a twenty-year period.

The current uses of the Pension Reserve are as follows: To offset lower pension collections due to reductions in apportionment and church contributions. To provide a 2% contribution to the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan. To provide a 1% contribution to the Defined Contribution component of the Clergy Retirement Security Program. To pay retiree medical, retiree program expense and benefit administration expenses. To meet the mandatory funding pertaining to the Retiree Medical Plan liability.

In 2016, the reserve position increased \$2.2 million as a result of outstanding investment performance in 2016.

Earned investment income totaled \$5.7 million which more than offset the plan's operational loss of \$3.5 million.

As outlined in the previous slide, the Board of Pensions is intentionally utilizing a portion of the reserve balance to fund budgeted operational losses.

Healthy reserve levels allow our Conference to provide additional pension benefits to plan participants and expense relief to churches in the form of reduced apportionment and billing rates.

Thus, in 2017, the use of reserves is projected to reduce our reserve position by \$400,000. In 2018, the projected reduction in the reserve position is \$1.1 million.

As addressed in the report, pension apportionment levels have been significantly reduced over the past 11 years.

This slide demonstrates the steady decline in pension apportionments since 2005. In 2005, the pension apportionment was \$1.5 million. Today, the apportionment is \$500,000.

Reductions have resulted in churches saving approximately \$8.3 million over an 11 year period from 2006 to 2017.

Bishop Jones, I submit the Board of Pensions committee report for acceptance by this Annual Conference.”

Bishop Jones – “O.k. friends, this is important work. I know that it's complicated. It has been before you in your Pre-Conference Journal. These are things requiring a vote and I am proposing to vote on the entire report at once unless somebody moves to separate an item or to amend it in some way or another. We do have people up here to answer questions. What is your pleasure? I don't see anybody moving to a microphone. I take it you're ready to vote. If you will approve the recommendations of your Board of Pensions would you say yes. Any opposed? And it's done. Jerry, thank you so much for your care and for the pensions of this conference. Thank you. Jerry Massey from the Health Benefits Committee.”

Health – Jerry Massey

Jerry Massey – “Good afternoon. My name is Jerry Massey and I am the chair of the Group Health Benefits Committee. I'm honored to serve you in that capacity. The report of the Group Health Benefits Committee is found on page 58 of your Pre-Conference Journal.

As approved by Annual Conference in 2016, in January 2018, we will replace the current over 65 Texas Annual Conference retiree group plans with individual insurance plans offered through OneExchange. You may recall that OneExchange is a program of Wespath Center for Health that offers assistance in selecting appropriate

Medicare Supplemental Health Care Coverage. Each participant will receive a monthly contribution of \$190 into a tax-free Health Reimbursement Account.

Some retirees will be able to reduce their monthly expense by selecting coverage more appropriate for their needs at a lower cost. Meetings to further explain this program will be held later this year. And all your questions at that point will be answered.

As indicated by the slide, we are forecasting plan deficits of \$1,052,000 in 2017 and \$1,796,000 in 2018. These deficits are offset by investment income and the rate stabilization reserve that was set up. However, investment income is not guaranteed, investments that go up can most assuredly go down, which is why we are making some minor adjustments to the plan.

We are implementing, beginning January 1, 2018, an additional \$10 prescription co-pay at Walgreens to compensate for Walgreens higher expenses. You can still use Walgreens; it is just that it will cost \$10 more per prescription to use them.

We are also increasing the out of network out of pocket expense from \$57,000 to \$62,000 to make up for lost discounts from using a non-PPO provider.

To further encourage participants to use Houston Methodist Hospital, we are increasing the co-pay for not using Houston Methodist Hospital from \$1,000 to \$2,000. This does not apply to emergency services or services not provided by Methodist Hospital. We are listing the zip codes, which are required to use Houston Methodist Hospital on the benefits website for your convenience. These will be available in the fall or early winter of this year.

Also, The Woodlands Methodist Hospital is scheduled to open June 26, 2017 (about 3 weeks) and is part of our PPO network. This increases the area of the Houston Methodist Service Area.

In addition, the committee is pleased to announce that effective May 1, 2017 all Methodist Hospital ER doctors are now in network providing our group with generous discounts. This includes the free-standing ER facilities that Methodist Hospital has opened all across our region as well.

We are also making some changes in the Script Care formulary. Script Care will notify participants who are using a drug which has an available lower cost alternative. The participant can discuss using that alternative with their doctor. If your doctor wants you to continue using the higher cost drug, the doctor will need to write a letter and then you will be allowed to use that drug, provided that the doctor will be able to certify that the drug is medically necessary.

Clergy personal contribution rates will increase 7% effective January 1, 2018. This marks the first increase in the personal contribution rate in 10 years. The new rates are reflected under the 2018 column for both the Standard PPO Plan and the High-Deductible Plan. The Pre-Conference Journal contains examples of the dollar impact stemming from the rate increase for several various salary categories. This comparison is contained on pages 65 and 66 of the Pre-Conference Journal.

In 2016, most of the operational losses were funded by investment income as opposed to utilizing the Rate Stabilization Reserve. The Rate Stabilization Reserve was created several years ago just to take care of situations so we wouldn't have to raise rates. It's only one of our reserves. The operational loss in 2016 was \$1,711,000.

In 2017 and 2018, we anticipate having to utilize \$225,000 and \$928,000 respectively of the Rate Stabilization Reserve. Projected performance for 2018 includes the impact resulting from the recommended changes that we are addressing in our report to this Annual Conference.

This slide reflects the status of the Post Retirement Liability after taking into consideration the most recent actuarial report and the elimination of the retiree medical benefit for those ages 55 and younger.

As indicated, the liability decreased \$1,900,000 due to eliminating the retiree medical benefit for those 55 and younger. The liability is now \$21,000,000.

Starting in 2018, Wespath will require all Conferences, including ours, to start funding their Retiree Medical Liability. Our plan deficit is to be eliminated over a twenty-year period. The contribution for 2018 is projected to total \$1,741,000 and this contribution will be made from the Pension Reserve.

Bishop Jones, I submit the Group Health Benefits committee report for acceptance by this Annual Conference.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you Jerry. This report has been before you in the Pre-Conference Journal. Jerry’s highlighted the pages; the items requiring a vote on page 67. Once again, I am open to conversation, debate, discussion on the floor. But our procedure is to move to microphone if you are seeking to speak to the matter. And I don’t see anyone doing that. O.k. If you will support and accept the recommendations in the Health Benefits Committee report would you say yes. Any opposed, no. And it’s done. We owe a great deal of thanks to all of you all working on clergy benefits. Thank you so much. That concludes the agenda items we have today. I am going to call, I ask Royce Hickman to move to a microphone for our closing prayer, but before he begins that I’m going to ask B.T. for announcements that need to be made.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you bishop. We would like to share with everyone that in the gymnasium that there are over 40 ministries that have displays that might be of interest to you – that can be of service and assistance in your local congregations. So we would encourage you to stop by the gymnasium and visit some of your friends and I’m sure that you will find some displays and some information there that will be beneficial for you.”

Bishop Jones – “Our session this evening is with the new Dean of the Perkins School of Theology, Dr. Craig Hill. I encourage you to be prompt at seven o’clock. He is very much worth hearing and we are looking forward to what he is going to share with us at that time. Royce close us out.”

Prayer – Royce Hickman

Royce Hickman – “I would invite you to join me in prayer. Gracious Heavenly Father, we come to you this evening with grateful hearts, grateful for the call that each of us has received to serve You. But mindful that serving you sometimes means getting into the trenches to care for your people, because the battle will be won in the trenches, not in our homes or in our churches. Grateful for the gifts that You have given to each of us, but mindful that it is not as much about our gifts; it is about using our gifts and trusting You in the use of those gifts. Grateful for our Annual Conference, each of our churches, the friendships we develop, the fellowships we enjoy and for the work you have trusted us to do; but mindful that we need to always seek your will and that your ministry extends world wide. Grateful for the messages we have received and that we will hear, but mindful that they are a call to action. Grateful for those who are answering your call to ministry and who have stood before us this afternoon, but mindful that they will need our help and our prayers. Grateful for our nation and the freedoms we enjoy, including the freedom to gather here today to worship you without fear, but mindful that freedom has a price and on this Memorial Day we lift up those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice and paid for our freedom and we pray for their surviving family members. And most of all Father, we are grateful for your love that you show us every day in so many ways, but in no greater way than in the birth of a tiny baby in Bethlehem. You became our Lord and Savior and by dying on a cross, Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins. And unified through Christ we come to you today in his Holy name. Amen.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you, we are adjourned until 7:00.” (this occurred at 5:00 p.m.)

Evening of Learning – Dean Craig Hill (Main Sanctuary)

Second Day of Annual Conference

Tuesday, May 30, 2017

Business Session III (8:30 a.m. Main Sanctuary)

Prayer – Kevin Benedict

Bishop Jones – “I ask for Kevin Benedict to move to a mic to open our morning session in prayer.”

Kevin Benedict – “Good morning. Won’t you please pray with me. Almighty God, we thank you for this day, this day that we are able to gather together again, the membership of the Texas Annual Conference. We ask that you and trust that you will be with us at this time and in this place as we praise your holy name. Father, we thank you for the leadership of our Bishop, Conference Staff, the Clergy and Laity alike. Today we thank you as we honor and celebrate those that have chosen to dedicate their careers and their lives to proclaiming your word and

for those who have heard the call to follow, we ask that you continue to bless them and nourish their hearts, their minds, and their souls. We thank you for all the many blessings that you have and continue to bestow upon each and every one of us. And now as we continue the business of this Annual Conference we ask that you lead us, guide us, and direct us in all the decisions we make and the directions we take. And that all would be pleasing unto you, giving you honor and glory. We ask all these things in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, as all God's people said, 'Amen.'"

Bishop Jones – "Thank you so much, Kevin. We appreciate that way to start our day. Good morning Conference. Glad to see you here. We had a wonderful night with Dean Craig Hill last night talking about servanthood. It was an excellent message and we got better acquainted with him. He announced that there's going to be a book signing at the Cokesbury display this morning during the break, in case you're interested in getting a signed copy of that. We're going to continue with our series of videos honoring retirees. Let's watch."

Retiree Video #3 (Honoring Jim McPhail)

Clergy Excellence Recognition – Gail Ford Smith and Elizabeth Duffin

Bishop Jones – "We turn now to matters concerning the Center for Clergy Excellence. Rev. Gail Ford Smith and Rev. Elizabeth Duffin are coming forward."

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – "Refresh is a gift from the Texas Annual Conference offered thru the Center for Clergy Excellence to recognize clergy at milestones along their ministerial journeys. We invite clergy at five year increments from the time of their licensing or ordination into ministry to take time away to reflect anew about God's call upon their life and how that call is being renewed and reformed for future years. Please stand as your name is called.

Celebrating 5 years: Mellonie Baldwin, Amy Bezecny, Brian Brooks, Del Covington, Linda Davis, Sandra Hall, Ross Hyde, Daniel Irving, DeAndre Johnson, Lindsay Kirkpatrick, Jim Love, Diane McGehee, Scott Moore, Andrew Payne, Doretta Remy, Lance Richards, Keith Swatzel II, Collin Taylor, Julius Wardley II, Sherri Waters, Jeremy Wester, Brian Wharton, Beverly Woodard, Daniel Yoo, Alison Young, Deanna Young, Rusty Young.

Celebrating 10 years: Danny Barrett, Paula Behrens, Marty Boddie, Jr., Lorraine Brown, Pam Cline, Nancy Cobbs, Cindy Doran, Rosemary Dubois, Kathy Eason, Amy Hodge, Stephanie Hughes, Shinia Kelsey, Vivian Kinnear, Conrell Lockett III, Greg Oberg, Jeff Olive, Carlos Phillips, Jim Pickens, Kim Poer, Bill Ramsey, Polly Standing, Wick Stuckey, Brian Waddell, Wayne Welborn, Shelli Williams."

Rev. Elizabeth Duffin – "Celebrating 15 years: Wanda Bess, Marty Dunbar, Jeff Gage, Janice Gilbert, Charles Kimble, Kenneth Livingston, Laura Loyd Davis, Bobbie Maltas, Jack Matkin, Carolyn McCall-Livingston, Mark McClanahan, Deborah Proctor, Carolyn Robinson, Fred Willis.

Celebrating 20 years: Terry Bebermeyer, Jonathan Bynum, Dick Dobbins, Jeff Hastings, David Henry, Joel McMahon IV, Matt Neely, John Newsome, Linh Nguyen, Andy Dixon, John Stephens, Rose Marie Veal, Marilyn Wadkins, Ellen Willett.

25 years: Doug Baker, Jim Bass, Thaddeus Eastland, Kip Gilts, Charles Jordan, Mike Mayhugh, Dean Reeves, John Robbins, Danny Wayman.

Celebrating 30 years: Marlin Fenn, Darrell Houston, Jenny Lannom, David Luckert, Ricky Ricks, Lester Ruth.

Celebrating 35 years: Tim Edwards, Rick Eifert, Joe Fort, Jr., Tommy Lyles, Jr., Jerry Pennington, Robert Stutes, C.J. Taylor, Dick P. White, Jr.

Celebrating 40 years: Ed Robb III, Jake Schrum.

Please join us in celebrating these colleagues in honor of their milestone anniversaries."

Bishop Jones – "We do thank God for your service and are grateful for the way God is working through you and using you. So, this is a great celebration. We turn now to Eddie Erwin who leads youth ministry for the Texas Annual Conference. Eddie."

