Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

2015 Journal
Mr. Ed Gibson – “Good evening friends and family. If I could invite you to come on in to our worship space and quickly and quietly take your seat. My name is Ed Gibson and on behalf of the worship committee of the Texas Annual Conference, welcome. This year we are working towards reaching beyond our immediate circle of influence when it comes to both praying for others and seeking prayers of our own concerns. The worship team of the Texas Annual Conference wants to encourage you to participate in the prayer this evening in one or both of the following ways. If you have a prayer request and are willing to share that request with others, we invite you to use Twitter or FaceBook by using hashtag TXAC. Again, that’s hashtag TXAC. If you are willing to pray for others you can also search for hashtag TXAC and pray for the requests that are found there. If social media is not your thing, that’s o.k. too. As you entered our worship space this evening you should have received a prayer card just like this that I am holding in my hand and you can write those prayer requests on the prayer card and then at the end of this evening’s worship service you can drop it off in a box at the exits…and these prayer requests will be taken to the conference prayer room and at some point during our time here for the next couple of days, we invite you to enter the prayer room and pray for and over those requests. Now I’m going to invite you to join me in song.”

Mr. Gibson led the congregation in an acapella singing of *Woke Up This Morning With My Mind on Jesus*.

Rev. Chap Temple introduced the opening hymn *And Are We Yet Alive*.

After the singing of the opening hymn, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie made the following statements during the welcome and greeting:

Bishop Huie – “Amen. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome to each one of you. I give God thanks that you have made it here this evening through these rain soaked roads in East Texas. Some of you looked a little wet coming in, but we are so glad that all of you are here. I know that many of you know that some of the area around the Louis Dam in our own annual conference is under a mandatory evacuation and that the Rio Texas Annual Conference has had some catastrophic flooding. Our disaster response folks are on it. So we can be here this evening to worship God and give thanks for what God has done already and for what God will yet do. So I declare that the 46th session of the Texas Annual Conference is opened. And I invite you to turn to one another and greet one another with signs of welcome and peace.”

The remainder of the worship service followed the order of worship presented in the booklet *2015 Transforming Lay & Clergy Leaders*. The remainder of the worship service is archived on audio and video recordings, but for these Daily Proceedings, only the Episcopal Address is included here.
Good evening. I’m a Methodist because Wesley taught me to look for and love the image of God in every human being—including the ones I don’t particularly like.”

It’s your turn now. We all need our elevator speech where we can explain why what we believe is important. What is important to you personally about being a follower of Jesus in the Wesleyan tradition? If you have a smart phone, tweet it. If you don’t, turn to someone on your left and then your right and tell them why you are a Methodist. Not a paragraph. One sentence. 146 characters. The hash tag is on the screen, #txac. Ready, set go.

Just look around the room: you are a marvelous community of the people called Methodist. You are making disciples of Jesus in 58 counties in Texas, from Texarkana to Matagorda, from Burkeville to Thorndale. Your capacity for doing “all the good by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can as long as ever you can” encircles the globe.

These words from Charles Wesley come to mind,
“Come, sinners to the gospel feast. Let every soul be Jesus’ guest.
You need not one be left behind, for God has bid all humankind.”

This annual conference is a gathering of leaders among the people called Methodist. We are heirs of John and Charles Wesley, Francis Asbury, Harry Hoosier and Barbara Heck. Our forebears here in America planted thousands of congregations so that the people called Methodist could be shaped and formed as disciples of Jesus Christ. Methodists started schools, colleges and universities so that every child could be educated and have the prospect of a better future. Methodists built hospitals to care for the sick, and retirement homes to care for the old. Methodists started community centers so that immigrants and the poor could learn the skills to create better lives for themselves and their children. Methodists spoke out against injustice wherever they found it—slavery, Jim Crow, child labor, and more. Methodists advocated for the right of women to vote and to preach. Over and over again, Methodists invested in the larger community and in a better future for all God’s children.

Today, two hundred twenty five years later, our leadership is challenged. All Christians, including the people called Methodist, have entered a season of changing realities in America. The Pew Research Center study published just two weeks ago finds that the percentage of Americans who define themselves as “Christian” has dropped seven percentage points or about five million people over the last seven years. Among our young, decline is even more dramatic. Pew found that over one-third of young adults now say they are unaffiliated. That’s up 10 percentage points in just seven years. The speed of this change has surprised even the experts.

Why is this unaffiliated group growing so rapidly? There are a number of reasons, but the Pew research indicates the primary reason is that so many people are actually leaving church. One-third of Americans who were once active in church are no longer in church—“de-churched” is the new term. They came, they saw, they tasted and they left. That trend is particularly pronounced among young adults.

Over the last ten years, the superintendents and I have seen this reality right here in the TAC. When a congregation drops 20% or more in worship attendance over a relatively short period of time, and people quit coming, we no longer see the level of recovery that we took for granted just ten years ago even though the congregation and the cabinet make changes to improve the situation. When people leave, they leave. Again, that trend is particularly pronounced among young adults.

There is some good news in the latest research. In a survey conducted last year by LifeWay Research, guess which denomination has the most positive image in the culture? The Methodists. 62% of respondents claimed a favorable view of United Methodists compared to five other faith groups. The authors state, “If [the Methodists] will show and share the gospel with their neighbors and plant evangelistic churches … they can turn a good reputation into a gospel opportunity.”
We must seize this opportunity.

We are blessed to have Dr. Gil Rendle with us during this annual conference to help us learn better how to lead in these changing realities. He will help us think more clearly about our purpose and the need for pastors, congregations, and the conference to work both on improving our current ministries as well as experimenting and creating whole new ministry paradigms.

Tonight I want to focus on how we Methodists might lead from our historic Wesleyan strengths to connect with the yearnings, hopes, and the hurts of people today. What might we glean from our own Methodist DNA that allows us to swim in these rough waters with realistic hope of a better future? Where would we begin?

I posed those questions last month to Dr. Greg Jones, professor and former dean at Duke Divinity School. He’s a good friend of this annual conference. He pointed to four qualities of Methodism that are both traditional and contemporary. These qualities form a Methodist lexicon that offers deep wisdom for living into our new reality. Each quality is characterized by one word.

Tonight I offer you this four-word lexicon that links our best past with our yearning for a better future along with some specific examples of how I’m seeing these qualities lived out in our annual conference. I’m hoping that you will listen and ask yourself, “What might that mean for our church and our community?”

1. Opposable

The first word is opposable—opposable not oppositional. The relationship between our fingers and our thumb looks oppositional, but it is really opposable. That opposable capacity makes possible everything from a baby holding a spoon to feed herself to an accomplished musician holding a violin bow to play Mozart.

At our best Wesleyan leaders know how to hold two things together that others see as oppositional. John Wesley had a remarkable ability to hold together justification and sanctification, evangelism and social action, sacraments and small groups, knowledge and vital piety. It is a both/and approach. Opposable thinking invites Methodists to reach for a higher level of thinking and acting to integrate what appears to be opposites.

Wesley’s most famous statement demonstrating opposable thinking is found in his sermon “Catholic Spirit.” He wrote, “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? Though we are not of one opinion, may we be of one heart? Without all doubt, we may.” Can you hear his move from oppositional thinking to opposable thinking? Instead of fighting with one another about our differences, we can love one another in our differences.

Opposable thinking among Methodists is what allows a President George W. Bush and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to sit next to each other on a Methodist pew.

One of the most exciting experiments in opposable thinking currently going on in the TAC is Project CURATE. Most of the small groups in our churches are composed of people who are similar to us—similar neighborhood, similar socio-economic background, often similar age. What if we could include new, different voices including people who aren’t usually found in any church?

Dr. Matt Russell at St. Paul’s has developed a diverse cohort of 60 people that “look like Houston.” They come from six diverse communities. One Saturday each month, the group participates in discussions that combine theology and community development. This pilot might help us learn to listen more deeply to people very different from ourselves and to create new ways to serve God together.

It is a fascinating experiment, and I can’t wait to see what God does with it.

2. Networked
The second word in our Methodist lexicon is networked. Networked. Today networks are the primary way in which pastors, people and organizations connect around the world. Just 20 years ago, our primary connection with Methodists around the world was the “up and over” network of faxes, phone lines and letters. A local church talked with someone at the annual conference who talked with someone at the General Board of Global Ministry in New York who talked with a missionary in the field somewhere in the world. That person responded back to GBGM who responded back to the conference who responded back to the local church. It took a long time. How quickly the world has changed. Today, a church member can Skype or Face time with another Methodist in Bolivia or a child in Mozambique or a soldier in Afghanistan—all within a matter of seconds.