Youth and Young Adult Ministries – Eddie Erwin

Eddie Erwin – “Good morning. It is a great joy and honor and privilege to serve as Director of Youth and Young Adults for the Texas Conference. I have a confession to make, I like jigsaw puzzles. The challenge is that there are a whole lot of pieces and they’re all mixed up and when you put them together in their proper place, they complete and form a whole picture. As each step falls into place, you know you are one step closer to your objective. As any good puzzler will tell you, you start with the corners. Our corners, the anchor points that set the dimensions of our ministry by and help us to manage our work are already established for young people’s ministry just like the rest of the conference. We celebrate the strength through our clarity of mission in making disciples of Jesus Christ, the transformation of our lay and clergy leaders, and helping to create growing, vibrant and missional congregations, and obviously investing in the young. Because they are easy to identify, we next move on to the sides. Ministries that we can quickly spot and continue to frame our puzzle with. I’d like to share that we are continuing the growth of our annual events such as Ignite, The Big Event, and the Texas Youth Academy. Some of these growths are numerical. Some of these growths are deepening the faith of the young people, and some of this growth is young people taking leadership of their church now. We have three students in particular, all Texas Youth Academy Alumni, who are continuing to lead outside the bounds of their local church. One is serving as part of a global board, one is serving on the design team of the youth event for the United Methodist Young People, and one is a conference delegate from her local congregation. Then we start filling in the middle of our puzzle with the rest of the pieces. Sometimes we are able to focus on a specific feature like a group of people or a similar color and shape when we are puzzling. The parts of the puzzle we are fastening together this year are the leadership retreat to give students better tools to better serve in their local church and to introduce them to connectional ministry. On Sunday we depart with a group of young adults on a pilgrimage to England to study and visit the historical Wesleyan sites, as well as to glimpse what ecclesial work looks like in a post Christian community. We also spent considerable time investing in relationships with the folks that work directly with the young peoples; sometimes one on one, sometimes in cohorts or communities, and sometimes just like Jesus did with those who worked with the young people got them on the boat to teach them a thing or two and to escape the pressures of ministry and refresh their souls. And there are sometimes you have to just start putting in the puzzle pieces piece by piece trying to match where they fit. There are ministries on the horizon where we will partner with some of the churches who have gone through VCI and have received a prescription for young people and can utilize the young people we have been training and working with, and equipping them, and who are called into ministry already. We’re partnering with the Unleashed Ministry Team to design a retreat for high school freshman during an uber-transitional time during the lives of students and their youth programs through discerning their spiritual gifts. One of the most encouraging things for me in the big section of the puzzle is that I’m seeing a renewed excitement and interest connectional young people’s ministry; new and rekindled relationships, fresh and re-imagined partnerships, and creative and continuous opportunities for us all to live into this calling. The thing that I love most about puzzles is that as one puts the pieces together, the puzzle becomes stronger. As each piece coalesces with the ones that surround it, the puzzle becomes more solid. It takes the embrace, the support, the encouragement, time and love to place all the pieces to have a complete puzzle and a clear picture. Thank you, thank you, thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you Eddie. I think it’s true that I look younger than I am but so far no one is mistaken me for one of the youth or young adults. But I deeply believe in our focus area about investing in the young, which means listening to them, receiving their ideas, trying to understand them. Now, the Wesley Foundation at the University of Texas Tyler and Tyler Junior College have developed this little item. Now, I have a Wesley bobble head, but I’ve never had one that’s squeezable before. I’m trying to think through the deep implications of squeezing Wesley’s head. Are you trying to empty Wesley’s thoughts into your own brain? Or are you so mad about Wesley that you just get frustrated with him. My understanding is that they are for sale, is that right Ben? (we will take donations, of course) I see. There you go. So if anybody can explain the deep spiritual significance of this to me, I’m open. But at the moment it just seems like a lot of fun, so there you go. That’s one advantage of being involved with youth and young adults, it’s usually a lot of fun even if I don’t understand everything that I’m up to. So, there you go. Now from the sublime to the institutional, right? B.T.”

Election of Institutional Trustees – Rev. B.T. Williamson

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Now that’s a hard act to follow. May I have my Wesley head back now? From ministries of education, to healing, to the care of children and older persons, to stewardship, to Christian

formation and fellowship; our relationship with various institutions enables the Texas Annual Conference to reach into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The bylaws and the covenants we share with numerous institutions call upon the Conference to confirm the trustees who will provide ongoing leadership for these groups that are vital in our collaboration and for our partnership in ministry. I'd like to identify those institutions that we have responsibility to elect officers for today. I believe that there is a slide that should pop up on the screen here in just a moment. In your Pre-Conference Journal you will find the trustees for Heartspring Methodist Foundation listed on pages 167-168. Houston Methodist Hospital is found in the addendum that you received on page A41. Lakeview Methodist Conference Center is also found in the addendum on A42. Methodist Retirement Communities are in the Pre-Conference Journal on page 203. Texas Methodist Foundation makes their recommendations on page 206. And lastly, Southwestern University offers their three on the addendum page A47. So those are properly before the Annual Conference. Bishop, I move the confirmation of these trustees today."

Bishop Jones – "Does anybody wish to speak or ask questions about any of these matters? You need to know that I regard our relationship to these institutions as very important and the aligning the purposes of our Conference with the activities and purposes of these institutions is important. And so, the election of these trustees is a visible way in which we connect. You also should know that B.T. and I as leaders of the Annual Conference often have a direct relationship to the CEO's, staff, and boards of these entities, so we're active on your behalf in supplementing what goes on and working together to align our purposes. I see nobody moving to a microphone. I take it you're ready to vote. If you will elect or confirm all of these persons who have been so nominated, would you say yes. Any opposed, no. And it's done. Thank you B.T. We turn now to the Conference Advance Special Report, Michele Hall is chair of missions for our Conference. Michele. Well, maybe it's Diane McGehee the Director of the Center for Missional Excellence."

Conference Advance Special –

Rev. Diane McGehee – "I apologize Bishop, Michele is still with the African American Black Clergy Women, so I'm going to step in for her. She's on her way. We have the privilege from the Missions Committee to recommend each year the Advance Special for the Annual Conference. And this year the Missions Committee is recommending Golden Cross as the Advance Special for our Conference this year. And as you know, Golden Cross is a historic fund of the church. It was established in 1921 and it helps to subsidize and pay for the medical needs of members of our congregations and communities that can't afford the prescriptions and other medical and dental care that they need. We negotiate with hospitals and get the bill reduced so that people are able to get the care that they need. And so we are recommending Golden Cross as the Advance Special for this year and that requires a vote of the Conference."

Bishop Jones – "Any questions? If you'll approve this say yes. Any opposed no. And it's done. O.k."

Rev. Diane McGehee – "Thank you. And we're going to add an item to the agenda since I have a few more minutes under this section. As you all know, Hispanic Ministries has been under the Center for Missional Excellence and we have been working hard to increase our clergy and lay leadership to help all of us to reach the growing Hispanic community that God has blessed us with throughout the Annual Conference. We are moving Hispanic Ministries to Congregational Excellence because our goal is to help every single local congregation reach the community in which God has placed them, which is beginning to include an increasing number of our Hispanic brothers and sisters. And so, Reverend Artie Cadar, if you would come forward at this time please. Reverend Artie Cadar is now going to be the Coordinator of Mission Field Development. He's going to be working throughout the Conference to help all of us to reach not only the growing Hispanic community but as Bishop Jones referenced in his Episcopal Address, all of the communities from all around the world that God has blessed us with. And then I want to take a moment to introduce to you some of our new clergy and lay Hispanic leadership. In the last three years we have tripled the number of Hispanic clergy and lay supply leadership that we have helping us throughout the Conference and they worked really hard. So I'm going to ask you to hold your applause and I'm going to ask them to all come up as I call their names and we'll welcome and greet them."

Rev. McGehee called them all up and the gathered body greeted them with applause. Those called forward were: Dayimi Pimentel and Daniel Hernandez, serving at El Mesias; Yuri Carralero and wife Julia, serving a new outreach at Greggton UMC; Frank Acosta and Elizabeth Gallardo, both at Fairbanks UMC; Andres Morales; Evis Serrano, helping at Texas City with a new outreach; Cynthia Dreesen, at Cypress Trails – helping there; Gustavo Echemendia, at Houston Foundry; Cesar Nunez and Cassandra Nunez, at Galena Park; Reyner De La Torre,

starting a new church plant and outreach out of the Heatherbrook campus of Windsor; Ruben Olivares, at First Pasadena; Emigdio and Susel Rosales, at First Conroe; Sheila Castellano, at Clear Lake UMC; Ramundo Areyo; Franklin Rodriguez, at Bear Creek; Agosto Sarrío and family, at Bryan; Jairo Ortiz, at Houston Chapelwood; and Ray Arguello, at Reid Casa de Alabanza.

Bishop Jones – “God bless you all in your ministries to reach people for Jesus Christ of all nations, especially those who are part of our Hispanic communities. Diane left the stage prematurely. Thank you for your leadership in the Center for Missional Excellence, particularly the way you have nurtured the Hispanic ministry of the Texas Annual Conference. We wish you well in your new appointment as we wish all clergy well in their new appointments. Thank you for your service to the Texas Annual Conference on our Conference Staff.

Friends, we now have a video that has been prepared from the Commission on a Way Forward. You may know that the last General Conference called upon the bishops to appoint a Commission to look at the impasse on human sexuality and how it affects the life of the church. There will be a special session of the General Conference called for in February of 2019. In preparation, this Commission will prepare a report to give to the Council of Bishops to consider at their February 2018 meeting and they will confer on it and forward it to Special Session of General Conference in 2019. This video has been prepared by them to share with you.”

The Way Forward (Video was shown)

Bishop Jones – “Friends, I have a daily prayer routine and when I get to my prayers for others on the very first part of that list of people I pray for, is the Commission on the Way Forward. I invite you to do the same. And I want to lead this Conference in prayer for the Commission right now. Will you pray with me. God, we are thankful for the United Methodist Church and the way in which you blessed it. And yet, we have issues, Lord. We pray for Commission on a Way Forward and ask that you would imbue each member on that Commission and especially its leaders, with a sense of wisdom. Help them understand in a deep way what it means to be unified in Christ and then Lord, help them to find the best way to live into that unity and express it for the Wesleyan movement for the years to come. We pray that all these conversations, both within our Conference and across the denomination might be done with the kind of love and mutual respect that Christ commanded for his followers. God, we pray for the Commission and ask that you might help them to lead us well. All these things we ask in Jesus’ name. And all God’s people said, Amen.

We turn now to another video. It is a report from General Board on Global Ministries. Let’s watch.”

GBGM Report via Video

Bishop Jones – “We have been given notice of a health concern among our group. B.T. would you share it with us please.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Our pastor from Hearn Wheelock, Gary Westbrook, was admitted to The Woodlands Memorial Hermann with chest pains. And so we do want to be remembering Gary as he goes through this time of distress. May we pray, please. Lord, we ask your healing mercies to abide with Gary. Surround him with your love and be with those who love him and who care for him. Restore him to the fullness of life in body and spirit. Through Christ our Lord we pray, amen.”

Bishop Jones – “It’s time for our morning devotional and I see the musicians are in place. Thank you very much. You hear the relief in the audience that they don’t have to hear me sing acapella!”

Morning Devotional (9:20 a.m.)

Bishop Jones had us look at Amazing Grace, Holy, Holy, Holy, Be Thou My Vision, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, and Great is Thy Faithfulness

Business Session IV (9:40 a.m. Main Sanctuary)

Bishop Jones – “We turn now to the next retirement video. Let’s watch.”

Retirement Video #4 (Honoring Karen Dorris)

C F & A Report

Bishop Jones – “We turn now to Rev. Deborah Vaughn, the chair of our Council on Finance and Administration. I see Dr. Elijah Stansel coming up as well. This is CFA report that was distributed in your Pre-Conference Journal.”

Rev. Deborah Vaughn – “Good morning Bishop Jones. Good morning sisters and brothers of the Texas Annual Conference.

I must say to you, before I begin, that I am especially pleased that the last song we sang together in our devotion this morning was Great is Thy Faithfulness. That resonates with me as I stand before you to give my first report for this new quadrennium.

I am Deborah Vaughn and it is a privilege to serve as the Chair of the Council on Finance and Administration for this Conference.

I would like to take a moment and ask all of the members of the Council to please stand. Conference, please join me in expressing our appreciation to each of them for their service.

Thank you. As a Council, we in turn express our appreciation to every member of every church for every dollar committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

It has been both delightful and educational to sit and glean from our Bishop, representatives of the Core Leadership Team, the Center Directors, our Conference Treasurer and his entire staff. To each of you, your patience, your insights and your devotion to the work entrusted to our care are priceless.

Conference, our report is found on pages 105-147 in the Pre-Conference Journal. Please go with me as I begin by highlighting two items. The Special Days with Offerings for 2018 are listed on page 105. We know, One Great Hour of Sharing was replaced by UMCOR in our denomination as approved by the 2016 General Conference. During our 2016 Annual Conference, you approved the development of and policies for the Texas Annual Conference Investment Committee. You should know that committee is hard at work. As noted on page 107, the committee is chaired by Ms. Esther Houser.

We humbly recognize, embrace and celebrate the due diligence by the members of our churches who give generously and often who sacrifice tremendously. The Proposed 2018 Budget is presented on pages 133-136. This proposed budget includes funding for the staffing implications presented in the Bishop’s Episcopal Address, covers our General Church Apportionments, eliminates \$300,000 in contingency, allows our Center Directors to continue their work, and holds at an overall 2.3% increase.

Bishop, this proposed budget captures your vision, embraces your strategy, and maintains a strong position for our center leaders as they continue to empower our laity and clergy.

The Council on Finance and Administration recommends approval.”

Bishop Jones – “This material has been before you. It has been carefully worked over by your Council on Finance and Administration. But, it is up to body to decide if this is what you want to do. Are there questions? I don’t see anybody moving to a microphone. If you will approve this report, would you say yes. Any opposed, no. And it’s done.”

Rev. Deborah Vaughn – “Amen. Thank you Conference. Finally, I would like to share one additional bit of information. The Council on Finance and Administration has contracted the services of RRC, Inc., an economic analysis firm, where Dr. Don House is the president. And I saw Dr. House earlier this morning. As our consultant, Dr. House will conduct an assessment of the present formula, which was implemented in 2002. Guiding considerations for the assessment process will include, but certainly not be limited to: fairness to local congregations; stability over the years; impact upon the local church; apportionment payout patterns; and, equitable distribution among local congregations. The assessment will be followed by research on alternative formula options: income based with fixed percentage; and, variable percentage of expenditures. Included in the inquiry will also be an assessment of other formulas utilized by other conferences of similar capacities as the Texas Annual Conference. Listening call sessions are planned for the Fall of 2017. All reports and recommendations will come before the 2018 session of our Annual Conference.

Bishop, as I stated, it is my pleasure to serve. I am learning and growing and loving the opportunity to be such a part of this Conference and the many diverse ways we participate in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This concludes my report. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Deborah, we thank you and the other members of the council for your service.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Dr. Stansell did you want to say something?”

Mary Lou Reece – “Dr. Stan, I hate to interrupt you, but I’m just going to take this opportunity because I found a hot mic.”

Bishop Jones – “Wait, wait, wait, wait. I don’t think she’s a member of the Annual Conference. She has no right to speak here.”

Mary Lou Reece – “Details, details, details.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, we were supposed to have a report from Equitable Compensation. They don’t have any action items this year, so as keeper of the agenda, I changed that to be equitable time.”

Mary Lou Reece – “B.T. you are my new favorite person. Hi. Good morning. O.k. So I think we have...again, I’m getting ready to teach you a few things about your bishop.

Bishop Jones – “You can at least say your name.”

Mary Lou Reece – “I’m Mary Lou Reece and I’m sorry I didn’t take his last name. It’s been a constant thorn in his side but it just is.”

Bishop Jones – “We are married though.”

Mary Lou Reece – “We are. That’s for another time. I just need you to know one thing about him, he is completely, absolutely, without fail visually challenged. He notices nothing visually. I mean I think there is a lot going on up here, but this doesn’t always connect. We’d been dating for two years – and you can actually put up that picture, any time you want to guys up there - we’d been dating for 2 years when someone from his youth group said, ‘what color are her eyes.’ He went...uhhhhh. Oh no, that’s not the right one. I’m looking for the KU/K State picture. About that eyes story...my eyes are not an ambiguous color. It’s not like, oh, green, brown, hard to tell. No, I have blue eyes. He had never noticed. The KU/K State thing...He did a cat hawk challenge to raise money for campus ministries. The first year we did this – you can leave that picture up there for a while because it is just worth watching, it’s just worth having up there – his assistant made this half KU, which is red and blue, half K State, which is purple, pajama bottoms. You can’t really see those there but they are hideous. Half and half. He would get up at the end of this thing and do an impassioned plea on what it meant to do campus ministry and how that was pipeline for clergy and leadership in our churches and what a great thing that was. And he would give this impassioned plea in this hideous garb. You know he doesn’t even notice what he is wearing, honestly. Every day he comes to me and says can I wear this tie with this shirt. He has no idea. So anyway, he’s visually challenged. Just letting you know. That other picture that is really hilarious. My next story...Scott cares about his stomach. He will eat anything, anywhere any time. When we are on a trip – one time he was just loading food into this body and I was saying, ‘Scott what is the matter?’ He said, ‘It’s all about the calories. I don’t know where my next meal will come from.’ And I went??? For me, when it’s all about the calories, I’m trying to stop eating. No, no. He eats anything – in fact, one time he dropped something on the street of Washington DC. And low and behold he picked it up and put it right in his mouth and I was going ‘no, no! I have to kiss you.’ Anything, he’ll eat anything. If something drops on the ground, I just leave it because I know he’ll pick it up. It’s kind of like having a dog in the house. Just saying. So anyway...Is he red? Is he red? O.k. so there’s still one more story and you guys caught on yesterday. The tweet that went out from here – and I did not get it up to the office so it’s not here – it’s a hilarious picture if you get on twitter. Which our kids loved it and retweeted it. It’s a picture of Scott standing there and it says John Wesley history for 300 Alec. But the picture that I have, is as you guys have already figured out, he channels John Wesley. Do you guys have that picture? Yes, yes. There he is. He is on the floor of General Conference and John Wesley is right there on his shoulder. This too went out on Twitter.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Mary Lou for adding 4 new shades of red to the color spectrum.”

Bishop Jones – “Yeah, life with Mary Lou is not boring. Did I tell you all that? Dr. Stansell you left the podium. You should have challenged her and taken control of agenda.”

Dr. Elijah Stansell – “Bishop, I believe it is safer to say it from down here. It could even be a benediction. Mary Lou and I are good friends. I would be remiss if I did not take a moment of personal privilege to thank all of the congregations of this Annual Conference. Being the Chief Financial Officer for the Annual Conference now in my 13th year. Every year I get a little worry, because apportionments are something that are paid frequently and infrequently. Sometimes consistently and inconsistently. But the churches of this Annual Conference, somehow somehow, every year seem to manage to keep us in the 88-90 percentile of payout. So therefore we are solvent. We owe no one. We are debt free. The mission center is paid for. The archival center is paid for. We had an audit that had no concerns in our management letter. We are in excellent condition. However, as we go into this quadrennium, I want to urge all of us to be good stewards of that which God has given us. And to remind you that good stewards know that they are trustees. They are not to horde that which God has given them. They are to be sure that the kingdom of God is ushered in through the ministries that you do through your local congregations. And for what we do globally around the world as a part of the annual conferences that support the general church’s budget, I want to give you a heart felt thank you. Thank you. God loves you and I love you and there’s nothing you can do about it.”

Bishop Jones – “We do want to offer our condolences to Christie Hale and her family in the loss of her mother yesterday. So please keep that family in your prayers. Friends, we have come to a break time and we are running ahead of schedule. What I’m going to suggest is that we take a full 30 minute break and we can reconvene here at 10:20. So if the people who are on the agenda for TAC Talks, next, can be ready at 10:20 we will come back together. I want you to notice that we are running ahead of schedule, despite certain people hijacking the agenda. We are in recess for 30 minutes.”

TAC Talks (Cassandra Nunez, Pamela Fulbright-Scheyer, Rev. David Dorn)

Prayer (Doug Baker)

Service Honoring Retirees (2:00 p.m. Main Sanctuary)

Business Session V (3:00 p.m. Main Sanctuary)

Bishop Jones – “Good afternoon friends. It is time to reconvene. As I told you one of the duties of a bishop is to interrupt good conversation. So, let’s bring your conversations to a close. I know you have important things to talk about and you’re glad to see friends, but I did give you an extra 10 minute break, so, you know... You’ve had plenty of visiting or at least more than the original agenda allowed for you. If somebody at the back would close the doors please, that would be a help to keep our deliberations as little disturbed as possible. We turn n.o.w to the Nominations Report. B.T. Williamson.”

Nominations Report (Rev. B.T. Williamson)

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you bishop. You’ll find the nominations report partly in the journal on page 42 and then one page on the addendum on page 3. Last year we brought a major slate of officers to the Annual Conference for you to elect, which you did in a very gracious and supportive manner. Over the course of the year, from time to time, people move out of the Annual Conference, persons change districts or are unable to continue in a position of leadership, or for some reason cannot serve. Therefore, the Nominations Committee does work on a year round basis to try and fill those unfilled positions with effective and appropriate leadership. Those names are before you today and the Nominations Committee would like to submit them for your consideration. As we did an evaluation in the changes in the demographics, if we could have that slide, we can see the impact of this year’s recommendations. We don’t need the names if we could flip on through. These are the persons names who are listed both in the Pre-Conference...there are an additional 3 clergy and 2 laity added to leadership. There are 6 males more and 1 female less. We have some work to do there over the course of the next year to insure our balance. We increased by 3 Caucasian and 1 African American and 1 Hispanic. And you did see the breakdown of the increases or decreases in the districts. Those names are before the body and I move on behalf of the Nominations Committee that they be elected. Bishop.”

Bishop Jones – “This is appropriately before you. Does anybody wish to speak? Again, I see nobody moving to a microphone and I take it you’re ready to vote. If you will approve this report of the Nominating Committee and elect these persons, would you say yes. Any opposed no? And it’s done.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. We have a video from United Methodist Men. Let’s watch.”

UMM Gathering Video

Bishop Jones – “We should note that the Texas Annual Conference has an impact on the general church in a number of ways. One of those is that our own Gil Hanke is the general secretary of the Commission on United Methodist Men. Gil are you in the room? I should have...there he is back there. If you want to know more, there’s the guy. We’re glad to do that.”

Mary Lou Reece – “Hi. My name is Mary Lou Reece and Scott that Wesley Foundation had a gift for you. Oh I missed.”

Bishop Jones – “Poor John Wesley.”

Mary Lou Reece – “But it is a John Wesley squeeze ball for those stress you might feel when I’m here. Another thing about Scott is that he has always looked like a kid. Even when he’s not really a kid. You know I have had gray hair since I was 18. So you can get it, I’ve been called his mother so many times. So many times. And actually, he is 18 months older than me. So just in case anybody needed to know that, he’s older than I am. But he looks like a kid. Will Willimon, the great Will Willimon said the great thing about Scott is that he often looks like a 13 year old kid opening up the present he always wanted. Do you have that picture? I ask you, is that not the greatest picture of the most boyish guy you’ve ever seen? I have to tell you that one of those times I was thought to have been his mother, I was with his mother and they thought she was the mother of our small children. So I just tell you. There’s no way you can rattle me. I’ve done it. I’ve done it. The other thing I need to tell you about Scott is that he is, and you guys probably already know this, but he is a dork. He’s such a cute dork. But he’s really a dork. I could give you so many examples, but I’m just going to tell you for sure that when nobody else high five’s him, he will high five himself. Scott, you want to demonstrate a good high five for them. Our kids love this. Our kids just love it. No? No, you’re not going to embarrass yourself?”

Bishop Jones – “Enough is enough.”

Mary Lou Reece – “where is that bobble head when you need it...that stress ball when you need it. So I started this off saying what a great Papa he was, but I’m also going to tell you a story about his greatest attribute, which is that he has learned through the years to love me well. Now, I’m not that sure that I have learned that quite as well as he has – you know, to love him well – but, I have...he does love me so well, that I...many of you have noticed that he wears hearing aids. So he has a little more trouble hearing than he used to. And I often am walking out of the room and saying something to him. And instead of getting irritated at me, no matter what he’s doing, he drops it and comes straight to where I am and says, ‘I missed that.’ Is that not the sweetest thing? And I think we have a picture. Oh no, I forgot to tell you this story. (Bishop Jones gets up from his seat and crawls under the table). Put that picture back. O.k. so he does love me really well, I just told you that, right? But at, maybe his first or second Annual Conference, very beginning of time, he got up and he was introducing his assistant who was Susan Stuber, and Susan was up there and had been a great help to him. He started extolling her attributes and somewhere through his mind went this little thread, ‘oh my gosh I’m saying all these nice things about this woman, I need to say something nice about my wife.’ Where’s that picture? Where’s that picture? And what he said was, ‘and then there’s my other wife.’ Seriously, it happened just the way I’m telling you. I’m at the spouse lunch and I get a text. So my one desire was to get over there before they got into any real business and say Scott, did you have something to tell me? I missed that. They were into something contentious. I missed my moment. I have one more picture and it is just to show you he does love me. He does love me well. And I am so grateful to be married to you even though I drag you through the mud.”

Bishop Jones – “I am great believer in truth and unfortunately everything she said is true. Sheesh. So much...I’m wondering if you guys are ready to call a special session of Jurisdictional Conference and get a new bishop after all of this stuff. I don’t know. I’ve got a reminder up here, we as the conference purchased 700 copies of Sue Nilson Kibby’s book Floodgates. I made reference to it the other night. I think it’s a great one. It is at the

display for Connectional Resources. One copy per church. I've been told some of you haven't picked up your copy yet, so before Conference is over or whenever they close that booth, whenever that is, please do that.

O.k. Here we go. We're into Constitutional Amendments friends. Now, this is going to require a vote and before I call on the secretary of Conference, Russell Hall, to lead us through the process, I want to explain the process and tell you what we are going to do. I know that all of you don't spend much time reading this (holding up the 2016 Book of Discipline) Book of Discipline, but I obviously do and used to teach it. One of the things that is important to remember is that most of the Book of Discipline is amendable by any General Conference's majority vote. But the Constitution is special. Because there was a time when the General Conference was not delegated but was all of the elders of the church, well, when they had a delegated conference in 1808, they put some restrictions on it. And they said that any changes to the Constitution had to be sent to the Annual Conferences for vote. So to amend the Constitution, most parts of it, takes a 2/3 vote of the General Conference and then a similar vote of all of the lay and clergy members of all the annual conferences. So, in 2016 there were five amendments passed by General Conference. Those amendments are now being sent to each annual conference all around the world when it meets. Some have already met here in 2017. Some will be meeting as late as December of 2017, maybe even January of 2018. In other words, this is a rolling kind of vote that goes on. And what matters is not the vote of any one annual conference, but the aggregate number of all of the lay and clergy members of the Annual Conferences. So, in other words, what we're going to do here today is vote on these 5, either up or down, they are not amendable, and then over the next year probably, the secretary of the General Conference will be tabulating all of these votes and send to the Council of Bishops who will look at the tabulations and announce the results. So you won't know how the Texas Annual Conference voted, you won't know how any annual conference voted. Instead, what you'll here in May of 2018 is which of these were passed and which were not. Now, let me remind those in the balcony, the bar of the Conference is downstairs. If you're in the balcony, you're not voting on this. And if you want to vote you need to come downstairs because that was the bar of the Conference set when we opened. Also, this will be a paper ballot. So, the paper ballots will be passed out after we've had our discussion. I know that some of these are complicated, but they're also debatable in the sense that you all will have a chance to make speeches about each one in turn or to ask questions. We will take each one in order. Russ will read them, I will open the floor to discussion. You can urge your colleagues to vote up or down. You can ask questions about it and we will seek to answer them as well as we possibly can. We'll then go on to the second one. We'll do all five. Then at that point, the tellers will pass out paper ballots and invite you all to vote. We'll collect them and then move on. So that's the process on voting on Constitutional Amendments. We're going to get started. Russ."

Constitutional Amendments (Rev. Russell Hall)

Rev. Russell Hall – "I'd ask the audio visual folks, can we get the monitor? We can't hear at this table and it's going to be really important as we have folks coming to the microphone. The other thing I would ask, just for our sake as we are recording this, if you will please come up to the mic and state your name and where you are serving or where your membership is for the record, that would be great.

As Bishop Jones said, we are going to begin. I'm going to read the amendment and so this is amendment one that was passed on May 16, 2016, at General Conference. It reads as follows – you can follow along on page 36 of your Pre-Conference Journal:

In the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division One, add a new paragraph between current ¶¶ 5 and 6:

As the Holy Scripture reveals, both men and women are made in the image of God and, therefore, men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God. The United Methodist Church recognizes it is contrary to Scripture and to logic to say that God is male or female, as maleness and femaleness are characteristics of human bodies and cultures, not characteristics of the divine. The United Methodist Church acknowledges the long history of discrimination against women and girls. The United Methodist Church shall confront and seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large. The United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten the cause of women's and girl's equality and well-being.

If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, this would become the new ¶6, and the current ¶¶ 6-61 would be renumbered as ¶¶ 7-62.

Ammendment 1 is before you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright, if you wish to speak to this, please move to a microphone.

Rev. Rick Sitton - “Bishop, Rick Sitton, First United Methodist Church, Bryan, Texas. So I stand here to urge a vote against this. We can’t amend it and it’s problematic. It suggests language that we could have a debate about the incarnation in this area. Because when it speaks of characteristics of human bodies and maleness I know that the Son of God became a male. This language here creates a problem and seems unrelated, even to the main issue it’s trying to address. Which I don’t think anybody would argue about. But the language itself troubles me in the way it’s written. So I would urge a vote against that.”

Bishop Jones – “That’s one speech against. Is there anybody that wishes to speak for this? Let me remind you that our rules call for a limit of three minutes on speeches – that was under the three minute limit – and in so far as possible, alternating back and forth. Since there is nobody wishing to speak for it, you’re next. Go ahead, you may speak against it.”

Andy Bouse – “Andy Bouse, First Methodist Angleton. I echo the gentleman’s sentiments. We know that Christ was born a male and He is God, so the justification didn’t work. We heard a woman minister yesterday, if I heard her right, talking about her sisters in the cloth were envious of our conference and our denomination for their room for advancement. And scripture says that neither Greek nor Jew, neither male nor female, God created us all. We’re all sinners. I don’t think we as mankind or womankind should try to improve on God’s words. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright, that’s two speeches against. Does anybody wish to speak for this? Yes.”

Rev. Marilyn Meeker-Williams – “I’m Marilyn Meeker-Williams. I’m retired and also in interim ministry. Excuse me. This takes me back 50 years when I was a young teenager and my family was very sexist. My dad and my brother and the the girls in my family were treated very differently. We were encouraged to do very different kinds of things as we grew up. God created us in God’s image. So if I was created female and I was created in God’s image, then how could God be a man? I think this is a really important issue for not only for all of us but our daughters and our sons and our granddaughters and grandsons and I really hope we will vote to approve this.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. You wish to speak against it (yes) o.k.”

Scott Johnson – “My name is Scott Johnson and I’m from Lakewood United Methodist Church. I share the comments of the first and second speaker in that I find the language problematic although perhaps not the intent, but unfortunately we have kind of a preamble that doesn’t seem to be supportive of the outcome they speak of. They see that beginning with the United Methodist Church acknowledges the long history and from there through the remedy isn’t something that I think most would find objection to. But there is a problematic language in the beginning. It seems to call into potential question that we believe that Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He was born a boy, raised a man and I find the beginning of this paragraph to be problematic.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. Yes.”