Networking has a multiplier effect. It has the power to add 2+2 and get 10. We are just beginning to see that multiplier effect of networks among congregations. On the one hand, the TAC has substantial under-utilized space in various congregations across the conference—unused classrooms and even worship space. At the same time, we also have a substantial need for built-out, low cost space for new churches and for existing congregations that have the capacity to grow. What if those opportunities could be networked?

I celebrate two new networking arrangements this conference year. Cokesbury UMC is a congregation of forward-thinking, mostly Anglo disciples with a wonderful facility located in the midst of an increasingly multi-ethnic neighborhood in South Houston. Christway UMC is a mostly Hispanic congregation which chartered just last year. It grew up out of Friendswood UMC and has been seeking permanent facilities in a multi-ethnic area. Christway brings strong evangelical engagement to the mission field. This spring each began conversations with their district superintendent and each other. Now, Cokesbury and Christway are partnered together. Each congregation surrendered their former name. Together, they have resources that neither could have alone: two bi-lingual pastors, a deep new connection with the neighborhood, a kingdom vision, and a new name—Houston Crossroads UMC.

Here is another wonderful story. FUMC Houston and Covenant Glen UMC, two of our largest congregations, have entered into a different kind of networking arrangement with each congregation retains its own identity, and sharing space together. Covenant Glen UMC needs room to expand its worship capacity and its ministry. FUMC has abundant space at the Westchase Campus. In this new networked relationship, FUMC has help with the expense of owning an excellent facility and Covenant Glen is bringing a thousand people to worship and to make a difference in the community.

Friends, these new arrangements are God-work. They are using networking to increase our capacity to make a difference for God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

This power of networking is what John Wesley meant by connection. It is part of the heritage we have today. What would it be like if, instead of each church working as an isolated congregation, our leaders were to imagine, share and strategize as 650 congregations networked or connected together? How much greater difference would we make in our communities and world, not to mention the impact of a cooperative witness on a skeptical generation.

3. Innovative

The third word in the Methodist DNA lexicon is innovative. At one time, Methodists were actually in the forefront of new initiatives in the world. We built great institutions like Duke, Emory, SMU, Methodist Retirement Communities and Houston Methodist Hospital.

More recently, we’ve gotten active again. Methodists around the world have developed and nearly funded Imagine No Malaria. This is $75M. In partnership with other public and private groups, we reduced the incidence of malaria in pregnant women and children by 50%. Pretty amazing. Now our conference is engaging with Zoe Ministries which is an empowerment ministry for the poorest of the poor.

Locally, our congregations are discovering new ways to connect with our public schools to support children who need help ranging from food to school supplies to mentoring in reading and math to coaching in sports to the
presence of a stable mature adult in their lives. Friends, I cannot over-emphasize the importance of this work with at-risk children. If I were starting over again as a young pastor, I would focus my missional energies exactly where the early Methodists did: the children of the poor. Over time, they changed a whole culture.

El Mesias is one of the Rio Texa congregations officially uniting with the Texas Annual Conference tomorrow. They voted just this morning to offer their facility to a premier charter school targeting at-risk youth – giving them a second chance to graduate. It’s a partnership with AAMA, the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, that currently operates George I. Sanchez charter school. It’s a “first” for our annual conference and for El Mesias and I am confident we will all be blessed and will learn.

4. Ecosystem

The final word in our Methodist lexicon is ecosystem. Ecosystem is a word that comes directly out of the natural world. It recognizes that for one thing to flourish, many things need to flourish. When something positive happens in one part of the ecosystem, eventually the whole system benefits. Conversely, when something negative happens, it affects the whole.

Methodists have always placed a high value around the physical, emotional, and spiritual vitality of children and youth. For decades, we invested heavily in “next generation” ministry. In the last 40-50 years United Methodist investment in “next generation” ministry has weakened considerably. That weakening has occurred inside our congregations with our own children and grandchildren, with our pastors, and in our communities with low income children.

One of the places where the Texas Annual Conference has invested in “next generation” leadership over the last few years has been with calling, supporting and equipping “next generation” clergy through the Emerging Leaders Initiative. There is a high school component, a college-age internship, financial help with seminary indebtedness, and post-ordination leadership development. Today, one in ten pastors in the Texas Annual Conference is under the age of 35, the highest in the U.S. More importantly, these young pastors are making a positive difference in strengthening congregations by connecting with next generation laity, the very place where the Pew Research Study indicates that Christianity is most vulnerable.

In January, we asked Lewis Research Center to review the last ten years and survey our 78 pastors who were under the age of 35 at their commissioning. Survey respondents reported a much lower median age for their congregations than our own annual conference average and a much, much lower median age than the denominational average. The percentage of churches that are growing numerically in worship attendance for these young lead pastors is 6% higher than the conference average and it is 10% higher than the denominational average. 80% of the associate pastors who lead a worship service report those congregations are stable or growing.

Now here is where I need your help. 70% of these young pastors incurred debt in seminary. Half still have debt, with the median total school debt being just over $30,000 per young pastor. The aggregate debt among this group today is $1,257,582. If this conference wants to continue to welcome young clergy and have the cabinet send them out to congregations that can’t afford to pay big salaries, we must invest in them—short-term and long-term.

Here is the long-term. The conference has created an Emerging Leaders Endowment to underwrite all areas of the Emerging Leaders Initiative: high school, college, seminary debt, post ordination leadership development. To date some wonderfully generous laity have contributed just over $4 million dollars. To fully fund these ministries without using any apportionment dollars, the Texas Annual Conference needs an endowment of at least $10 million. This next year—my last year—as your bishop, I will be coming to you to ask you to do what Methodist people have done for 200 years—invest in the next generation. No matter how big or how small your church, you can invest in its future through this endowment.

Here is what you can do tonight. Tonight’s offering will be given to the Ambassador’s Grants fund to award grants in the class who will be commissioned at this annual conference. That’s the money raised outside the
conference budget every year to help these young pastors pay down these debts. Every year it takes $150,000 to award these grants—the more young pastors in a commissioning class, the more money it takes. For the first time this year, I asked the young pastors who have been previous beneficiaries to help raise the funds for the class of 2015. Pay it forward. So far, together, they have raised $66,000. Friends, the rest is up to you. When we receive the offering tonight, I’m asking you to make up the difference. You can contribute on line at the conference web site all week long. You can write a check. We still take cash. I hope you personally will be extraordinarily generous and that you will go home and invite your congregation to be generous both with Ambassador’s Grants and the Emerging Leaders Endowment Fund.

Does the Wesleyan way of life have a future here in the US? Of course it does. God isn’t finished with us yet! I believe God is calling us to lead into the future from our historic Wesleyan strengths.

Every day God looks over the rich diversity of people God has made and sees our many colors and cultures and nationalities, religions and ethnicities. God sees how so many people are being treated with suspicion, distrust, hate and even violence because of their race, gender, religion or anything else that makes them “different.” God says, “This needs to change. Instead of fighting with one another about our differences, I need people who can love one another through their differences. So God sent a Methodist.

Every day God looks at people blessed with beautiful homes and overflowing closets, multiple cars and generous stock portfolios. God sees how many are lonely and scared and bored and depressed and tired of superficial living. God says, “I need someone to speak truthfully and lovingly to my people and say to them, ‘There is much more to life than this. I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.’ People need spirit-filled communities where people who are different from one another who can connect with one another, engage deeply with one another, trust and forgive one another and make a difference for good in their neighborhood.” So God sent a Methodist.

Every day God looks at the children—children who are hungry, children who are having trouble learning, children being sold as slaves, children being written off as not-worth-the-effort. And God says, “I need someone to feed these children, to tutor and mentor them in school, to distribute mosquito nets and anti-malaria drugs. Most of all, I need someone to listen to them, love them, read them the stories of Jesus, and teach them they are made in my very own image which is Love. So God sent a Methodist.”

Every day God looks down on our generation of Methodists and this next generation of children and young adults who might yet be called Methodist. God says, “I have blessed you with so many gifts. I need leaders who will join me in creating heaven on earth.” Won’t you say “yes?” and let God send you.
First Day of Annual Conference  
Monday, May 25, 2015  
Hilton Americas  
Houston, Texas

Worship Celebration  
Monday, May 25, 2015, 8:30 a.m.  
Lanier Grand Ballroom

An audio recording of this time of worship is on file with the Conference Secretary and since it was mostly an endeavor of music and teaching about leading music, the transcription is not included here in these Daily Proceedings.

Business Session I  
Monday, May 25, 2015, 9:00 a.m.  
Lanier Grand Ballroom

The following was transcribed directly from the audio recordings of the Annual Conference. As such, some sentences may not be complete and grammar may not be correct as it is a verbatim account of the speakers.

Bishop Huie – “…and be seated please. We’re ready to begin this morning’s session. We started with hymn singing and some musical teaching. It is a great way to start the day. We are going to move now to the business session. So if you will come on in and be seated and give the attention now…we’ll have the roll call by our secretary and then move into our prayer.