Trevor Warren - “I’d like to speak for.”

Bishop Jones – “o.k.”

Trevor Warren – “My name is Trevor Warren and I’m from Williams Memorial Methodist and representing the North District, from Texarkana. I come speaking for because my understanding of our Wesleyan tradition is that, and one of the things that has made us to be able to be so successful in spreading the Gospel, is our ability to be contextual – our ability to recognize the experience of all of our members. Just as we mentioned the racial injustices that happen in our society that have happened historically, which we mentioned our discipline, so we should do with this gender inclusive statement. What it does is it recognizes the experiences of every woman in our denomination and in the country who have felt oppressed, who have been discriminated against, and who every day struggle to find themselves as seen in the image of God. Yes, Jesus was a man. Yes, that was a reality. However, we cannot deny the experiences of those, while not male, have an experience that Christ relates to. And we have to recognize that experience in this just as we have done through race, and that we do through nationality, just as we try to do through sexual orientation. We have to recognize the experience of all our

members, no matter where they come from and to show that every person is made in the image of God. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone.”

Justin Flint - “Yes, I’d like to speak in favor.”

Bishop Jones – “O.k.”

Justin Flint – “My name is Justin Flint, member of Christ Church Sugar Land, and representative of the Southwest District. And I would like to remind the Conference that the fact that Christ is both fully divine and fully human is a mystery of our faith. One that is difficult to sort through. But that makes it difficult to point to Christ as emblematic of the wholeness of God entirely without falling into modalism issues. And we ought to keep Christ’s gender as a male in the incarnation a part of, but not the entire answer to, how we ascribe gender to God as a whole. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright, this microphone.”

Janice Christley - “I’m speaking against.”

Bishop Jones – “O.k. Your name please and church.”

Janice Christley - “I’m sorry?”

Bishop Jones – “Your name and church please.”

Janice Christley – “Oh, I’m Janice Christley and I’m from Angleton First United Methodist Church. I believe that the word of God is the final and full authority in life and as we live as Christians. And the word of God says that Jesus was born a man. And he was raised a man and he ascended into heaven in his male body. Like the woman that spoke before, I have also been discriminated against because I’m a woman and I would love to vote for something that was against discrimination against women. But I don’t want to do it by recreating my God. He is man and the Bible says He is the full representation of God, that He is just like God, and He called God his Father. So I can’t vote for it because of that language in it because that God is neither male nor female.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. This microphone.”

Fany Quezada (spoke in Spanish with translator)- “Good Afternoon. To the whole Texas Annual Conference. My name is Fany Quezada and with a lot of joy I am a Methodist since 13 years of age. I invite you all to vote against the Constitutional Amendment for the following reasons. The Amendment says it is contrary to the Scripture and to logic to say that God is neither male nor female. However, since the beginning of Scriptures, God has revealed himself as a Father, Creator, and Son. To say that God is a Father, does not make us women feel less nor subordinate us, much less discriminate us. To say that God is genderless comes from human philosophical reasoning, but not biblical. For there is no biblical evidence that supports this heresy. This pen was created with a purpose. If I wanted to I could stir the coffee with this pen. I could scratch my head if I want to. I could put a hat. But it will always be a pen. Because its been a pen since its creation. And its purpose...we are men and women since the creation of our biology. Right now, if God does not permit a fire war to begin, if we are all burned, the only thing that the science could say would be that there were this many men and there were this many women. So I am a woman. This is my biology, my hair, my nails, my eyes. I am XX. So I invite you to vote negatively to this amendment.”

Clapping ensued.

Bishop Jones – “O.k. friends, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no...you all know better than that. We are engaging in Holy Conferencing. We are not going to applaud. We are going to listen to each other respectfully even if we disagree with each other. And I will not allow expressions of that kind of enthusiasm and approval in a serious conversation like this. Next microphone please.”

Terrie Pauler – “I’m Terrie Pauler from Bryan Alexander. I believe I’m speaking in favor. Because we have to remember that when Jesus was born male the society was male. Had He been born female, He would have been nothing, He would have been dirt. And we need to remember the culture of the time, not that it was right, it’s what it was.”

Bishop Jones – “Now friends we’ve had 9 speeches: 5 against and 4 for. Your rules do not limit the number of speeches in terms of constitutional amendments because we don’t do it very often. I’m proposing to keep the speeches going for a while, but there will come a time when I believe the body has heard enough of both sides that I am going to put it to you, ‘do you want to end the discussion on this amendment?’ But we’ll hear the next speech, but I’m just sort of telling you there comes a time in which we need to move on. Yes, this microphone.”

Rev. Allison Thompson – “My name is Allison Thompson and I’m with Bascom United Methodist Church; I’m the pastor there. I cannot vote for this amendment because it seems to address to different issues and it’s confusing to me. The first is a language issue and it has to do with the literal translation of God and hadam and we’re talking about gender issues which are very confusing when it comes to the literal translation when it comes to the original language. So that’s difficult to determine that in this context. Also, as a minister, when I’m baptizing a child and saying, ‘I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,’ I am fine in saying that in referencing the Trinity. We know that God is neither male nor female. We understand that this is a problem of pronouns as it relates from original Hebrew language as it relates to English language and I think we are smart enough to understand that and still lift up the equality of men and women. I feel that the second part of this amendment is about equality between men and women, of course we want that. And I am for it, but I see the melding of those two issues being difficult to vote on in one amendment. That’s my comment.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone, you were up next.”

Rev. Elnora Nunnally – “My name is Elnora Nunnally and I’m the pastor of Union Memorial United Methodist Church. And I am against the amendment and the reason why is because...everything the world puts against us, we tend to take it and bring it to church and try to change things of the church. United Methodist is built on Scripture, Holy Scripture, and the Bible. So I go to you to Revelations 22 and 18 thru 21. It says, ‘warn everyone who hears the word of prophesy of this book, if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to them the plagues described in this book. And if anyone take words away from this book of prophesy, God will take away from him his share from the tree of life and in the holy city which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, yes I am coming soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with God’s people’. Now if we want to change something, we need to change ourselves. We need to look at ourselves and change how we believe in discrimination. And we need about the gender and being made in God’s image...if you know you are Christian and you are made in God’s image, then you know that God’s image could be male or it could be female according to what the Scripture says. You are made into his image. And so, if that’s the case, you don’t have to change your constitution. You just need to teach your children and teach yourself that we should not discriminate against each other.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone.”

Rev. Herb Stallknecht - “One way to look at it...”

Bishop Jones – “Your name please.”

Rev. Herb Stallknecht – “My name is Herb Stallknecht from Pattison United Methodist Church retired. One way that we might look at it is to look around and think about where God is. God is in this room. God is the creator. God is the reconciler in Jesus. God is present here in the Spirit. And here in the Spirit we can’t really deal with male and female imagery. We put it because of Jesus. Jesus was a man, but you also have the logos that was with God, that then became incarnate. And I believe, my Greek fails me, but isn’t the logos not a masculine term? I forgot, ya’ll Greek scholars help me. But, anyway, we have the Spirit language that keeps us from locking God down into male and female that is a mystery here that we know and comes close to us; not male and female.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone.”

Rev. Emily Chapman – “My name is Emily Chapman, I’m clergy from St. Mark’s in Houston. And I have to admit that I am a little confused as to why I’m standing here. Except that I was raised and called to ministry and supported in a United Methodist Church and so I feel remiss as a clergy woman not to stand up and say that first of all I don’t believe the incarnation is threatened by language that reminds all of us that we’re made in the image of God. That’s what my United Methodist Church taught me. I was made in the image of God and that Jesus loved me that way and called me to ministry that way. And so I’m a little confused as to some of the things that we’re debating, but I want to urge you to consider voting for this amendment that reminds us that all people are

made in the image of God and that helps us to care for women and girls who are some of the most vulnerable around the world that God has called us to care for. This will be an amendment that becomes a part of our global United Methodist Church. And so I'd ask you to consider supporting it for that reason, knowing that God, who is greater than anything we can imagine, is big enough for all of this and for all of this language even if it is confusing and there's a lot of things we are wrestling with Scripture and language and Greek and all of those kinds of things. At the heart of it, its about reminding all people that they are beloved by God and called by God in their baptism. Thank you."

Bishop Jones – "This microphone."

Rev. Jennifer Veres-Schrecengost – "Hi I'm Jennifer Veres-Schrecengost. I'm serving as associate at St. John's in Richmond. I would like to speak for this amendment. I can appreciate the previous speakers' points about the incarnation and I'd like to remind the body that there are many beautiful and powerful images God that are feminine throughout Scripture. But I think that we have the luxury of debating the theology behind some of the language in this amendment that much of the world does not have. For a global denomination, this amendment is very important because there are many places around the world where the equality of women and girls is suffering. So, please vote for this."

Bishop Jones – "This amendment then I'm going to put the vote...this speaker and then I'm going to put the vote...not put the vote, but suggest that we quit on this amendment. Go ahead, you can be the last one."

Maricio Rosas – "Ladies and gentlemen, Maricio Rosas from the college pastoral internship project. I'm probably the youngest one around here. So God, right, man or woman. Oh my gosh, most confusing. I'm just going to point you to Scripture real quick. Exodus 15:3; open your Bibles. If you don't have one, you can just peek on someone else's. 'The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name. The fifth word is man ladies and gentlemen. Let us not be confused, God is a man. He created men in his own image and that does not mean that we bash women. This has been a misconception that has been weaponized to change the mind of the women in our church. There are roles that I as man will never be able to fulfill, because women have been set for that purpose. Men and women will never be equal because they're complimentary of each other. That's the perfect union that God has made. Let us go to Scripture again in Revelation 3 and I'm almost over. Revelation 3:1, 'And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, these are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.' God addresses the church in its later stages through the Holy Spirit and the Spirit is telling me this, to the church, to the Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church, it's the word of God, wake up. Thank you."

Bishop Jones – "Alright friends, I think you have heard a variety of perspectives on this amendment and that will guide you in your voting. We turn now to the second amendment, Mr. Secretary."

Rev. Russell Hall – "Thank you Bishop. On May 20, 2016, at General Conference the following amendment was approved and this is coming to us from them, Page 36 beginning at the bottom:

In the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division One, ¶4, *Article IV*, amend by deletion and addition as follows:

After "all persons" delete "without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition". After "because of race, color, national origin," delete "status," and add "ability". At the end of the paragraph, add "nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition."

If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, ¶ 4 would read:

The United Methodist Church is part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In the United Methodist church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, ability, or economic condition, nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status, or economic condition."

Bishop Jones – “Does anybody wish to speak to this one. Alright, the conversation on that is closed. Russell, amendment 3. I’m sorry? O.k.”

Pat Hale – “Hello, I’m Pat Hale and I’m from Cameron United Methodist Church and I’m scared like crazy right now. I asked that we vote against this amendment and not because it seems fine until you think that the word gender, 50 years ago meant something completely different than it does today. Gender can mean a lot of different things in today’s society. I think that the amendment should have been clarified to men or women instead of the generic word gender. When we start offering the sacraments – that includes marriage, that includes a lot of different things that are really celebrations – and if someone is sinning, I don’t want to celebrate their sin any more than I want to celebrate mine. I don’t want to put them up on a pedestal and say we’re condoning this, because the Bible definitely says that there are certain things that are sins. If we turn our back on that and let the world define what sin is instead of Scripture, then our being as a church is baseless.”

Bishop Jones – “I take that as a speech against. This microphone.”

Fany Quezada (with translator) – “Again, I invite you to vote against this amendment.”

Bishop Jones – “Your name please, again...”

Fany Quezada – “My name is Fany and I come from First United Methodist Church in Bryan. Can you recall that today there are more than 50 genders? Today I feel myself as a woman, tomorrow I can feel myself as a man and then the day after I can feel myself as a dolphin. The great thing about Scripture is that it is based on absolutes, it is not relative and it does not change. It is not based on feelings and that is why I invite you to vote against this amendment.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. This microphone.”

Alyce Williams – “Alyce Williams, Groves First United Methodist Church, Groves, Texas. I’m the lay delegate. I say as a person who has been excluded that we have no right to exclude anyone from God’s church. And we have talked about that already this weekend that we are to love all the children. I also remind everyone that we are all sinners. And we all need the fellowship and the ministries of the church. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone.”

John Aikey – “My name is John Aikey. I’m from Shelbyville United Methodist Church. I’m speaking against this amendment or resolution, rather. When we begin to identify ourselves as other than Christians, I think we disgrace the Bible. The real answer is to remove all of the identifiers from it. In my opinion, they’re divisive. If I happen to be a man or you happen to be a woman, is there something wrong that we have no place in this world that we feel discriminated against. Maybe, I’m not a woman. That’s not right. God didn’t identify us as anything other than those that come to Christ and those that didn’t. And he loved them all. And for us as a body to begin to play identity politics, we disgrace the Methodist faith and the Christians around the world. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone again.”

Kelly Burd-Huss – “Good afternoon, my name is Kelly Burd-Huss. I am a lay delegate from St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, Central South District. And I’m rising in favor of this amendment. As we look at our Book of Discipline, I am one of the rare lay people that grew up with a Book of Discipline on her shelf as a child; I’m from a deep bench of Methodists. There are two existing places in the Book of Discipline that talk about gender and human sexuality and I think that it is important that we separate these two concepts. So gender is not human sexuality; it is not behavior. That question is up to the Commission on a Way Forward. Now, when it comes to gender, however, I will remind you that in the Book of Discipline we affirm that all people are created with sacred worth. The problem is that we actually have to have a document which is culturally intelligent in how it describes what all people born with sacred worth means. And that means, we have to use gender to wrap our heads around that. And the reason you would use gender is because it actually allows space for either side of the human sexuality debate to see themselves as being all of sacred worth. And finally, I – I’m trying to think of how to word this – so, we asked to do life together and this book that I grew up reading through line by line – yes I ended up an attorney – it is supposed to be there to help us to do life together. If we start arguing over minutia, of how we describe the human condition, from all the vast cultural contexts that make the United Methodist Church so diverse and great, and we end up with something that allows space for degradation of women, for us to exclude

others in a way that is out of sync with right relationship with God, then we have to commit ourselves to a document we might not be completely comfortable with...”

Bishop Jones – “Bring your speech to a close, please.”

Kelly Burd-Huss – “...when it has the practical reality of moving us closer to right relationship with God and one another. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “This microphone.”

Michelle Hutchinson – “Hello. My name is Michelle Hutchinson. I’m a lay delegate from Bellaire United Methodist Church and I am rising to speak for. I feel like maybe this conversation has become emblematic of something that is not actually in the amendment. Maybe. So, my only thought here is that no matter how we are defining gender, no matter what that means to each person in here, we have two sacraments in the Methodist Church...yeah definitely, communion and baptism and no matter your sinfulness, that should be available to all because they are means of grace of God working in our lives. And no matter if you are male or female or identify as anything else, you shouldn’t be excluded. So that’s what this amendment is speaking about and I feel like we should go with it. Thanks.”