Roll Call – Rev. Russell Hall

Rev. Russell Hall – “Good morning Bishop Huie. Good morning Texas Annual Conference. This morning I am here to announce to you that the official roll call will be all of those lay and clergy delegates registered by the end of today at 6:00 p.m. That will become our official roll call. I also wanted to take just a moment to set the bar of the conference and we will do this a couple of times throughout the conference. As we move towards voting I just wanted to let you know that on the front sections there are 4 sections and each of the 4 sections are a part of the bar of the conference. They go 10 rows back. Everybody seated within those sections is in the bar. In the back row, it is going to be the two sections that are directly on either side of the sound and video folks and the two sections next to them. The outer sections are not in the bar of the conference. Please make that note as we move towards voting. The new outer sections to make room for worship are not in the bar of the conference.”

Bishop Huie – “Friends, this morning we begin as we have for the past number of years with a Memorial Day recognition. And we are so honored this year to have a decorated veteran. One that many of you will know, but maybe not his service awards. And so, in just a moment I’ll call on Dr. Don Waddleton to come and offer the Memorial Day recognition. Dr. Waddleton is a recipient of the following medals: the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Viet Nam Service Medal with 3 Bronze Stars, the Viet Nam Campaign Medal and a Purple Heart. It is with a grateful heart that I welcome Dr. Don Waddleton and ask you to stand.”

Memorial Day Recognition – Dr. Don Waddleton

Dr. Waddleton: “Thank you. Thank you. You may be seated. It is my pleasure and honor to be here before you this morning in recognition of our veterans throughout the world.

The remainder of Dr. Waddleton’s presentation, found below, is taken directly from the report he handed in to the Conference Secretary and read verbatim by Dr. Waddleton.

On November 19, 1863, some 152 years ago Abraham Lincoln spoke these words: ‘Four Scores and seven years ago our Fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.’
Later in the same speech he said: “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can
never forget what they did here.”

As a nation we have committed, our young men and women to fight for freedom not only for our nation but for
nations around the world. Some of those brave men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives.
Others, have served with dignity, often never being the same persons on their return. The families of these
soldiers are to be commended for the sacrifices they have made and continue to make on behalf of democracy
throughout the world.

Ann Landers reminds us, a patriotic organization, NO GREATER LOVE, initiated the National Moment of
Remembrance established by Congress in the year 2000. At 3:00 p.m. on Memorial Day, Americans are asked to
honor our fallen soldiers, our active troops, our veterans and their families.

Bishop Huie, I am requesting an Order of the Day at 3:00 p.m. to have 2 minutes of silence. Then in a moment of
love, a love for those we honor and their families and a love of God and country.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you Dr. Waddleton. 3:00 p.m. is the beginning of the second business session and if you
will affirm this moment of silence that we will all participate in at 3:00 p.m. would you please say yes?”

Annual Conference – “Yes”

Bishop Huie – “Then let it be so and thank you Dr. Waddleton again for reminding us. Well said. Well said. We
turn now in this first session to the beginning of the business session of the Annual Conference and I call on our
Conference Lay Leader, Stephanie Griffin to please come forward and begin us with the laity address.”

Conference Lay Leader – Stephanie Griffin

Stephanie Griffin – “Come and see.” I’ll bet some of you have waved one of these “spirit towels”. Back in
March I had an experience that made me stop and think about the way we recognize and support each other in the
church and about how we invite others to “come and see.”

My nephew had a milestone birthday in March. He turned 18. He invited his Aunts and Uncle to come and go
with him on a cruise to celebrate. Who could turn down such an offer? Certainly not his aunts. We packed our
bags and took off determined to act and play in a manner that suggested we were young enough at heart to merit
the invitation. On the Island of Rotan we went up into the mountains to zip-line through the jungle and then made
our way to a beach to slow our heart rate and relax. But, to my rubbery legs great dismay we discovered we were
too late to stake out chairs and umbrellas. A gritty towel looked like my only option. Just as I was about to
spread my towel and collapse, I heard my sister give a loud Whoop - And a thumbs-up salute to a family I did not
recognize. She ran over, as the man said: you folks need some chairs, we are on our way back to our ship, take
ours. I stood there amazed at our good fortune as my sister talked to these strangers as if they were long lost
friends. They hugged each other, discussed what proud class of 75, and 78, they were, they asked about each
other’s children and they talked about what they were going to do when they got back home. As the family left, I
asked my sister, “Where did you know them from?” Her reply is the catalyst for this towel: she said, “I don’t
know them, they saw my cap and knew I was part of the family.” Wow, could we take a lesson?

I want to share with you some stories from across the conference where laity have raised the “Spirit Towel” above
their heads and are calling to those they meet, “Hey, come and see.” Leaders who have taken the initiative to
reach out to those in their communities and beyond to share the love of Christ and make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world.

Let me tell you about Kris, a sweet friend from my home church, First United Methodist Lindale. She is a retired
teacher and retired director of a children’s science center in our area. She has volunteered for many jobs in our
local church from answering the phones to directing the Wednesday Evening Kids Activities. Several years ago
she was diagnosed with a lung disorder and the doctors weren’t very encouraging. But this did not stop Kris she
just kept serving where God placed her. Then sometime around the first of the year she heard that the ESL adult program was going to be discontinued because there wasn’t anyone interested in leading it, mainly because of the language barriers. Kris had worked as a teacher in the valley years ago. She said, "I speak a little Spanish and she took the job. The program is growing in love and relationships with each Tuesday night meeting. It started with 3 mothers whose children were in Head Start and has grown to over 25. There are 8 to 10 women, a couple of men and many children. Kris has recruited 4 helpers who work with the children while she teaches the adults. Every month ends with a birthday party for the children who have birthdays during that month. It all came about because Kris felt God tug her hand to use her skills to reach out. She never ends a session without a personal invitation to those she is teaching to “come and see” by saying come worship with us, I have a seat available right beside me.

Last month I attended a training at Trinity East United Methodist Church in the Central South District. They are embarking upon a new pilot ministry in partnership with the Texas Annual Conference Center for Missional Excellence and a relationship with Black Methodists for Church Renewal. This pilot project is entitled “Healing Communities”. While the initiative is not new, it was nationally launched through a collaboration with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and St. John’s UMC – Downtown in 2008 with Mr. Morris Fountain serving as the Case Manager for the Homeless, Bread of Life. Mr. Fountain is a lay person who is called to touch the lives of people who are jailed and their families who face the many trials of having a family member incarcerated.

- Healing Communities is a project of caring for an offender’s family while they are incarcerated. It is designed to help families care for basic needs such as food, shelter, helping children find caring classrooms, and families find caring congregations and compassionate contacts for support.

A call for volunteers to assist with this ministry is currently going out to churches within the Central South District. Anyone who has a desire to get more information and/or volunteer is welcomed. For more information about this opportunity to serve you can contact Mr. Morris Fountain or Juanita Jackson the District Lay Leader for the Central South District. Come and see where you can serve.

There are many opportunities across the Texas Conference for Laity to respond to the call God has on our lives. Anna Rohde from the North District has a passion for helping lay men and women who have a desire to serve and discern where God is sending them. She will be our new director for Lay Servant Ministries. There are some exciting changes happening in this area as Lay Servant Ministries is being moved to Congregational Care where Rev. Jesse Brannen will help coordinate training opportunities and provide better communication through the Annual Conference web site. Training sessions for Conference Lay Ministry programs will be publicized. And pastors can help laity find places to grow our faith, develop our skills, and explore our call to be and make disciples. Come and See!

David Tapley was one of those who felt called to do more to make disciples. He and his wife, Brenda were members of Van United Methodist Church. David was a retired police officer that taught Sunday School, sang in the choir and was a church Trustee. In 2012 he felt God’s call to do more. He completed his certified lay minister training in April of 2014. David wanted to “help others to become stronger members of the Body of Christ”. David and Brenda died in the tornado that tore across the town of Van on May 10th. They were laity who left a legacy of discipleship for their church and their community and yes for each one of us in the Texas Conference. Come and see where God is calling you to serve.

How amazing that something as simple as a towel can unite a stadium filled with people. People who may not look like them, who may not have the same political beliefs, or who may not worship the same, but they have a common love and loyalty that unites them and makes them family. A family so strong they raise children to aspire to go to that college and a loyalty so strong that they recruit young people to become students there.

We are followers of Christ. We follow Him because He first loved us. We are loyal to Him because He is always faithful to us and because He died for each one of us in spite of all of our short comings. Love, Faith, and Grace unite us! The Texas Conference leads Methodism in our recruitment of young pastors, what would happen if the laity of the Texas Conference made the same commitment to recruit young disciples of Jesus Christ and raised our
children and grandchildren to aspire to be followers of Christ. What would happen to our churches if we recognized each other by what unites us and worked together to grow the kingdom. With God’s Spirit moving through us and with us we can change the communities where we live and work. We can bring peace and hope by simply saying: “Come and See.”

I have 1000 of these towels. They will be available at the Laity Session for a donation to the Advance Special, the ZOE Orphan Empowerment Program. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we raised at least $10,000 with a “Spirit Towel?” Get one and remember: We are family, we have a bond that unites us, and we have been called to lead others to Jesus Christ, to be a ray of hope in this world and to say: Come and See. And lest you think that a sporting event is the only time a Spirit towel is waved I would remind you that in Africa they are often waved in worship as an act of praise!

May God bless the 2015 Annual Conference with the love of Christ that unites us!

Bishop Huie – “Thank you Stephanie. Thank you very much. We are grateful. I’ll turn now to the report of the Core Leadership Team that will be given by Mr. Reggie Clemons.”

**Core Leadership Team – Reggie Clemons**

Mr. Clemons – “Good morning Bishop Huie, B.T. Good morning Annual Conference. The Core Leadership Team report is located on page 57 of your Pre-Conference Journal. And what I’d like to do is to give you a brief synopsis of some of the items we addressed in the Conference year.

We participated in a workshop with Episcopal Bishop Andy Doyle focusing on his new book, Dealing with Leadership at Annual Conference Levels. We also saw a clarity around the role of the Center of Missional Excellence as ministries of sending and advocacy become more prominent in the Texas Annual Conference. Kenda Creasy Dean consulted and guided us through an assessment of the future for youth and young adult ministries in the Texas Annual Conference. Conversations with stakeholders reimagining the Conference purpose and new responsibilities for the director’s role emerged. Sue Nilson Kibby returned to lead the Annual Core Leadership Team and District Leadership Team conclave. She focused on vital congregations and the significance of prayer as districts identify strategic churches for spiritual support. New church starts worked on strategic approaches, shifting more towards second campuses and partnerships for new congregations. The Vibrant Church Initiative rolled out a new change management process. The 3 foci: investing in the young, growing vibrant congregations, and developing transformational leaders; were affirmed as our ongoing emphasis into the next quadrennium. We also collaborated with the committee on the episcopacy defining the strategic needs as the Annual Conference transitions to new episcopal leadership. And finally we planned to bring a major report in 2016 based upon an assessment of the Texas Annual Conference’s vision and mission. Bishop Huie I submit report.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you very much, Reggie. We appreciate the clarity of that. It is printed in your program…they are not action items here, so we simply will receive this report with great gratitude. I turn now to the consent calendar and call on the Rev. B.T. Williamson to walk us through the consent calendar and additional action items that will come later.”

**Consent Calendar – Rev. B.T. Williamson**

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop Huie, good morning Conference. You’ll find the consent calendar, the preliminary consent calendar, on pages 30 and 31 of the Pre-Conference Journal. It has been reviewed at all of the District pre-conference meetings and I move its adoption.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, it is before you. Is there any discussion? Yes.”

Rev. Jon Stouffer – “Bishop, Jon Stouffer, First United Methodist Church in Brenham, and I would move that we take the Lakeview report off the consent calendar.”
Bishop Huie – “All right, is there a second? All right, it has been seconded. All right, is it a…”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “What page is that on Jon? Do you happen to know?”


Rev. B.T. Williamson – “thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. All right, so you’ll remember that in the Conference Rules…I’m moving out here because that spot light is making it pretty hard for me to see you in the middle here…so the Conference Rules call for a 25% vote in order to take something off of the consent calendar. So kind of remember where the bar of the conference is and we have a motion and a second to remove the Lakeview report from the consent calendar. This could be debatable…I don’t know how much you want to debate…generally no debate, all right. Let’s just see here if you would support removal…this is a report…if you would support the removal of this report from the consent calendar would you raise your hand. If you would not support it would you raise your hand. We have a lot of people not voting or else I’m not seeing it. Let me consult with my colleagues up here.

(Bishop Huie consulted with Rev. B.T. Williamson and Rev. Russell Hall)

Bishop Huie – “O.k. we all agree. We think that it prevailed Jon, so it will come off the consent calendar and we will try to log it in to probably Wednesday morning, because that is potentially the only place that we have time. All right, if you’ll just make a note of that and it will come back, we hope…it will come back…sometime on Wednesday. All right, is there…if you are ready to approve the rest of the consent calendar would you please raise your hand. All right, thank you. If there are any opposed? Thank you, then it is so approved.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, the second item of business is that in the addendum to the Pre-Conference report we sent the recommended nominations for the last year of this quadrennium. As you came into the plenary session today, you should have received a copy of this or as you registered. It was delivered electronically, there are copies up here at the secretaries’ desk, so I would move that we place this on the table for 24 hours and that we take this up at the time for the affirmation of the institutional trustees tomorrow.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve this motion to…and this will come before you at this later time…please raise your hand yes. If not, would you raise your hand for no? Then it is so approved.

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

Bishop Huie – “All right, we turn now for another action item…we turn to a report and action item from Congregational Excellence and Jeff Olive, the Rev. Jeff Olive will help us understand and then make a decision about a process of discernment.”

**Congregational Excellence “A Process of Discernment” – Rev. Jeff Olive**

Rev. Jeff Olive – “My report is found on page 112 and 113 in your Pre-conference Journal. You can go ahead and take a look at this. It is titled *A Process of Discernment for At Risk Congregations* and, in essence, the process allows the congregations to just have an opportunity to just evaluate their ministries and determine the best path forward for them. It is going to be overseen by the Center for Congregational Excellence and Connectional Resources. It has the endorsement of our Bishop and cabinet, so the process is before you. Bishop I move for its adoption.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, it is before you for adoption. Is there any discussion here? I don’t see any. Are you ready to vote? If you would approve this process for discernment would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. It is so approved. Thank you very much.”
Bishop Huie – “All right, we’ll turn now to the report of the Chancellors and I saw Ms. Mary Daffin come in a little while ago. Oh, she’s coming in right here. All right, thank you. Mary Daffin and Frank Jones are our chancellors. Mary will be making the report today and I just want to say a personal word of appreciation for two very hard working chancellors who give their time and their energy to support the work of this annual conference. They’ve got many emails and many phone calls in the last year and we are grateful…Mary to you and to Frank. Thank you.”

**Chancellors’ Report**

Mary Daffin – “Thank you Bishop and Rev. B.T. Good morning conference. Well the first thing I would like to announce to you is that there are no law suits pending against the Texas Annual Conference. There are several items that I will highlight that we worked on during the conference year. Two lawsuits – one with a very favorable result. The Conference was sued by Harris County on behalf of itself and several other county wide taxing authorities…foreclosure tax suit. Actually, the suit named New Beginnings Tabernacle, but the Texas Annual Conference was named as an additional defendant. As it turned out, the Conference had actually sold that property to New Beginnings, so we filed a motion to have the Conference dismissed and the Conference was dismissed from that lawsuit. So we are no longer part of that. But in July of 2014, the Texas Annual Conference joined with the other four Texas based annual conferences of the United Methodist Church to file a friend of the court brief in support of a writ of…to the US Supreme Court that was filed by the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Northwest Texas Conference. That suit was seeking review of a Texas Supreme Court case and the Conference was interested in the issues that were presented in that case as they dealt with trust principals and applicable law for deciding disputes surrounding local church property that is held in trust by the denomination. As it turned out, the US Supreme Court denied the writ. It was denied in November of 2014, but notwithstanding that denial, your chancellors are constantly monitoring cases that are cropping up more and more often now dealing with trust issues and those are concerns of the Conference and of the denomination and we will continue to monitor those lawsuits. But, as it stands my original announcement, we are not part of any lawsuit that is pending. So that is my report Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. And again thank you for much hard work. Those lawsuits didn’t just disappear overnight, let me say. And again, we are very grateful for the work that Mary Daffin and Frank Jones do on our behalf. Having completed the Chancellor’s report, we will turn now to our first retiree video. It is one of the treats in this Annual Conference is being able to hear from our retirees kind of all through the conference and if we could roll that first retirement video right now. Thank you.”

**Retiree Video #1**

This video honored Rev. Bruce Wood

Bishop Huie – “That’s great. That’s great. Well friends we are right on time here and thank you for that and thank the presenters for that. So what we will do is at ten o’clock we will begin the laity session. It is down on the second floor in the Ballroom of the Americas. The clergy have a little bit of a longer break and we will start the clergy session at 10:15 in this room. So you are dismissed to the various groups and we will see you back here later.”
Eddie Erwin presided and welcomed everyone.

Bishop Huie was welcomed and introduced. The Bishop encouraged participants to attend the workshops during this annual conference that would be led by Gil Rendle. Additionally, Bishop Huie presented information about the Ambassadors Grant and emerging leaders. She informed the laity that promotional materials and speakers were available to come to our churches. She finished by highlighting a variety of accomplishments throughout our districts.