Bishop Jones – “Go ahead; this microphone.”

Dr. Dorothy Smith-Hubbard – “Dr. Dorothy Smith-Hubbard, Community of Love Church, Angleton, Texas. I am against this amendment because I feel like – well not feel – the word of God says in Genesis male and female he put them together and the focus on the marital status, meaning that it could be other than man and woman being together. And also, I love everyone and I don’t think this is an issue on love and grace, I think it’s an issue on standard. When you’re running down the road there has to be a standard of the speed limit. And when you exceed that speed limit, then you are constantly disagreeing with the laws of the land. So, I believe that the United Methodist Church has the Book of Discipline, I believe that they have the Bible – the inspired word of God – and either we’re going to stand by the word of God or we’re going to go against the word of God. God bless you.”

Bishop Jones – “This Microphone.”

Rev. Darnell Walker – “I’m Darnell Walker, a long time retired pastor. I think that I would like to step forward, but I need to ask a question. I think I’ve understood, but would you unpack marital status? The more I hear, I got a feeling that there is something else behind that; behind what I understood as marital status. Could you unpack the words meaning marital status?”

Bishop Jones – “My friend, unfortunately there is nobody in the room competent to answer your question. That, in fact, the terms of the Constitution get debated, bishops will interpret them if they are passed and then they get reviewed by the Judicial Council which is the only body competent to answer your question. That wraps up our conversation on amendment 2. We’re back to reading amendment 3, Russell.”

Question from the floor (Randy Smith) – “Was there an even distribution of pros and cons?”

Bishop Jones – “Relatively even, 4 against and 3 in favor. We are not bound by equal numbers by the rules, but I am keeping track to try and keep some sort of balance, but it was pretty darn close. Russell, number 3.”

Rev. Russell Hall – “Amendment 3 was adopted by General Conference in a session On May 16, 2016, and it reads as follows for your consideration:

In the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division Two, Section VI, ¶ 34, *Article III*, (2016 *Book of Discipline*, Division Two, Section VI, ¶ 34, *Article III*) amend by addition as follows:

After the first sentence, add, “Such elections shall include open nominations from the floor by the annual conference, and delegates shall be elected by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast.”

If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, ¶ 34 would read:

The annual conference shall elect clergy and lay delegates to the General Conference and to its jurisdictional or central conference in the manner provided in this section, Articles IV and V. Such elections shall include open nominations from the floor by the annual conference, and delegates shall be elected by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast. The persons first elected up to the number determined by the ratio for representation

in the General Conference shall be representatives in that body. Additional delegates shall be elected to complete the number determined by the ratio for representation in the jurisdictional or central conference, who, together with those first elected as above, shall be delegates in the jurisdictional or central conference. The additional delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference shall in the order of their election be the reserve delegates to the General Conference. The annual conference shall also elect reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conference as it may deem desirable. These reserve clergy and lay delegates to the jurisdictional or central conferences may act as reserve delegates to the General Conference when it is evident that not enough reserve delegates are in attendance at the General Conference.”

Bishop Jones – “This amendment is before you does anybody wish to speak to it? I see nobody moving toward the microphones. When somebody moves, I’m trying to figure out if they are just changing places in the pew or moving. So I don’t want to limit it, but I don’t see anybody seeking to speak, so we will move on. Amendment 4 Russell.”

Rev. Russell Hall – “This amendment was adopted by General Conference on May 20, 2016 and reads as follows:

In the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division Three, ¶ 46, *Article I*, amend by addition, as follows:

To the end of the paragraph, add “provided that episcopal elections in central conferences shall be held at a regular, not an extra, session of the central conference, except in the case where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.”

If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, ¶ 46 would read:

The bishops shall be elected by the respective jurisdictional and central conferences and consecrated in the historic manner at such time and place as may be fixed by the General Conference for those elected by the jurisdictions and by each central conference for those elected by such central conference, provided that episcopal elections in central conferences shall be held at a regular, not an extra, session of the central conference, except in the case where an unexpected vacancy must be filled.

Bishop Jones – “This one is before you, does anybody wish to speak to it? Yes, go ahead.”

Rev. Wade Floyd – “Hi I’m Wade Floyd, I’m clergy from Deadwood and Galloway and I would like to speak for 3 and 4. As I have been around the world, in places that don’t understand what it means to have the process that we have – their political systems are different – I think this would help them to understand the meaning of what it means to be Methodist there. They don’t have the democracy that we have and understand the voting process and these kind of things. You have a way to do this and a way that is actually a vote. And so I think it would help them to understand what that means. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright I see nobody else moving to speak. Amendment 5, Russell.”

Rev. Russell Hall – “Adopted in a session on May 17, 2016 at General Conference, amendment 5 reads as follows:

In the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, Division Three, ¶ 50, *Article VI*, amend by addition, as follows:

After the last paragraph, add “These provisions shall not preclude that adoption by the General Conference of provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in episcopal areas.”

If voted and so declared by the Council of Bishops, ¶ 50 would read:

The bishops, both active and retired, of The Evangelical United Brethren Church and of The Methodist Church at the time union is consummated shall be bishops of The United Methodist Church.

The bishops of The Methodist Church elected by the jurisdictions, the active bishops of The Evangelical United Brethren Church at the time of union, and bishops elected by the jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church shall have life tenure. Each bishop elected by a central conference of The Methodist Church shall have such tenure as the central conference electing him shall have determined.⁹⁴

The jurisdictional conference shall elect a standing committee on episcopacy to consist of one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual conference, on nomination of the annual conference delegation. The committee

shall review the work of the bishops, pass on their character and official administration, and report to the jurisdictional conference its findings for such action as the conference may deem appropriate within its constitutional warrant of power. The committee shall recommend the assignments of the bishops to their respective residences for final action by the jurisdictional conference.

These provisions shall not preclude that adoption by the General Conference of provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold its individual members accountable for their work, both as general superintendents and as presidents and residents in episcopal areas.”

Bishop Jones – “This amendment is before you, does anybody wish to speak to it? O.k., we are now going to proceed to voting. Some of you in the bar of the conference are not actually voting members of the annual conference. Your name badge distinguishes whether you’re able to vote on the constitutional amendments or not. All lay delegates are able to vote. All elders with a red tag are able to vote. All local pastors are able to vote and all probational members are able to vote. If you are not in one of those categories, please do not stand when I ask the voting members to stand. What I’m going to do is ask voting members to stand and then the tellers to pass out the ballots, so that one ballot goes to each voting member. Would you please stand now if you are a voting member of the annual conference? When you have received your ballot, would you please sit down; that will help the tellers to know who still needs a ballot. When you get your ballot you may begin marking it and then once I think that everyone has had a chance to mark their ballot we will call for them to be collected. Russell, I don’t get to vote.”

Rev. Russell Hall – “Yes, but B.T. does.”

Bishop Jones – “When they elected me bishop they took away my ability to vote in conferences. They did that on purpose somebody said? When you have your ballot please be seated. And begin marking the ballots. Is there anybody – there are people standing along the wall, but I assume you people have received your ballots – is there anybody who has not received a ballot, please raise your hand or do something.

I think I’m going to pray. God, we thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the governance of your church. Give us wisdom for how best to lead, for how best to vote, how best to make decisions for your United Methodist Church. All this we ask in Jesus’ name and all God’s people say, amen.

Go ahead and mark your ballots. We will give you a minute or so to do so.

Alright if you have finished marking your ballot please stand. Tellers start collecting them please and when you have turned in your ballot you may be seated, that way the tellers will know. Ah, some of you have already turned them in, you’re ahead of me.

Alright, if you would please be in order. Are there people who have yet to turn in a ballot, would you please raise your hand or signal somehow that a teller needs to receive your ballot. Friends, we are moving to the adjournment of our afternoon session. One last check, is there any ballot that has not been turned in, please make...waive your arm or the ballot or something. We want to be sure to get them all in before I declare the ballot closed. I don’t see anybody. Thank you tellers for attending to our voting process. We appreciate your service. I turn to B.T. Williamson for one announcement. B.T.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Several of the superintendents in the northeast area have reminded us of the storms that have continued to plague that part of the state. We’ve had several of our counties that have received damages, with power outages and some homes that have experienced destructions. So we just ask that we all be prayer for those who are dealing with the ravages of nature as this has continued to be a problem through the Spring. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “I’d like to invite Dr. Ed Robb to come and close us out in a word of prayer and give me an opportunity, once again, to say to the whole staff and all the members at the Woodlands United Methodist Church our deep gratitude for the marvelous job you are doing in hosting us. Thank you. I’ve just been handed another announcement. I’ve been asked to announce that there will be a delegation meeting after this session down front. O.k., now.”

Prayer (Dr. Ed Robb)

Dr. Ed Robb – “It is our joy having you. Let us pray. Thank you, oh God, for your goodness to us always. For your loving mercies and for the way you bring us into the ministry of your kingdom. We thank you for the privilege of serving together through the United Methodist Church. We pray this in our Savior’s name. Amen.”

Bishop Jones – “We’re adjourned.”

Service of Commissioning and Ordination (7:00 p.m. Main Sanctuary)

Last Day of Annual Conference

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

Business Session VI (Main Sanctuary)

Bishop Jones – “Friends, this is your two minute warning. We’re going to begin on time. If you would begin bringing your conversations to a close. If somebody in the back would close the doors to the narthex, we will begin our conference in a minute and a half.

Good morning conference. We’re going to start off with prayer. How do ya’ll feel about that? Amen. Juanita Jackson come to the microphone and please lead us by invoking the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.”

Prayer – Juanita Jackson

Juanita Jackson – “Thank you Bishop. Good morning. I’m Juanita Jackson. I’m the lay delegate to the Annual Conference from Trinity East United Methodist Church and I’m also the District Lay Leader for Central South. And I like the way you said good morning! Let us pray. God, our Father, the Prince of Peace, the Almighty One and the Creator of light at the rising of the sun this morning, let the greatest of all lights, Your love, rise like the sun within our hearts. We are so grateful for the opportunity to provide this gathering today as we come together for another year at the Annual Conference to do the work of the church. We give you our hands to do the work. We give you our feet to go your way. We give you our eyes to see. We give you our tongues to speak your words. We give you our minds so that you can think in us. We give our spirits that you may pray in us. And above all, we give you our hearts that you may love in us. We give you our whole self, that we may grow with you so that you, Lord Jesus, that lives and prays in us, through your grace may our lives be a prayer. Amen.”

Bishop Jones – “Thank you Juanita. I want to share with you the report of the offerings taken up here at Annual Conference. One of the spiritual reasons that we do this report is that our deep United Methodist value is about integrity in the handling of money and transparency. So we want you to know that the first offering for the expenses of the Texas Annual Conference was for \$8,074.76. The Golden Cross offering was for \$4,826.46 and for the Emerging Leaders Endowment \$ 6,869.47. Thank you for your generosity sisters and brothers.

We had a powerful retirement service yesterday and we continue now, hearing video testimonies from another retiree. Let’s watch.”

Retiree Video #5 (Honoring Minnie Baxter)

Resolutions Presentation

Bishop Jones – “Friends, there are two resolutions to be considered this morning. The Texas Annual Conference has rules about how those are considered. B.T. Williamson is going to present them to us today.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop. Good morning conference. We have two resolutions for your consideration this morning. The first one is found on page 39 of your Pre-Conference Journal. It comes from the Archives and History Commission of our Conference. Barbara Huggins asked that we bring it forth in the form of a resolution. It is a formality, but it does require the action of the Annual Conference with regards to applications with historical site markers. So I’ll read it to you and then we will turn to the decision:

Whereas the Emory United Methodist Church, at Emory, Texas, in the Northwest District of the Texas Annual Conference, has met the various requirements for recognition as a Methodist Historic Site, we therefore request the approval of the Annual Conference for their application for recognition.

Bishop, this is before us.”

Bishop Jones – “: This resolution is properly before you. Does anybody wish to speak to it? Alright, if you would approve this, would you say yes. Any opposed? Then it’s done.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop. We turn to the second resolution. It is in the addendum that came out after the submission of the first official Pre-Conference Journal. This resolution is found on page 2 and 3. This resolution came in after the normal processes for receiving them, so it did follow the proper procedures and because it is very broad in scope it was taken to the Core Leadership Team for their evaluation and recommendations. The Core Leadership Team, as you know, is comprised of District and at large members from across the Annual Conference. They bear the responsibility to implement the decisions of the Annual Conference. They also guide the assessment and the alignment of our work that we do to see that our vision and mission are achieved. This body gave consideration of this resolution at their March meeting and the minutes reflect that the Core Leadership Team affirmed the resolution and they recommended that it be presented to the Annual Conference. The feeling of the Core Leadership Team that day was that discussion should take place here in the whole body and that you should decide on the merits of this resolution. So Bishop, it is properly before the body.”

Bishop Jones – “Friends, I need to clarify that in order for you to even consider the substance of this resolution, you must suspend the rules. It requires a 2/3 vote of the body to even begin talking about this resolution. A motion to suspend the rules is properly before you from the Core Leadership Team. It’s not a debatable motion. So in just a minute, I’m going to put the question to you and I want you to be clear, you are not voting on this resolution, yet; you’re voting on suspending the rules to talk about the resolution and then consider it. O.k.? It takes a 2/3 vote, I’m going to ask for a show of hands. Are you ready? If you would suspend the rules to talk about this resolution found on pages 2 and 3 of the addendum, would you lift the hand. Down. If you are opposed lift the hand and it passes. We’ll now consider this resolution. There are makers of the resolution who are prepared to speak to it to start and if others wish to speak, please go to a microphone. Alright, I understand that Keith Whitaker is one of the authors of this resolution. Keith.”

Rev. Keith Whitaker – “Thank you Bishop, B.T. and members of the conference. I am here to place before you this resolution, which states that we are seeking to elect the delegates for General and Jurisdictional conference – for the 2020 conferences – to elect those in 2018, which is 2 years before the conference. It has been our conference tradition that we would elect one year before the conference. So, this is a change from our typical pattern of electing one year before to bring before us now to elect 2 years before, which means that the election of delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences would take place next year at annual conference. The idea of electing early is one that has been approved by General Conference and has been adopted by several other conferences. It was before us as an option before the 2016 General Conference. We chose not to exercise that last time on our elections. But several conferences did do it and they have felt very positive about the results giving their delegations more time to prepare and to just be ready for the General and Jurisdictional Conferences. The truth is that our delegation has talked about this after the fact, we never took a vote on it, but the consensus was that it would have benefited us last time, had we had an extra year to be prepared for the General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Now, we bring this to you aware that it is a change in our typical pattern of elections, but I want to be clear to you that we are not – in this resolution – we are not talking about who may be elected, we are simply talking about the timing of the elections. So that’s what we will be voting on today. It’s been my sacred privilege to serve as either a delegate to General Conference or to Jurisdictional Conference and to be on the last 6 of our delegations. Over that time, the pattern that has developed and which I suspect will take place again in preparation for 2020, the pattern is that most of the current delegation would be re-elected to go back to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Every time there will be some new persons elected to the delegation. But the majority of the delegation will be returning. One of the benefits in taking two years of preparation for the conferences, is because it does allow – especially the new members of the delegation – to get up to speed on how the delegation works and especially the specific issues that will be dealt with in the General and Jurisdictional Conference. Now, of course you know we are having a called session of General Conference in 2019 to deal with issues of human sexuality. I want to be very clear that this resolution does not change our representation to that called session. The delegates elected for the 2016 General Conference will serve, will continue to serve, as our delegates to the called session. If we were to elect next year, if this resolution passes, those persons would be the delegation for 2020, but not 2019. The resolution does allow that they be allowed to go the General Conference, the called session in 2019 as observers, but that is something that is open to any of us in the room – anyone. It

just says that if a new person is elected to the delegation, they would certainly be invited to be a part of the group that goes, as an observer; not as a voting delegate, but as an observer. You may have heard it said, by some who are in opposition to this resolution, that it is a good idea, but at the wrong time. We believe that it is a good idea and is a perfect time for us to adopt this.”