The next speaker, Anna Rohde, talked to us about lay servant terminology. She said that there were a series of lay ministry opportunities and trainings. Essentially, there are 4 positions: basic (this is the first step in the training process), certified lay servant, lay speaker (this is the step that trains to pulpit preach), and certified lay minister (this is the group that ministers within the community, church and district). There is more information available on each of these through our district offices. She noted that currently only 2 districts were offering training.

Our next speaker was Leah Taylor. Her focus was on discussing Laity Unleashed with us. This program is an experience that is designed to help people discern their call in life and how to implement that call. She led us through the following Top 10 list (top 10 laity items done like David Letterman’s top 10) as it related to the information she was presenting:

10. Yummy food
9. Reading thought provoking books
8. Exploring new styles of prayer
7. Building new relationships with other laity who are discerning God’s call
6. Retreats
5. Building a toolkit, serves you as you serve God.
4. Respond to other participant’s strengths
3. Experience communion around a campfire
2. Discovering your greatest gifts and the community’s greatest needs.
1. Stepping out in faith.

She stated that there have been 2 graduating classes thus far and encouraged us to consider this opportunity for ourselves.

Our next speaker was Scott Atnip and he discussed General and Jurisdictional Conferences with us. He explained that 9 lay and 9 clergy delegates will represent our annual conference in Portland next year. He also reminded us that there will be 9 lay and 9 clergy delegates that go to Jurisdictional Conference next year and that this would be the place where new bishops would be elected. He stated that some of the General Conference issues included: administrative structure of the United Methodist Church (local as well as global), considering starting a provisional General Conference in Asia, the need to get resources into mission fields, and resolutions and statements about what we believe as United Methodists.

Next, Pastor Mike from Bear Creek United Methodist Church shared with us a Discernment Tools handout designed for clergy and laity to be aware of the process of ordination. He stated that ordination can be a very long and cumbersome process taking a minimum of 6 years to become an elder. These discernment tools are designed to help people navigate the process and keep everyone on the same page. He insisted that you make better quality decisions with a consistent process. He reminded us that if someone is called to ordained ministry, they should
begin their process with a conversation with their pastor, followed by a meeting with their district superintendent, and then a conversation with the SPRC of their local church. These early meetings are designed to discern an individual’s call and their appropriateness for ordained ministry. They are critical in the process. He said, “Being nice kills the church. We are called to be kind, not nice.”

Our session was ended and we were dismissed to lunch.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Jones, Associate Secretary
Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve these persons for these 3 committees would you raise your hand yes? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand no? Thank you. There they are so approved.”

Unnamed Presenter – “Question 19 – a) Who are the certified candidates. That is as listed with one addition. We would add Vernon (Bert) Snyder. And also if you are a certified candidate or a mentor for our certified candidates, would you please stand so that you can be recognized. Thank you so much. b) Who have had their candidacy for ordained or licensed ministry accepted by District Committee on Ordained Ministry in another annual conference, as listed. And c) Who have been discontinued as certified candidates for licensed or ordained ministry. That is also as listed.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Are you all following this? We went through a lot of pages there. But if you would approve these candidates as listed would you raise your hand please? Any opposed? Thank you, they’re so approved.”

Unnamed Presenter – “Question 20 who have completed the studies for license as a local pastor and are now not appointed. As listed. Question 21; we will go through all of the parts and then vote at the end. Full-time local pastors, part-time local pastors, c is students from other annual conferences serving as local pastors and enrolled in a school of theology, d is students who have been certified as candidates in your annual conference and serving as local pastors in another annual conference, and e is persons serving as local pastors while seeking readmission. Bishop we will vote on question 21 as listed with corrections.

Bishop Huie – “All right, we are at the top of my page 8 and I think yours are numbered the same so…these have been reinstated as local pastors number 23. If you would so approve these persons would you raise your hand? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you they are approved.”

Gail Ford Smith – “Question 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 is as listed. B other Methodist denominations, as listed. 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. They need a vote please Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. We need to vote on question number 25. If you would approve these persons, would you raise your hand? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. Then they are so approved.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – Question 26 without vote, who are affiliate members? As listed. Question 27…This is the fun part. (there was some question between Rev. Bruse and Bishop Huie in a sidebar as to whether question 26 requires a vote) We are not sure, we are going to go ahead and vote anyway. Look at number 26, affiliate members without vote, you see them listed there.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve these would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If not, would you raise your hand? Thank you. If we needed a vote, we have one in the affirmative. Thank you.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “We’ve done it correctly. Now for the fun part. It is our privilege as a Board of Ordained Ministry to recommend to you provisional members for commissioning as deacons and elders. I would like to introduce them to you now and ask you to elect them. First of all those being recommended for provisional membership as deacons. If they would come forward as we say their names: Victoria Campbell, Heather Gates, Cynthia Riddick, Lindsay Smith, Amy Walker. No note after Amy’s name in your BAC, you see the word online? That’s an error. You can cross that out. That will be corrected on the Business of the Annual Conference. Just as a word of information we would share with you that Amy is in compliance, as are all of our
candidates, we affirm the policies of the general board of higher education and ministry. Right now we allow 2/3 of degrees to be online. So just a word of note there. Thank you, Amy, for letting us use you for that information. And now those provisional elders, if they will come forward as we call their names: Jacob Breeze, Kimberly Carney, Daniel Childs, Roger Clayton, Thomas (Trey) Comstock…is the next name on your Business of the Annual Conference, Trey’s wife is due with their first child this week in Atlanta. Graciously the north Georgia Conference has agreed to commission him on our behalf, but we will be electing him into provisional membership today in abstenia… Todd Cooper, Erik Gragert, Thomas Harper, Tammy Heinrich, William Lucas, Trenten Oliver, Paul B. Richards, Raegan Seaton, Stephanie Snyder, Cameron Supak, Andrew Wolfe, Trisha Lynn Woodruff, Daniel Yang.

Bishop Huie – “You can stand now. We are going to vote too. You can stand. We are so pleased to have these persons before us…let me…if you’ll just stay standing. Let’s do a standing vote here. If you would…this is question 28a…if you would approve these persons on my right, your left, these five as provisional deacons would you say hallelujah? Are there any opposed? It must be a whisper. All right, they are so approved. And if you would approve these persons in the middle and on my left, your right, as provisional elders, would you also say hallelujah? And give all of them another round of applause.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “They will be commissioned before us at the commissioning and ordination service tomorrow night at seven o’clock. We invite you to celebrate with us. Commissioning candidates you may be seated.”

Bishop Huie – “And just as a reminder, I’ll be asking the historic questions to these folks in the afternoon session so that laity can be a part of that process and participate as well. We move now to question number 29.”

Rev. Shelli Williams – “O.k. question 29a, as listed except that you need to remove William Llana. He will go now to question 42b on your report. And then 29b; provisional deacons who became provisional elders? Deborah DeFrank Tipps.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “More celebrations! The Board of Ordained Ministry has had the privilege of working with these residents we are about to introduce for 2 years and they are amazing. We recommend them to you as full members of the annual conference and for ordination as deacons and elders. And those will be separate votes, but first we will introduce them to you and ask them to come before you. First, for ordination as a deacon and full membership: Laurie Key Purcell. Now as ordination as elders and full membership: Nathaniel Murff Bledsoe, Philip Eugene Grose, Wade Kenan Harman, Joy Bracken Johnston, Melody Lynn Kraus is already a full member of our annual conference…she is ordained as a deacon, but she has felt a call during her years to the order of elder, so she spent 2 years preparing to make this transition…she is already a full member, you won’t need to vote for her there, but we’ll be voting to ordain her as an elder…Continuing with the elders who will be ordained into full membership: Mireya Guerra Martinez, Bryan James Moore, Richard Preston Morgan, Jason Jon Nelson, Gregory Clark Smith, Jennifer Michelle Veres-Schrecengost, and Benjamin Otto West.

Bishop Huie – “All right, these are in front of you. They require a 2/3 vote. I will start with 12a…Laurie Purcell our deacon, if you would elect her to be a full deacon, would you raise your hand please? Any opposed? Then you are so elected. I will take this next group as a whole group. If you would elect these persons in front of you whose names have been called…if you would elect these persons as elders would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? And would you give all these persons a standing ovation?”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Again, we invite you to be a part of the holy moments when the bishop ordains these Tuesday night in this space.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, moving down to question 38 who have been received by transfer from other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church? Nathan Eugene Firmin from Central Texas and #41 who have been transferred out to other annual conferences of the United Methodist Church? Matthew Stephen Weaver. Question 42 is for Carol Bruse.
Rev. Carol Bruse – “Question 42, who are discontinued as provisional members: a) there are no names; b) by voluntary discontinuance…this is where Shelli Williams our BOM registrar mentioned where we would move the name of William Llana (PE) Provisional Elder. It does require a vote Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would…this is a voluntary discontinuance, but it does require a vote as you’re voted into the annual conference so you have to be voted out of the annual conference. If you would approve this discontinuance would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. It is so approved.

Rev. Josh Hale – “Good morning. I am Josh Hale. I am the conference relations chair for the Board of Ordained Ministry. Questions 43 and 44 have to do with clergy on location. You’ll see the names that are listed there. You’ll see under 43.a.2 those that have been honorably located previously, that there are a number of names about which we have little information. If you are a clergy person who has an honorably located clergy from our conference in your congregation, we would ask that we would like to stay in touch with them, update our records and just know how they are doing. You’ll find a corrections slip at the very end of your report. So please fill out a correction slip if you know of an honorably located clergy person in your congregation so that we can help keep track of these. Our Board of Ordained Ministry staff and leadership have done a very good job and we’re very thankful to Clergy Excellence for helping us to keep track of these folks. We would like your help as well. Thank you.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Question 46: who have had their conference membership terminated? A) there are none; B) by withdrawal from ordained ministerial office, Rebecca Love and Eric Ryburn. Bishop this does require a vote.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, again as you’re voted in so even voluntary withdrawal you must be voted out. If you would so approve the withdrawal of these two persons would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. It is so approved.

Rev. Josh Hale – “Question 47 who have been suspended? It is as listed. Question 48 those who have died during the last year. 48c) What elders have died during the year? Effective clergy: Michael R. Proctor, May 20th. Retired clergy: Kelley Black…I tell you what, let’s stand for this. Let’s stand for this. I invite you to have a spirit of prayer as we read these names and then we will pray afterwards. Michael R. Proctor, Kelley Black, Andrew Brown, Sr., David Ray Davidson, W. Carroll Fancher, Eugene F. Fitzwater, Thomas Edward Gray, James Harrell Griffin, William Morris House, Bruce Emmett Krause, Charles Edward Lang, Sr., Allan Wayne Middleton, Nita Louise Newman, John Daniel O’Donnell, James Hugh Powell, Oscar Taylor, R. June White, Robert Edwin Willis, Edward H. Wilson, Joe R. Young. E) what local pastors have died during the year – retired local pastors Damon Lee Wyatt. Let us pray. Eternal God, our times and our seasons are in your hands. You know the beginning of each of us and you know the ending of each of us. You know our stories more thoroughly than we know them ourselves. And so we commend these saints to you in the great love of Jesus Christ. May their memories be cherished by loved ones, by congregations they have served and here among this body. May our spirits respond in the same way that theirs did; with willingness, with grace, and with great love for your people. In all that we do may their example guide us. May comfort and peace and eternal life follow them and us forever more; in Jesus Christ. Amen. You may be seated.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Just a word friends, we in Board of Ordained Ministry are grieving, with all of you, the recent death of Mike Proctor. He was an integral part of our clergy fellowship and we miss him dearly. His family has requested that his name not be read this year at the memorial service. Because they’re not going to be able to be present and prepare for that. So just know that when we come to the memorial service, his name will not be part of this year’s remembrance. But he will be remembered next year. He needs to be on this report so that it is correct. Many of you know his memorial service will be Wednesday at 4:00 at St. Marks. Thank you.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “Question 49: What provisional or ordained members (elders and deacons) have received appointments in other Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church while retaining membership in this Annual Conference? As listed. In addition Kilumba Kalamba from the West District going to West Ohio.”
Rev. Josh Hale – “Question 50 involves provisional, ordained members or associate members on a variety of kinds of leaves of absence. We do have corrections under 50a)(1) Please remove the name of Kilumba Kalamba. You just heard he’ll be receiving an appointment. Please remove the name of William Llana, he was already addressed under 42b. Please remove the name of Allison Thompson, who will also be receiving an appointment and will be showing up in question 73a shortly. Bishop A (1) requires a vote.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve these persons for voluntary leave that are listed here under 50 a, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “Voluntary leave personal for five years or more requires a vote of 2/3, you see the name there.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so these persons…so initially you start with a majority vote and then as the years go up it takes a 2/3 vote. So if you would approve the persons listed in 50 a) (2) for five years or more, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “50 a) (3) Family leave, you see the name listed there, less than five years and is a majority vote Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve this person with a majority vote would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. It is so approved.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “And family leave of five years or more in 50 a) (4).”

Bishop Huie – “All right if you would approve Elizabeth Sutherland raise your hand please. Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. It is so approved.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “The last name in question 50 is transitional leave section 5 there. Please add the name of Jenny Lannom from the Central South District a full elder effective date January 1, 2015. This does not require a vote. Number 52: who have been granted medical leave due to medical or disabling conditions? You see the names that are listed there. Bishop this requires a vote.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you’ll look over those names listed there. The Annual Conference, the clergy session has to approve these for medical leave. If you would so approve would you raise your hand please. Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “Question 53: What members in full connection have been retired? Deacons (a) this year as listed and we are going to invite you all to stand as we read your names. And then we will invite a vote of thanks and a prayer at the end of reading all of the names. Wineva Hankamer, Stephanie Scott. Retiring this year as deacons. Retiring as elders this year: Suzan (Sue) Carter, Sara Curley, James Foster, Kathy Harrell, Keith Jenkins, Joel McMahon III, William (Bill) Newcomb, Linda Pierce, D. Nick Sholars, Sandra Smith, Harold Travis, James (Jim) Turley, Karen Williams, Bruce Wood, and Mark Young. You’re going to be invited to turn several pages. We are going to continue with number 54: what associate members have been retired (a) this year – Danny Carter and Ruby Nelson. 56: Who have been recognized as retired local pastors this year: Carla Reed, Karl Mervin Scott, Willie Sears, Randall (Randy) Smith. You have been hearing from them already in the retiree videos and those will continue throughout Annual Conference, but right now let’s show our appreciation for their ministry and their service in our Conference. I invite you to remain standing as we say a prayer of blessing over them. Lord Jesus Christ you have commissioned disciples and apostles. You have given clergy and ministers to serve your body the church in this world and we are thankful for each one of these who have completed their term of service as clergy in this conference. We thank you for their wisdom and their insights. We thank you for their compassionate care. We thank you for their courage, for their justice and their righteousness. We thank you for their fearless proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As they begin a new season in their lives, may you continue to minister through them so that together we might join you in your eternal kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen. Thank you.”
Rev. Carol Bruse – “On behalf of Vicki Harris, who serves the Board of Ordained Ministry and represents specialized ministry and professional certification, number 58 – question 58 – who are the candidates in process for certification in specialized ministry? They are listed. Question 59, who is certified in specialized ministry? You’ll see those names listed and I’d like to read to you 2 names who will be certified this year – those will be presented in the full session this afternoon: Susie Crafton and Rhonda Taylor, both receiving special certifications in Christian Education.”

Unnamed Speaker – “In question 63: Who are certified as lay ministers? That is as listed.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “Before we proceed with question number 69, we left James F. Jackson off that list that we just read. He says he’s not coming back. So let’s greet that with a round of applause for him as well. Number 69: what diaconal ministers have been granted leaves of absence? There is the name of Patricia Ricks there. Bishop this requires a vote.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, if you would approve the leave of absence for Patricia Ricks would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. It is so approved.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “Question 73: who are approved for less than full time service? A) would you add the name please of Allison Thompson serving Baskam at half-time.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, we need a 2/3 vote on these. We are at 73a. If you would approve these persons for less than full-time, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. Gail Ford Smith – “b) what deacons in full connection and provisional deacons are approved for appointment to less than full-time service? Those listed please.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, these persons are listed. They require a 2/3 vote. If you would approve these deacons appointed to less than full-time service, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – Thank you all. Before we leave the Business of the Annual Conference report…three things. First of all that very last page is a corrections page. The Business of the Annual Conference is work in progress. It does not become official until it is turned into the general church as statistics for all clergy persons and then printed in our journal which will happen in a month or two. So please help us to go on to perfection if you will. If you’ve found errors on this report, we can’t take those verbally. We don’t want to waste your time, but please do complete this corrections sheet. You can hand it to our registrar Shelli Williams, to our candidacy minister or to any of us. We would be happy to hand it to them and get these corrections made. Please include your name and email address and phone number there so we can contact you. Two other things, quickly. This is a labor of love. We are scared to count the number of hours that go into trying to perfect this report every year. And I would like for us to take a moment to name the people who have worked so hard to produce it. First of all our brand new candidacy manager Deann Saxton, who serves in the Center for Clergy Excellence. Of course Shelli Williams our Board of Ordained Ministry Registrar. To Nancy Hinshaw in the Bishop’s office, to the Bishop, to Gail Ford Smith and her office, to all the district superintendents, and the district administrative assistants, let’s say thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Let’s also say thank you to Rev. Carol Bruse who chairs this and managed to get us through this report in 45 minutes.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Thank you. We’ve bought ourselves a little time to celebrate in a few other ways. So if you would turn now to the other handout we have before you, which is this Tools for Discernment. We have just a few good news items to share and a couple of announcements and celebrations and then we will get you to lunch. So Tools for Discernment here at the clergy session 2015. You should have that hand out before you. Many of you remember last year at this time, we placed before you three tools intended to help you as pastors and as
ministers when people come to your offices and your altars interested in ordained ministry. We know that this incredible system of candidacy is complex and scary and long. You may have noticed that each year during this quadrennium the Board has tried to take a few minutes of this session to just give you the information you need to help them. So that one day that they can be here and be leading the Annual Conference after you and I are retired and gone. And so there are 3 discernment tools we talked about last time that we hope will help you. We laid them before you for an entire year for feedback and now they will become effective. And so now our district superintendents and district committees will expect you if you receive a person interested in ministry, to actually complete this first tool for pastors and to give that to the district office. One tool for pastors. You will complete this if someone comes to you with a call to ministry, or if you identify and convince them to consider that process, you’ll complete this and give it to your district superintendent. And this is effective June 1, so any time after June 1 of this year if you would complete that tool.