Bishop Jones – “Bring your presentation to a close, please.”

Rev. Keith Whitaker – “Thank you Bishop. The opposition is centered on fears of what might happen if we do this. I want to remind us of what our lay leader said in his address on Monday. ‘Our greatest blessings will be found on the other side of fear.’ So I invite you to consider this resolution. We do hope and pray that you will vote to allow us the extra year of preparation. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “This matter is before you. There’s been one speech in favor, does anybody else wish to speak? Yes.”

Rev. Jim Bass – “My name is Jim Bass, senior pastor at Friendswood. Certainly, as my good friend Keith has said, this resolution is before us and it’s not necessarily a bad idea, but I do not think it’s out of fear, but I do not think it’s a good idea at this point in time. I believe the resolution is well intentioned, but is ill-timed and does have some very real potential unintended negative consequences for us. The proposal would elect delegates in 2018, as we know, to serve in 2020, but would retain the existing 2016 delegation to serve the special session of General Conference in 2019. We would essentially have 2 delegations at once; the current delegation and the delegation in waiting so to speak. I believe that is problematic and that could create, possibly, a constitutional question. In my understanding of the polity, we cannot have 2 delegations serving at the same time. In 1970, the last time we had a called session of General Conference, the Judicial Council ruled that we could have a new election preceding that session, but, for whatever reason, if we had a new election, it would have to replace that current delegation. Now I realize this is a different situation. It was before the General Conference allowed us to elect early, but I do know that if this resolution is approved, we would have a delegation elected and a current delegation that would go to 2016. No one really knows what the constitutional question would be. All we know is the judicial council would decide and it could put in jeopardy our current delegation serving and I believe they’re most prepared for the 2016 General Conference session. I believe we are taking an unnecessary risk in electing a new delegation, potentially, to serve in this most important session of General Conference in our life time in 2019. And the other thing I would just like to say is that I think I would prefer to elect those delegates in 2020 that would go to Minneapolis and follow-up on what was decided in 2019 after I know what the Commission on the Way Forward has already determined, what the 2019 special session of General Conference has determined, and then with that information we can elect a delegation to go to Minneapolis. I do not believe that this is the best idea for us at this time and I think it will bring confusion into our process – confusion amongst the delegations – and I would request that you do not support or that you vote this resolution down. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “We’ve had one speech for and one speech against, does anyone else wish to speak? Move to a microphone. Microphone here.”

Rev. Lindsay Kirkpatrick – “Bishop Jones, this is Lindsay Kirkpatrick from Asbury UMC in Pasadena. In speaking in favor of this resolution, I believe that this is a good idea at the best time, because rarely has our delegations had such an opportunity for on the ground learning as they would in this opportunity. But, Bishop, having heard Rev. Bass’ questions as to the constitutionality of this resolution and in an effort to address those concerns, could you speak to your understanding of the constitutionality of this resolution” Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “I will accept that invitation because it will help the body. I do not take sides in a decision like this, but when it comes to interpreting the Discipline, that is the role of the bishop. I have read the relevant Judicial Council decision and the relevant portions of the Constitution. My argument, my approach to this says that it is constitutional and within your rights as a conference to have a delegation elected specifically for the 2020 General Conference. The rationale runs like this. There is no office in the annual conference structure of the delegation. You can’t have two secretaries of conference at the same time, so that we don’t elect competing secretaries or other offices in the life of our conference. But the delegation is for a specific General Conference and so you have elected a General Conference delegation for 2016. They are, by the constitution, to be the same delegation for the special session. To elect another delegation for a separate purpose is not a conflict and is within the rights of this body if you choose so to do. Rev. Bass is correct in that somebody can write a request of

decision of law, I would then put this opinion in formal writing and the Judicial Council would then review it. I am highly confident that the Judicial Council would sustain me. On the other hand, there have been a couple of times in my career I have been surprised. So, is it possible I would be overturned? Yes. I don't think so. That's up to the judgement of you all to vote and see what you want to do on this matter. It truly is before the body. Is there anybody else that wishes to speak to this matter? This microphone. Are you speaking for or against?"

Rev. Benjamin West – "Oh, my DS is walking up with me woah."

Bishop Jones – "You got there first."

Rev. Benjamin West – "Benjamin West - Fairwood in Tyler and UT Tyler Wesley Foundation. I have a question more than anything. Who would pay for these observers to go to General Conference? Would it be on their own dime or would the conference be footing the bill?"

Bishop Jones – "While the resolution is not specific about that matter, I presume that if they were elected by the conference, that the conference would need to pay the people that did not have their expenses covered in some other way, because it's clearly the intent of this that the conference would send them as part of this newly elected delegation. Let me turn to Dr. Elijah Stansell for his estimate of what that might be and what that might involve. And Dr. Stansell, would you speak to any other financial implications in this resolution as well."

Dr. Elijah Stansell – "Good morning. The cost according to the General Council on Finance and Administration it's \$4,637 per delegate. Jurisdictional costs, which is not the conversation, but for your FYI is \$2852. That would also mean we would have to add an amendment to the budget which has already been passed, for the voting process. That number is \$47,500. It would just be a year earlier that it would have been before. Bishop those are the cost."

Bishop Jones – "Thank you Dr. Stansell. Benjamin."

Rev. Benjamin West – "May I speak then?"

Bishop Jones – "You may. For or against?"

Rev. Benjamin West – "I would like to speak against, simply because my little church, Fairwood of 70 people, pays \$20,000 in apportionments every year. And I know in the grand scheme of 15 million dollars we keep here locally in our conference, \$20,000 isn't much. But if we have 5 delegates that are different, it sounds like from what Dr. Stansell says, 5 delegates – that \$20,000 would be spent on observers to conference – to this special called conference. When we have no Jurisdictional delegates that go as alternates that have their expenses covered – that go and serve faithfully. My hope would be, that if these observers are elected, that they would go potentially on their own dime, it's not that far away, but that does not sound like that is going to be the case in this resolution, so I would speak against."

Bishop Jones – "Thank you. Yes."

Rev. Tommy Williams – "Tommy Williams, St. Paul's Houston. I'm in support of the resolution and I want everyone to be clear that in the resolution you did not hear about a financial requirement for the support of a delegation for the year 2020. So the expectation is that that delegation would be expected to go on their own dime. You did not hear in the resolution any sort of financial provision that is being asked for from this annual conference or from another. This resolution is purely about the election of the delegation, not about you providing financial provision for that delegation."

Bishop Jones – "Ah, let me turn to the maker of this. Keith, is that the intent of this resolution?"

Rev. Keith Whitaker – "The intent, Bishop, is that we elect early. It is our belief that the elected 2020 delegates would travel on their own dime."

Bishop Jones – "Ah, thank you for that clarification. Friends, when the Annual Conference acts without clarity, as bishop we're responsible for executing your will, I would have read it a different way, but having now put it into the record, there will not be any financial obligation to send these people to the special session. Thank you for that clarification. Anybody else wishing to speak? Yes."

Kelly Burd-Huss – “My name is Kelly Burd-Huss, St. Pauls United Methodist Church, Central South District, I’m rising in favor of this resolution. And for me it comes down to relationship and how we are able to forge a way forward in our life together with one another. Relationships take time they take continuity. They take the ability to listen and learn and open our hearts out to one another. And as we’ve heard before, this is a matter of faithful service with person sacrifice – and I know a lot about personal sacrifice having not taken a paycheck for two years – this is about opening our hearts to one another, seeing God in one another no matter where we fall on the divisive issues. And looking back on our founding fathers, Wesley and Asbury...”

Bishop Jones – “Bring your speech to a close please.”

Kelly Burd-Huss – “...and seeing that the true evil in the world are not things that divide us but that unite us in God’s love.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright. I see nobody moving to a microphone. Ah, alright.”

Tom Wussow – “Tom Wussow, Kingwood. Just two quick points. I would agree with the earlier speaker, I think that the election would be a much more informed election if we waited for the Way Forward process to be completed. It just makes sense to get that behind us and then elect the new set of delegates. And my second point is, that heaven knows that our system is complicated enough without having two sets of delegates operating at the same time. Let’s keep it simple. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright friends, I take it you’re ready to...o.k. One more speech and then I think I’m going to put the vote to you.”

Rev. Elizabeth Moreau – “Hi, I’m Elizabeth Moreau. I’m from Kingwood United Methodist Church on incapacity leave. I will say that it is my sincere wish that a sufficient number of years have passed that you have no recall that you taught me the discipline. I would like to speak against this amendment. We talk about relationships and I think that’s a great thing, I would be in agreement with that. My comment would be that if in essence we elect similar delegations every four years with only a few of it switch out – if there are only 2 or 3 or 4 or so that are different – I fail to see that we have a great advantage in building relationships by increasing the number of delegations we have at the same time. It doesn’t benefit that. It only confuses the matter and it still stands – in spite of good reason – it stands the possibility of being overturned by the Judicial Council. I think it is unnecessary at this time...”

Bishop Jones – “Bring your speech to a close please.”

Rev. Elizabeth Moreau – “It’s closed now. Thank you sir.”

Bishop Jones – “Are you wishing to speak? Are you speaking in favor? O.k. This will be the last speech because it will balance things out friends and then I’m going to put it to your vote. Yes.”

Romonica Malone-Wardley – “Romonica Malone-Wardley, Blueridge Houston. I am speaking in favor of this resolution. I think that we are intelligent enough people that the delegation for 2016 and then the new delegation would understand their role and responsibility. I know that when words are put on a paper and put before people, that it only takes an email or a whisper for there to be assigned malice intent or fear of intent and I just want to say that there was no malice intent towards the 2016 delegation. That this was all about unity and on the ground learning. The opportunity for two delegations to be along side one another and to learn together, because we are in unprecedented time for our congregation...I mean for our conference and for our church...”

Bishop Jones – “Bring your speech to a close please

Romonica Malone-Wardley – “...The ability for us to learn together and to show and display our unity would be a great opportunity. Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “Alright, I’m going to ask for a show of hands on this. You know what the proposal is before you. The financial implications have been clarified. If you would support this resolution would you lift the hand? Down. If you’re opposed lift the hand. Down. (Bishop calls the Secretary and Assistant Secretary over). Friends, it’s my judgment supported by my colleagues at the table that the resolution failed. We will move on now to the next item on the agenda. We have...Yes? Move to a microphone please, I’m not going to take voices from the floor. Yes?”

Rev. Pat Sparks – “Bishop, Pat Sparks. I was sitting in the back. It looked pretty close to me. Is there any way we can have a count? Thank you.”

Bishop Jones – “A member of the conference has requested a count vote. If you were in favor... Tellers get ready please. Let’s move the tellers to their places of counting. Friends, our procedure on this is I’m going to ask you to stand either in favor or opposition to this and then when the teller has counted you, you may be seated at this point. O.k.? If you are in favor of this resolution would you please stand. I think everybody has voted. If you are opposed to the resolution would you please stand.

(We wait for the votes to be counted and tabulated)

Friends I have been given the total of the vote. The vote was 269 in favor, 428 opposed. The resolution does not carry. Thank you for your patience in waiting for this. We turn now to Matt Idom, the Director of Lakeview Conference Center, Matt.”

Lakeview Conference Center – Matt Idom

Rev. Matt Idom – “Thank you, thank you. Sorry, no confetti this year. When I was 14 years old I went to my first Mid-Winter at Lakeview. I was sitting on the floor of the old cafeteria and Wineva Hankamer was playing her old guitar and I learned Kum Ba Yah, Pass It On, and They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love. I had never been through a confirmation class and I was only marginally associated with the church. And in that moment, in my heart and life, I felt a very real calling to be a minister of the United Methodist Church. I do not ever recall accepting Jesus Christ as my Savior; I just kind of skipped that part and went to work. I had to be baptized, I found out. And my life has gone full circle now as I have the privilege of working for you. And I thank you for my job of serving as the President of Lakeview. There are four things I want to tell you about, that I hope you will etch into your brain today. As you know we are embarking on this our 70th year of existence, because it was in 1947 that the original 400 acres was received by the Annual Conference and Lakeview Methodist Assembly was created. Two years later, the first camp in 1949. As we begin the celebration of our 70th year, we’re launching into a new camp model. You’re aware of that. What I want to say to you is that there are going to be brochures to hand out to you as you are going to your break. And on the back of that brochure it says that registration opens September 1st. Church what that means is that on September 1st you can start registering your kids to go to camp. Go home, lay delegates and pastors, and tell the mothers and fathers that on September 1st to get their kids names on camp. They can change the date later and they can take 9 months to pay. Let me say that again, moms and dads can start paying over a 9 month period. We will adjust for scholarships, and hear this, as we raise money at Lakeview to give scholarships, it’s going to be first come, first serve. More incentive to have the kiddos start registering early. Very important and very critical as we work these approaches together. Now, is Dwayne and Patty Andrews in the room? Patty, pardon my manners – Patty would you please stand up just a moment cause I’m going to ask this Annual Conference to applaud and thank you in just a minute. I approached Patty and Dwayne four years ago, begging for money to birth a new program at Lakeview that we call TAP. The Andrews Program, because the Andrews family invested to start this program initially. The goal of the program was to go back to my own heritage, to that 14 year old experiencing a call to ministry. Folks, in three years time, we’ve now identified 153 campers that have expressed a feeling and a call to the ordained ministry. The Andrews Program asks a question, ‘is God tapping me to serve?’ We just received word last week that Lakeview has received a grant for \$64,000 from the young clergy initiative program from the denomination to fund this program for another four years. We’re very excited about that. When a young person joins TAP, here’s what’s going to happen now. Their mom and dad’s going to get a letter from Lakeview saying their son, their daughter, has expressed a sense that they may be called to the ministry. Their pastor gets that letter. Their district superintendent gets that letter. Their district committee on ordained ministry gets that letter. Conference committee on ordained ministry gets that letter. Every Wesley Foundation and Methodist college within the bounds of the annual conference gets that letter. The bishop gets that letter and the seminaries get that letter. So that we make sure these young people do not fall through the cracks. Lakeview is the cradle of the call and it’s where our next generation of ministers will come from.