The second tool in front of you is for District Superintendents. It will help them interview these candidates interested in ministry. Help them again assess as pastors consider if that is the appropriate place that their gifted for ministry, considering all the options for ministry. And they’ll complete this tool and give it to the District Committee.

Then the third one is for Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committees. To help them understand what candidacy is and what the options are and to help communicate to the candidates as they interview them for certification. All of these will be expected after June 1st then to be completed and sent to the district office. So let me just show you if you’ll keep turning in the packet I’ll show you where in the process they fall and how to complete them.

So do you see this simple guide to candidacy? This always gets a laugh. Candidacy is anything but simple. Right? But we’re so proud that we got it on one page that we keep printing this for you. So when a United Methodist member experiences a call from God to ministry they go usually to their home church pastor or campus minister. Then that’s when that tool would be completed. And then you would give that to the district office and the district superintendent would need to complete that tool before they’re recommended to go to the candidacy summit. And again, June 1 is the deadline for people going to Candidacy Summit. And then you see that when these candidates are in process, that’s when their SPR Committee would need to meet and review them and that tool would go before they could become certified candidates, which is key for them either becoming licensed local pastors or moving on to ordained ministry. The candidate check lists are here. If you will look at the arrows, that’s where these 3 new tools are required. Inquiring candidate, you see the home church pastor and District Superintendent. If you’ll continue turning through the exploring candidate checklist, on the back you’ll see there the Staff Parish Relations Committee would need to complete these checklists. This may sound boring or just like one more requirement, but one of our goals as a board is to help the future leaders of our conference and to remove more requirements toward the beginning of the process, so that candidates coming in considering ministry could be fully informed, fully discern the role they are walking into. Before they spend 40K dollars and 4-7 years of their life preparing. So we’ve moved these requirements early on to help you as pastors and ministers and district superintendents and SPR Committees, and district committees make wise decisions. So that they are made early on in the process and not later. Meanwhile, next clergy session, we will be focusing on this end, the latter end of the candidacy process, which these folks are in right now…the commissioning and ordination, the residency time in between. We’ve reduced some of the requirements there. So the number of hoops as we affectionately call them in the candidacy process have not increased, they have decreased. We’ve just moved the emphasis to the beginning. So, any questions, all of us board members are here and we’ll be recognizing those during our full session. As many of them are laity and we would be happy to answer your questions, but thank you for your attention to these new requirements. We are very grateful.

We have a celebration of sorts. But first there is an announcement. I would like to call forward Cheryl Smith, Rev. Cheryl Smith chairs our clergy accountability ministry area in the Center for Clergy Excellence. And Cheryl Smith has some good news in an announcement for you today.”

Call Rev. Cheryl Smith

Call Rev. Cheryl Smith
Rev. Smith – “Good morning, back in last year 2014, the clergy accountability group/committee launched a survey and that’s over a year ago. Many of you have wondered what has happened to that survey and I know that because you have messaged me on FaceBook, you have called me on the phone, you have emailed me and you have grabbed me at meetings. And so I want to assure you that that survey has not been lost. It is just taking a great deal of time to analyze the first portion of that was quite objective and we hired a statistician to analyze that for us. The probably most important part of that was not objective. It was all those questions that you took your time to answer and to individually share your comments with us. There were over 300 people approximately, 33% of our clergy responded to this survey and so we have a great sample. Thank you for taking your time to do that. And there were many, many questions that allowed places for comment. We received between 50-70 comments on every single question. So the people who are charged with dealing with this also have full-time jobs. And it is taking us a while to sort through and categorize and analyze all those anecdotal comments. We are working on it; we’re getting there. And the good news is that at the gathering this fall there will be a time to report the data that we received and analyzed, as well as to engage in conversation with people that have an interest in this. That’s all of us, but I have to tell you the bishop and the cabinet have not received these results yet either, because they’re not fully analyzed. They will received the results and there will be a time at the gathering where we can all engage in dialogue and you will get a chance to find out what you said as well as what might be suggested by that data. Thank you.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Thank you Cheryl and thank you for your work in that ministry area. We are grateful and we look forward to that. If you still have your finger in your Tools for Discernment, turn, to the certified candidate check list. Most of you know if a United Methodist is interested in ministry they begin by coming to you, coming to your office or altar, then you recommend them to the district superintendent, then the district superintendent recommends them to attend the Candidacy Summit and there they begin to discern where they are called. If they feel called into licensed or ordained ministry, then they go to after their Staff Parish recommends them and their charge conference, they go to the district committees. Which then can certify them. Certified candidates can then serve as licensed local pastors and then can continue on to ordained ministry through a series of other educational steps. What you may not know is that we seem to have a lot of focus always in our annual conference and during these sessions on the ordained route; those who become ordained. And surely there are a lot, almost 500 of us serving as provisional and full elders and 42 serving as provisional and full deacons. But did you know that we have 219 licensed local pastors serving among us. Amazing. 91 full time and 128 part time. I want you to all stand and let us applaud again and thank you for your ministry. These people are not guaranteed appointment and they are out serving our local churches.

We also want you to know, there are some special people we want to recognize and then one we would like to honor if he’s here. District committees support and train, for the most part, our wonderful part time and fulltime local pastors and we are so grateful for their ministry. But know also, here at the Conference level, we actually have 7 officers dedicated to supporting and nurturing and encouraging and serving this segment of our clergy leadership. And I would like to recognize them and ask them to stand and I want you to know who they are and thank them for their work. Linda Snow is the chair of the fellowship of local pastors and associate members. She has done an amazing job during this quadrennium of leading. Danny Barrett, was actually our former local pastor registrar. He is no longer doing that, but he did it for decades. Wade Harmon is our current local pastor registrar. Jerome Brimmage and Jeff McDonald if you’ll stand. They co-lead our licensing school every summer. Doug Wintemute is our clergy mentor chair. He assigns mentors to every local pastor in our conference. And we have two course of study representatives; Jimmy Reese and Jim Crawford. Let’s thank them for their service.

Jim Crawford, are you in the room? Are you here? Could you come forward? Come on. Many of you know our course of study school has trained literally hundreds of local pastors to serve our conference. Jim Crawford retired last year after 11 years of leading our course of studies. Jimmy Reese took over. Jimmy was not able to be with us today. He will be stepping down and becoming assistant director. But Jim is turning 80 years old this year. He’s retired several times. He says he’s preached his last sermon yesterday at First Huntsville, but he has done more to train and nurture local pastors in this conference than any of us. We have a gift for you, for your sacrifice from the Board of Ordained Ministry. But Jim thank you.
Next year and during the session we will talk about all those who support our residents and candidates for ordained ministry. Many of you know Mike Proctor was a huge part of the creation of our current residency system. So we are hurting today with all of you all and we will be remembering him again next year as we share the good work being done in that area. But for now, I just wanted to say thank you. I wish you could all stand here for just a minute and get to see the joy our Bishop gets to have seeing your faces. It is such a privilege. Today as our culture becomes increasingly secular, and the none’s and the done’s increase, representing the gospel of Jesus Christ has become increasingly difficult. And I am so proud to be among those of you who have the courage and the grace to keep being faithful to our common calling. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you all friends. Thank you Carol for a great report and moving us through, because these lunches and that is an important time, remember 1:30 the memorial service starts. So we want to give you adequate time. I’ve asked Carol if she would offer a prayer of blessing and dismissal for all of us here and then you are dismissed until 1:30.