The final thing I want to do this morning is to read a letter that I got last week. Actually, right before I came down here. Bradley Doherty, our director of camping and ministries, shared this with me. ‘Hi. My name is Shianne. I’m 14 and I love Lakeview. This year my church isn’t going and I still want to go, but I can’t because my mother doesn’t have the money to send me and my sister. So I was wondering if I could get a scholarship to

go the week of the 25th thru the 30th? So please can you see what you can do for my sister and I. Thank you very much. God bless.’

What would you like for me to tell her?”

Bishop Jones – “I assume Matt is taking answers to that question privately at the break time today. We turn now to Kim Mabry, one of the chaplains at Houston Methodist Hospital and the person responsible for our Golden Care Program. Kim.”

Golden Care (Kim Mabry)

VIDEO was shown first.

Rev. Kim Mabry – “Friends, it is my complete joy that I get to serve in such an amazing new ministry in our conference. I am the Project Manager of Golden Care Ministry. For some of you this might be a little bit confusing. You’ve heard these two terms ‘Golden Care’ and ‘Golden Cross.’ Well let me explain Golden Care and Golden Cross. This is a combination, a collaboration between the Texas Annual Conference and Houston Methodist Hospital. A collaboration that helps patients who discharge into vulnerable conditions find resources through our churches and through the community. And it’s also a means of congregational care that helps our congregations really organize for vital health ministry programs. And when I go into our churches and explain what Golden Care is, the response that I get is always, ‘well it’s about time.’ It’s about time that the Texas Annual Conference and Houston Methodist Hospital collaborate on something this big and this needed in our conference.

I have a short show here. Can I get some help from AV? Alright. So let me explain the difference of Golden Cross and Golden Care for just a second. Because there is some confusion that might be out there. So one is very old and one is very new. Golden Cross is 96 years old and it’s amazing to me, how many in our conference, don’t know about Golden Cross. It was established in 1921 during the Protestant Hospital movement. And it was started so that we as a denomination, because this was across the United States and there would be a Golden Cross giving Sunday, and we would collect funds to help one another – our fellow United Methodists – pay for medical and dental services that otherwise they couldn’t afford. This fund still exists in our conference. It has always been there. You can download the application under the Center for Missional Excellence. Anyone in our conference, who needs medical or dental assistance, has access to \$3,000 per person, per year through this fund. Now it doesn’t have much money in it right now, but that is why one of the goals of Golden Care is to re-emphasize the need for Golden Cross funding. That’s why, at our Memorial Service on Monday, we gave an offering. That entire offering went to Golden Cross, which goes to direct patient care. That directly goes to medication, dental expenses, medical expenses, and transportation that patients need in our churches to help them with follow-up care and to stay well. In addition to that offering, we are the advance special for 2018. Meaning that all of you can raise money at any time for Golden Cross. And next, we went to B.T. Williamson and our bishop and asked, can we really re-invigorate and reinstate the giving Sunday for Golden Cross. And they said, ‘well, how about we have a whole month? How about the month of February we focus on the health and welfare as a conference and that we give our churches the opportunity to give to Golden Cross so we can help the most vulnerable members of our church and of our hospitals.’ So that’s Golden Cross.

So what is Golden Care? Let me just reiterate what Diane McGehee stated in the video. Because there is several layers to this, because this is a complicated system, but we can make it easy. Now what Golden Care is, we didn’t make this up, this is something that has been going on under a name of a congregational health network in Memphis, Tennessee for almost 11 years. They too have a Methodist Hospital. And those churches there, over 579 churches to be exact, collaborated with the hospital there and said, ‘you know, your patients are our people. And we want to help you to keep them well.’ They created a model that is being replicated all over the United States. So why would the largest medical center in the United States, in the world that is, not want to replicate that very thing using this strong conference and you amazing churches and the people that can make this happen? All of you can help make this happen. So let me explain.

So how does Golden Care work? This diagram will help us to kind of talk through it a little bit, because it takes all of you to help participate. We know, as a hospital, that when a patient admits that there are certain social determinants that this patient has a very high likelihood of readmitting; meaning that when they go home, they’re probably going to get sick all over again and come right back. There are four main determinants that we know of.

Number one, if the person does not have a medical home or a primary care provider – meaning that they aren't getting preventative care. Number two, they cannot afford their medications. Number three, they do not have proper nutrition or the resources to buy food. How do you take your medication that requires you to take it with food if you don't have food to take it with? Transportation. This is the number one barrier to care in our communities. It is very difficult for people, whether you are in a rural setting or an urban setting, to get to your follow-up care, to get to your pharmacy to pick up your medications. That's why Golden Cross funding will also help with transportation. And at Houston Methodist Hospital, we're working with several different resources to negotiate rates. Whether it's Uber, Yellow Cab, or individual companies, to help us transport those patients so they can get to the hospital, get to their follow-up care, and get to the pharmacy. Again, your money goes to that direct care.

So, let's look at this work flow, this referral flow, and see how it works. First the hospital lay ministers. Many of you have already volunteered and know about chaplaincy lay ministry that goes bedside and actually gives spiritual care to our patients. So we're taking that and expanding that a little. In addition to spiritual care, you will also provide assessments for social needs. You will ask those patients, 'tell me a little bit about what you have going on at home. We care about you when you're here, but we care about you when you're at home as well. What are the things that you are going to maybe encounter that are going to prevent you from getting better when you home? Do you have a medical home? Do you need a doctor? Can I make you an appointment right now before you leave? Do you have any way to pay for your medications? Do you have transportation? Do you have food?' Now let me stop here for just a second. Because one of the things our conference is doing is expanding the Golden Cross giving to include not just United Methodists, but those patients who discharge from Methodist Hospital and that have social workers, care navigators and case managers have said this patient is vulnerable to re-admission. They do not have the means. After they have been vetted by our clinical professionals, they too will have access - \$3,000 per person, per year – to help them stay well. Next, congregational health leaders. We're asking each congregation to appoint two congregational health leaders who will be my point of contact and also the contact for other Golden Care employees, to contact and say, 'we have someone discharging to your area, would you be able to help and assist with their social needs?' Because all those social needs that I listed, are needs that you can take care of. You can take someone to the hospital, you can take them to their follow-up care. You can help them get connected with Golden Cross and get funding. So congregational health leaders; they receive referrals after a lay minister – any of you can be congregational health leaders or lay ministers – get them in contact then with the church health leaders. Then, we're asking for you to form congregational mission teams. How many of you have UMARMY or JUMMP kids who go to Corsicana, or somewhere else in Texas, or mission teams that go to Guatemala or Bolivia and build wheelchair ramps, who do all this vital hands on mission work? It's wonderful that we do that. But what Houston Methodist Hospital and Golden Care are saying is that we have people who are sick and vulnerable right here in our communities. Let's do both and; not just those away from our own city limits. And Golden Care can help you do that. So that's how it works. That's how the work flow goes from bedside to church.

So, what I just explained on that power point, was what I like to call the local mission part of Golden Care. The second part is congregational care. So if we look at the relationship – what it is that the church and the hospital are putting into this relationship of Golden Care – we can see how congregational care naturally flows out of that. So the hospital side. What we are doing as a hospital is assisting congregations in organizing a health ministry partnership. Now, as a health ministry program, you can do this alone as a single church. A church such as the Woodlands that we are in right now, you are strong enough to have an entire health ministry program, helping those in the community all by yourself. But then there's my favorite story, and that is when we first met with our new bishop, he said, 'Kim, I want you to do 2 things with Golden Care: I want you to lean into who we are as Christians and Methodists so that people know that this is historically founded in holistic ministry. It is who we are as Christians and as Wesleyans to understand both the body, mind, and spirit as part of our endeavor as whole people. And secondly, I want you to lean into our connectionalism as a denomination.' So, this is where my favorite story comes in. Down in the South District, there are five churches that have a beautiful story. They called me – one of them – Rev. Barbara Fyffe at First La Marque and said, 'Kim, I want to do this.' She read the article in the Cross Connection, the first article and said I want to have this health ministry that you're talking about. For whatever reason at First La Marque, they've always collected medical equipment. They have two classrooms full of medical equipment and nothing to do with it. It is a small congregation. So I called Kip Gilts the District Superintendent and said, 'Can you help me organize another...some other small churches in that area

that could maybe help with them?’ So we called McKinney Memorial. So McKinney Memorial, First La Marque, Hitchcock UMC, and St. John’s in Texas City, and First Texas City – we got together at McKinney Memorial. We’ve had four meetings now. And we sat there and I looked at all of them and the first question I asked is, ‘At any point in your ministry, have you sat down with other churches, in this community right now, and said let’s do something together as a connectional denomination?’ And they said no. We’ve never sat down together and organized a ministry between us. So I asked each church to tell me their gifts and tell me their needs when it comes to health care – creating a healthier congregation for your people and your community. And it was a beautiful, beautiful moment; because McKinney Memorial has an amazing amount of retired nurses and social workers who have been trying to create health ministry. At First La Marque, you have a congregation, as I said Barbara had said, they have two classrooms filled with medical equipment. Then you have St. John’s that has an active youth and young adult ministry program because they are so close to College of the Mainland. And then you have little bitty Hitchcock. They said, ‘I can tell you our gifts. Our gift is that we help our people all the time. We know exactly who in our congregation who is hungry and who is not.’ How do you know that? That’s a really hard thing to find out. How do you know who’s hungry and who’s not, cause we all have them. And they said, ‘fresh eggs.’ What do you mean fresh eggs? ‘Well if you show up to anybody’s door step with fresh eggs and say I need to put these in your refrigerator because my chickens just laid them and they’re right out of the coupe and here you go. I can get into anybody’s kitchen and I can see what their cupboards look like and what their refrigerator looks like.’ So friends, when we got together, everything blended beautifully. The young adults from St. John’s are going to help First La Marque inventory and clean all that medical equipment. The nurses and case managers from McKinney are going to help organize a true parish nursing or faith community nursing program at the other churches. We’re going to work together to create that of the South District, a strong relationship. And all of you, I want you to look around at who is sitting next to you, what are the churches in your area? Maybe you’re too small to have a vital health ministry program just all by yourself. But when we work together, we can do this. Never underestimate the power of a small church like Hitchcock. Because they can teach us all a lot of lessons and it all started with one little egg.

Just a couple more seconds here. The next thing that Houston Methodist Hospital will do is provide resources for congregational health and education. Imagine what we would do if some of you have empty classrooms or unused spaces in your churches. What if we used those telemedicine, for mental health provisions during the day – where we had counseling that would be offered to the community using your empty Sunday school classrooms? What if we used the ability and the resources of Houston Methodist Hospital to help create health symposiums and health education; vitally needed in all of our congregations because all of our people are suffering either as patients or as care givers for someone else that might be susceptible to things like diabetes, hypertension, high blood pressure? These are chronic conditions that we can help our people manage going back to our roots as Wesleyans and as Christians. What if we helped our people learn how to die well? We do a great job of helping people live well, but we need to teach one another, how do we die well? How do we have those hard conversations about what will inevitably happen to all of us? That’s hard and we don’t do that very well as a church. But we have the resources at Methodist Hospital to teach you. What is the difference between palliative care and hospice care? What is the difference between an advance directive and a medical power of attorney? And why do you need that? How will that minister to the families when they go in and face those hard situations? What if we went into your churches and helped you organize a way to measure everyone’s high blood pressure so that we would know who was sick, who’s in danger? What if we did it in coordination with communion Sunday? So that when you go into your church on communion Sunday, blood of Christ, my blood – o.k. I’m going to go to the fellowship hall and get my blood pressure checked. That’s our reminder. Those are the kind of things – this is where the creativity happens in our congregational care piece.

Now, on to the church side. Well on the church side, what we have is...you have include health ministry into your part of your congregational care plan. So, what we want to do, what we ask the churches to do, have a vital health ministry program in your church. And secondly, as a church, we are asking you to organize to help receive vulnerable patients into your churches. So how do you get involved? What do you do? There are two things that you can do right now. Number one, respond to be a lay minister in any of our 8 hospitals across greater Houston; there’s one getting ready to open right here in the Woodlands. And secondly, choose congregational health leaders, at least two. So that they can be my point of contact, so that I can help you organize for local mission around vulnerable patients and to organize for congregational care. You can do that by emailing me at KS...ooh backup, hold on...there I am...so here’s my email address. You’re welcome to email me the name of either

yourself if you want to be a lay minister in one of our hospitals, or the congregational health leader for your particular congregation. Those are the two ways that you get involved. Now the third opportunity is with donations. At the Memorial Service we had a donation of almost \$4,800 for Golden Cross. Houston Methodist Hospital is matching that dollar for dollar, so actually that's almost \$10,000 that we will be donating to Golden Cross. And for those of you who missed that opportunity, I'm going to be standing right down here with my Methodist bag and you're welcome to donate to Golden Cross to help those who are most in need in our communities and I will hand that bag straight to Elijah Stansell. You can make your checks out to the Texas Annual Conference. Make the notation to Golden Cross and you will help those who need medication, dental offerings and transportation. Thank you."

Mic Inquiry (speaker never identified himself) – "Can I ask you a quick question? I know all of you are like me and you don't carry a lot of cash and rarely write checks. We all have credit cards and debit cards. Is there a way to online donate for this? If not, it needs to be developed."

Rev. Kim Mabry – "Yes there is and B.T. showed me this fancy little app..."

Rev. B.T. Williamson – "The tech people will put that reference on the board."

Rev. Kim Mabry – "The tech people will put that reference on the board so that you can donate. Dollar for dollar challenge here."

Bishop Jones – "Thank you Kim. Friends, I think we are in need of a break. We will reconvene in 20 minutes. Come back and we will have our break then."

Break (9:40 a.m.) – this is a change of schedule (Retiree Video number 6 was to have come next)

Business Session VII (9:40 a.m. Lanier Grand Ballroom)

Bishop Jones – "Let's move to your seats please and end your conversations. As usual, if somebody would close the doors at the back and the side, that would remind us. We are honoring our retirees and we are going to move to our next retiree video now. Let's watch."

Retiree Video #6 (Honoring Robert Earl McGee)

Bishop Jones – "To the young people in the room, I want you to pay attention to the witness of these retirees as we hear them; but also meeting here at the Woodlands, to pay attention to the naming of some of the rooms around here. The Outler Atrium over there is named for my teacher. It might be said that I and Ted Campbell were his last students. A great man; he's commemorated here by naming an atrium for him. But also, these retiree speeches remind us of what God has done for those in the lives that go before us. Isaac Newton in his ground-breaking work (Principia Mathematica), put in the opening pages his statement, 'If I have seen a little farther than most, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.' If Isaac Newton says that about the breakthrough work he did in mathematics and science, what do those of us who are following Christ in the United Methodist connection have to say about the men and women that have gone before us? And so I'm grateful for these videos as a way of reminding us that those of us who are currently engaged in ministry have a lot to be thankful for those who have gone before."

APPLAUSE

Bishop Jones – "We've been given some announcements and I want to be sure to cover those so I'm going to ask B.T. to put them before you right now. We are intending to adjourn this Annual Conference sometime this morning, and so putting a few of these in your mind at the moment would be a useful thing. B.T."

Rev. B.T. Williamson – "Thank you Bishop. We do go green every year. If you're wondering what to do with your name tags and your lanyards there will be containers outside main sanctuary exits and you can return them there and we'll reuse them at conference time in 2018. Also, we appreciate your feedback as to how things function and go here at Annual Conference, so take out your cell phones and go to the app if you choose to do so now and you can fill out the survey if you find that sessions are a little boring. Or you can wait..."

Bishop Jones – "Wait, wait, wait! There has not been a boring session yet. If that was an invitation for Mary Lou to come back, then I'm through with that. O.k.?"

Rev. B.T. – “So after you leave Annual Conference, you can turn to your cell phone and on the Guidebook there you can respond to the survey, or it will be online: txcumc.org/TAC2017, or we will be sending survey out to all the delegates next week when offices are open again. So, three different ways that we can receive your feedback; we cherish it and we use it to plan and anticipate following years.

The best way that you can own your copy of services is to download them from our website. If you'd like to purchase a DVD you can order them. The form will also be on the website and by June 2 you will need to complete that order if you want a permanent copy.

We have been asked to pray for Kim Anderson, the wife of Pastor Rick Anderson, she had surgery this past Tuesday and is facing another procedure this next Thursday. And so we remember Kim and pray that God's mercies and healing strength would be with her and with all those who love her and care for her in this time. So please remember the Anderson family. Bishop, those are the announcements.”

Bishop Jones – “Very good. Let's turn to next retiree video and see that before the Clergy Recruitment report.”

Retirement Video #7 (Honoring Roy James)

Clergy Recruitment & Emerging Leaders Endowment (Rev. Elizabeth Duffin)

Bishop Jones – “We turn now to Rev. Elizabeth Duffin who works with the Clergy Excellence office of our church and especially in clergy recruitment, Elizabeth.”

Rev. Elizabeth Duffin – “Bishop, members of the Annual Conference and guests: the kind of church our children and grand children will attend tomorrow is a direct result of the investment made in pastoral leadership today. Since 2011, our Conference has been actively raising money to fund the Emerging Leaders Endowment. Many of you are familiar with the Endowment and its various components – Texas Youth Academy, College Pastoral Intern Project, Ambassadors' Grants, and Advancing Pastoral Leadership.

The goal of the Endowment is to help the Texas Annual Conference recruit gifted, young, diverse clergy to serve the growing mission field here in Texas. If you have participated in TYA, been a college pastoral intern, received an Ambassadors' Grant, or participated in APL, would you please stand. As you can see it is working. We believe that the future leaders of our churches are already here – worshipping in our churches, participating in our youth groups, attending our colleges and universities, and working in our communities. What these young people need is a community of love to affirm and sharpen their call, and the time and space to discern it. This year, we have nine young people doing just that. They are our College Pastoral Interns for 2017 and I want to introduce them to you now. These college-age young people will spend their summer shadowing pastors in our conference, serving across the Conference – from Athens to Lake Jackson, from Vidor to downtown Houston.

Of course – our goal is not only to recruit clergy, but to develop them over a lifetime of learning. To that end: we started Transformative Pastoral Leadership. This program is aimed at strengthening African-American pastoral leaders, so they can lead our church into the mission field. This initiative began this spring with 11 of our pastors and we're excited to see what fruit it will bring.

Scripture tells us the story of Samuel and Eli – without the wisdom of Eli helping Samuel listen to the voice of the Lord, he never would have known who was calling him. This is our role too. God is calling us to care for the church of the future today. Again, the kind of church our children and grandchildren will attend is a direct result of the investment made in pastoral leadership today. It is one of the greatest opportunities to be on the side of blessing and growth for the church's future. So thank you for the investment you are making today.

New Faith Communities

Bishop Jones – “We turn now to a report about new faith communities. Morris Matthis is transitioning from being a District Superintendent to being the director of that effort and Artie Cadar is going to be appointed as part of the Conference staff. We're grateful for both of you accepting these new responsibilities. So, tell us what we need to know.”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “Good morning, my name is Morris Matthis.”

Rev. Artie Cadar – “My name is Arturo Cadar or Artie Cadar.”

Rev. Morris Matthis and Rev. Artie Cadar (they alternated about every other line and said some lines together) – “And to quote Adele, we just want to say hello. We both love what we are doing now. But we are really excited about what we are going to do July 1. Because that’s when I will become the Director of New Faith Communities (Morris) and I will become the Coordinator of Mission Field Development (Artie).”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “My job, my area, used to be called New Church Starts, but now we call it New Faith Communities. This is a recognition of the fact that its not just about putting new churches in new neighborhoods or replanting churches where the life cycle of United Methodist Churches has come to an end and there’s still a mission field to be served; but also, its about working with gifted, entrepreneurial leaders, to find fresh expressions of ways to reach out with good news of Gospel and help people grow in their faith that otherwise might not reach. This is exciting work. I really can’t wait to dive into it.”

Rev. Artie Cadar – “My job is a new position intentionally created by the leadership of the Texas Annual Conference to actively assist pastors and their leadership teams, entire congregations for that matter, with their plans to effectively connect and minister to changing communities. One of the takeaways from the Laity Session, which I had the privilege of participating, I came away out of that session knowing that many churches do really want to tend to the needs of their changing communities; they just don’t have an idea of where to start. And so whether it is through Hispanic Ministries, or a fresh way of expression to reach out to the practical atheists around you, or rebirthing a new congregation in an existing church, we want to be able to help you become a more missionally relevant church for your community.”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “Bishop Jones has reminded us of the challenge and the opportunity that God has given us as a conference.”

Rev. Artie Cadar – “and the mission field of the Texas Annual Conference is not only expanding in diversity but it is also expanding in numbers.”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “We already have a lot of great churches in our Conference.”

Rev. Artie Cadar – “But we need more churches.”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “and more new faith communities.”

Rev. Artie Cadar – “to be able to reach out and expand the good news of the Gospel.”

Rev. Morris Matthis – “So we just wanted to say hello and (with Rev. Cadar in unison) we look forward to the exciting journey before us.”

Bishop Jones – “You all have figured out that life at my home is not boring. Life at the office isn’t boring either. I mean, what can I say. Alright, one of the most important...”

Mary Lou Reece – “I just couldn’t let the whole day go by without saying something and partly because I forgot to say it yesterday. You know, I just had so much going on there that I...and when he ducked behind the desk, I just lost my mind...So, anyway. He’s never done that to me before. I just wanted to tell you on that little segment on how well he loves me, I just forgot my punchline. Which is, ‘Scott, how long have we been married?’”

Bishop Jones – “Not long enough!

Mary Lou Reece – “And you know, he is still able to say that today. Isn’t that great!”

Bishop Jones – “Yeah, o.k. So much for the tight script for the morning. One of the great gifts of the life of our Annual Conference has been Paula Arnold, the Director of Communications. Paula come forward. As she begins her report, let me just say that one of my goals in coming to be bishop of the Texas Annual Conference was to keep as much of the extended cabinet, conference staff team, together as much as possible. I had high regard for everybody that was working on my team. I thought it was a great team and my goal was no change. Well, that didn’t work out so well. We made some appointive changes to people to new positions because that’s what the health and the vitality of the Annual Conference required. And then Paula Arnold came to me and said, ‘Bishop, it is time to retire.’ Well, I want you all to know that when that time comes in a person’s life I don’t want to stand in the way, but I want to say that my high regard for her and my great appreciation for the contributions she has made to the Texas Annual Conference while in this position has just been a blessing to you all and certainly to me

for the last 11 months. Paula, we recognize that you are moving to a new phase of service. We know that you are leaving the conference staff to pay more attention and time to your family, but we want to say thank you for all that you've done for our Annual Conference."

Communications & Social Media (Paula Arnold)

Paula Arnold – "Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. It has been my privilege and my honor to serve both Bishop Huie and Bishop Jones. There will be things that I miss and people that I will miss. I have enjoyed my job tremendously. I am looking forward to being with my grandbabies and to long lazy mornings. I am looking forward to it. But there is a sadness there too. This morning I want to report on the communications department, sort of the state of communications of the conference. We are now sending Cross Connection to around 14,000 folks. I want to encourage you to those share links so that we can expand that number. We lead the denomination in social media. That's happened in a pretty short period of time. We are ahead of every other conference except regarding Snapchat. I barely know what Snapchat is, but it is a thing and we will be out there soon. This is why we need new blood here y'all. This morning I would like to announce - we have a contest every year, or have so far, for best ideas in communication and this year we did it by categories. We have a large church category that was won by Chapelwood for a video called "Executive Servant Video" and we'll be showing that to you in just a minute. The medium size church winner was The Story in Houston for their video: "He's Got the Whole World." The small church category was Orange, First United Methodist Church in Orange. I'd like for Brad Coleman, the maker of the video in Chapelwood, Karen Firenza, creative arts director at Chapelwood, Eric Huffman of The Story and John Warren of Orange to please join Brant Mills over on this side of the room and get your pictures taken with your awards. We appreciate their creative work. And now I would like to show you just a bit of the Chapelwood video to show you a bit of the Chapelwood Video to show you type of creativity that is going on throughout our conference. We'll also be doing a story about this in next week's Cross Connection and we'll have links to both of these videos and tell you a little bit more about the other entries into the contest. There are some really creative things going on out there and we appreciate it and want to share those things with you. Could you go ahead and roll that video please?"

CHAPELWOOD VIDEO

Paula Arnold – "Just a taste. Like I said, these will be all available in Cross Connection this next week, so I encourage you to check them out. Before I leave the stage I just would like to express my gratitude to my boss B.T. Williamson for his loose leash and support. It's been wonderful working with B.T. for the last 5 years. Along with the help of a committee, because we are Methodist and it takes a committee to do anything, Bishop Jones has selected my replacement. It will be Shannon Martin as the new Director of Communications. Shannon served as the Director of the Conference from 1995-2000. So she comes with a lot of experience and I wish her well. Shannon."

Shannon Martin – "Thank you Paula. Thank you B.T. Bishop. Texas Annual Conference, I am excited to be your new Director of Communications. I am thrilled to be back and just want to tell you I am excited about working with each of the churches and my amazing staff. Whatever I can do for you, please do not hesitate to give me a call. Thank you so much."

Bishop Jones – "We turn to the chair of the Episcopacy Committee, Rev. Karen Dorris."

Episcopacy Committee "Transition" – Dr. Karen Dorris

Thank you Bishop, members of the Annual Conference. The Episcopacy Committee is a similar group to the Staff Parish Relations Committees in your local church. Which means we have spent this year getting to know our new bishop in much the same way that congregations get to know new pastors when there has been a change in pastoral appointment. We want to share with you, in slightly different ways than Mary Lou, has some things about your new bishop. We entertained the bishop and Mary Lou with dinner last summer before they even arrived in our Annual Conference and learned at that time that our Bishop has a warm and gracious heart. Mary Lou does as well. We have observed that he is a Bishop who travels. He had worship experiences at both ends of our Annual Conference so that we could welcome him and get to know him better. He has been to every district in the Annual Conference seeking to get to know us better. We on Episcopacy Committee, Bishop, understand our role to be your support system and to be one more set of eyes and ears through the Annual Conference. Of course, our District Superintendents, members of the cabinet, the conference staff, and the Core Leadership Team

perform that role as well. Here are some things that we have learned and I'm sure you have observed this week: our Bishop has a spiritual gift of teaching and he shares that with all of us in a way that is a blessing. You have heard him here at the Annual Conference. I would encourage you that if you have not found his blog, to read his blog, because he shares insights to all of us through that medium and he has several books that are worth your time. We have learned that he is authentic and a person of integrity. The bishop we see seated here before us is the bishop who we have experienced in meetings with the Episcopacy Committee, is the bishop you have experienced when he has been out and about in the Annual Conference. We have learned that he is a lifelong learner. He asks questions of many people and takes seriously the responses he gets. Part of what he was about in touring the districts of our Annual Conference was getting to know us just as we were getting to know him and he took all of that information and put it into his list of challenges that is before us as an Annual Conference and the opportunities we have in meeting those...the beautiful vision he shared with us in his Episcopal Address. Friends, this is a man who listens very carefully. He gathered us at the Spring Episcopacy Committee meeting, shared with us the vision he shared with us during the Episcopal Address and his experiences to date in the life of our Annual Conference and then he took questions from everyone in that room. He did not back down from a single question. He did not dodge in his answers. He engaged with us fully. We appreciate that, Bishop, very much. And the last thing I want to share with you is that if you haven't learned this about him yet he is a man who loves God deeply and seeks to follow Jesus Christ faithfully. Which means he is a very good episcopal leader and we are glad to have him. Part of what the Episcopacy Committee will be doing with Bishop Jones in the year ahead is an evaluation process he has asked us to structure and he has asked in his great capacity of listening widely, that it be an evaluation process that deals with all of the ways he leads and all of the people who are involved in experiencing his leadership and we will do that. We appreciate your sense of humor, Bishop, and if you will give me Arthur's cell number, I will text him and tell him we find you neither sad nor old."

Bishop Jones – "I need all the help I can get with my family as you can tell. Yes, you can have Arthur's cell number and try and tell him I haven't embarrasses you all greatly as a bishop here in the first year at the Texas Conference. I do want to say thank you to the Episcopacy Committee and to the extended cabinet because as you move into any of these transitions, as you pastors know when you get a new appointment, there is a lot that has to be done to make the new person feel welcome, to teach them what they need to know, to be attentive to their gifts they bring to this new relationship. You all as the Texas Annual Conference set this up incredibly well. My first several months were just a real blessing as I was warmly welcomed, as Mary Lou was warmly welcomed. We love being in the Texas Annual Conference. We are loving the people we are meeting and just incredibly blessed to be serving with you all here. So, Karen and the committee, thank you for your support. I look forward to working with this committee. I do believe that evaluation is important and feedback is important. I've had older bishop's tell me, 'you will never hear the truth.' Well, it's Karen and the committee's job to tell me the truth. And so we look forward to hearing those kinds of ways I can continue to grow and improve my service to Christ in the office of bishop of the United Methodist Church.

I'm going to invite Garry Masterson to come up to offer our prayer to end this session. Then we're going to have a 10 minute break, maybe 15 at the most, but we're shooting for 10, to reset the stage for our service of sending forth. So Garry, why don't you pray for us, then we'll be on break for 10 minutes."

Prayer – Rev. Garry Masterson

Rev. Garry Masterson – "Let us pray. Father we thank you for your presence with us. We thank you Lord, for this business session and all of the exciting things that are happening in our church, in your church. We praise you Lord that we have the opportunity to be servant leaders. I ask Lord, that we be in sync as Rev. McGee told us in his video. Lord, thank you for all the preparations for General Conference and also for all the medical and social ministries that are taking place and development of Golden Care. We thank you, Lord, for the young clergy and for the growth in new faith communities and all the things that will be happening as we listen to you and respond to your Spirit. Thank you. We praise you for the great adventure it is to serve you in the Texas Annual Conference and in the United Methodist Church. As we leave this place and go to our respective communities, help us to glorify and honor you and to keep our focus on you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

Bishop Jones – "Amen. We'll reconvene in 10 minutes."

Unfinished Business - None

This session of the Annual Conference was adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Service of Sending Forth