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Let us pray. Holy God as we celebrate this Pentecost season, let your Holy Spirit fall upon all of us. Give us your power and presence and peace. As we celebrate Aldersgate day again, Lord, open our hearts to be warmed by you. Help us experience your grace that we might extend it to all we meet. As we celebrate Memorial Day, Lord, make us grateful for those who have served and sacrificed. Make us willing to serve as they served. Wherever needed. That all people might one day see you; that all wars might cease. That one day we all might be united as one. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, we pray these things in the name of your Son and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Memorial Service  
Monday, May 25, 2015, 1:30 p.m.  
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Business Session II  
Monday, May 25, 2015, 3:00 p.m.  
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Bishop Huie – “We’re at 30 seconds. All right friends, it is 3 o’clock and by our own action today, we made a decision to take this moment at three o’clock when Americans across the nation and indeed around the world, will pause for 2 minutes in silence and remember those who have given their lives for our country, for those who are still in uniform. Those families and the sacrifices they have made and those who are veterans and after that 2 minutes, Dr. Don Waddleton, whom you heard this morning, will come and offer the prayer. Let us be in silence.”

Dr. Don Waddleton – “Almighty God, we come with thanksgiving in our hearts for the ways in which you have touched our lives and the ways in which you allow us to be in your kingdom. We remember those who gave the ultimate gift of life itself, just as you gave up your son and washed our blood to make it pure. We give thanks, O God, for those who have been willing to serve, not only in our nation, but in nations throughout the world, trying to bring democracy to each of those countries. We thank the families for allowing their sons and daughters to be a piece of history. Now God we ask that you would lead us in the ways that you would want us to go. And most of all, let us be kingdom builders for you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bishop Huie – “Thank you all. Now our first order of business this afternoon is to see and hear another one of those wonderful retirement videos. So if you all will roll that video and following that we will move immediately to the Board of Ordained Ministry report.”
Retiree Video #2

This retirement video honored Sue Carter

Bishop Huie – “We turn now to Rev. Carol Bruse, the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry who will lead us in the report from the Board of Ordained Ministry and introduce us to some very fine folks.

Board of Ordained Ministry – Rev. Carol Bruse

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Thank you Bishop. It is my privilege to be before you today. Our report is on page 62 and page 63 of the Pre-Conference Journal. I represent an incredible network of amazing people, who together prepare leaders for the future of the Texas Annual Conference. Licensed and ordained clergy. I would like to recognize at this time our Board of Ordained Ministry…its 70 members strong with both clergy and lay as well as 9 district committees as well as all 9 district superintendents and their district administrative assistants are key parts of that. Dozens of mentors who mentor candidates and clergy out of the compassion of their hearts and also the incredible Center for Clergy Excellence. We are so privileged to be supported by director Gail Ford Smith and associate director Michelle Hall and our wonderful new candidacy manager Deann Saxton. Would you all stand and let us thank you for your amazing work year round.

Thank you. Earlier this year, the Board of Ordained Ministry recommended and this morning the clergy session elected some incredible people I’m thrilled to introduce to you now. 23 provisional members have been elected and they will be commissioned tomorrow night at our commissioning and ordination service. And 13 full members of our annual conference have been elected and they will be ordained deacon and elder tomorrow night at the commissioning and ordination service. I would like to introduce them to you now. First of all these are candidates for provisional membership and they will be commissioned deacon: Victoria Campbell, Heather Gates, Cynthia Riddick, Lindsay Smith, Amy Walker.

These candidates have been elected provisional elders and will be commissioned elder tomorrow night: Jacob Breeze, Kimberly Carney, Daniel Childs, Roger Clayton, Thomas Comstock, Todd Cooper, Erik Gragert, Thomas Harper, Tammy Heinrich, William Lucas, Trenten Oliver, Paul B. Richards, Raegan Seaton, Stephanie Snyder, Cameron Supak, Andrew Wolfe, Trisha Lynn Woodruff, Daniel Yang. And elected this morning to provisional elder, but not with us today is Thomas Comstock, his wife is having a baby this week in Atlanta so very graciously, the North Georgia Conference has offered to commission him later this month on our behalf. But he joins this class of awesome provisional ministers.

Bishop Huie – “Friends I want to take just a minute of our time to let you get to know these folks a little bit better. We will have to be brief, but I want you to get to know them a little bit better, I’m going to start right here. Let’s pass the mic down and tell us your name and what church you’re from and where you went to seminary. All right, here we go.”

Provisional Deacons introduced themselves again.

Bishop Huie – “And those were you deacons right there. These are going to be…next crowd provisional elders.”

Provisional Elders introduced themselves again.

Bishop Huie – “What a great group. What a great group. Thank you all.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Thank you provisional members you may be seated. And now I would like to introduce to those who were elected this morning as full members of the Texas Annual Conference and to be ordained deacon and elder. First, to be ordained deacon, Laurie Key Purcell. And now those to be ordained elder: Nathaniel Murff Bledsoe, Philip Eugene Grose, Wade Kenan Harman, Joy Bracken Johnston, Melody Lynn Kraus, Mireya Guerra Martinez, Bryan James Moore, Richard Preston Morgan, Jason Jon Nelson, Gregory Clark Smith, Jennifer Michelle Veres-Schrecengost, and Benjamin Otto West.
Bishop Huie – “Again, what a great group. It has been our custom in the last few years for the bishop to ask the historical questions to those who are about to enter into full membership with the whole body present here and so on behalf of the whole body, I want to invite you to hear these questions and to respond to them. And just in case I should ask you a question, then maybe to respond again. So here are the historic questions from John Wesley. Asked of every pastor since the days of John Wesley and the early Methodist movement. Have you faith in Christ? Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you earnestly striving after it? Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to his work? Do you know the General Rules of our Church?

*Up to this point all questions were answered in the affirmative by all candidates.*

And I know you know them because I have asked that question in this room a lot of times. What are they? But today I want to ask you a different question…assuming you know the General Rules…which is how would you explain them to someone who is under the age of 35 and a none…that is an unaffiliated? How would you talk to them about what Methodists believe that the General Rules. Nathan, you look like you want to answer this.”

Nathan Bledsoe – “Oh man. I thought that Jay was kidding when he told me you were going to hand me a microphone. I think that it is important to tell people first and foremost about love and about grace and how they intersect and that is what we talk about as Methodists all the time. That the love of God is so wonderfully available to all people by grace…not by anything that we do…that we get to live in and participate in it period. And that that is something that we are already experiencing and that when we chose to deepen that relationship and to seek after God with who we are, the possibilities are endless and life just can’t…is for now and forever…is so so wonderful.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, well done. I had to come up with one that you hadn’t already figured out the response to. Anybody else want to take a crack at the same one? All right, I have others. O.k. So then after, do you know the General Rules, will you keep them? (Yes) Have you studied the doctrines of the United Methodist Church? (Yes) After full examination, do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures? (Yes) Will you preach and maintain them? (Yes) Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity? (Yes) Do you approve of our church government and polity? (Yes) Will you support and maintain them? (Yes) Will you diligently instruct the children in every place? (Yes) Will you visit from house to house? (Yes) Will you recommend fasting or abstinence both by precept and example? (Yes) Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God? (Yes) Are you in debt so as to embarrass yourself? (No) They know the right answer even if it is tough. Will you observe the following directions: 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 amend our rules, but keep them, not for wrath, but for conscience sake? (Yes) So not in the historical questions, but a couple of you take a crack at this: Why are you a Methodist and coming into Methodist ministry with the people called Methodists? Same question I asked last night. What is it about the Wesleyan movement, the Wesleyan understanding of Christianity that calls you into its leadership? Who wants to take…Go for it.”

Rev. Jenny Veres-Schrecengost – “I was invited to UM Army by a friend and had not attended church at all before that. So at UM Army I experienced United Methodism and the gospel to be receiving the profound love of God and sharing that with the world. And that translates to the personal piety and the social holiness that is so important to Methodism and so relevant to our world.”

Rev. Phil Grose – “While I deeply, deeply appreciate Wesley’s understanding of prevenient grace and going before us and while I deeply appreciate his understanding of justifying grace, that moment when we fall before God and dedicate our life to God…what the Wesleyan understanding of sanctifying grace really resonates within me because in that moment when we decide to set our life on a path of following Christ, it has really just begun and I need God’s grace now and forever. And I hope to continue in that path of discipleship in a way that is contagious.

Bishop Huie – “Well said, well said. All right, one more. Who else wants this? All right, Joy.”
Joy Johnston – “When I was in my early 20’s I had not grown up in church nor had my husband, and I became a United Methodist because of radical hospitality. It was the only church I contacted that was willing to welcome a non-Christian, non-member and help them get married. And that’s…the radical hospitality and love of grace that is shared through United Methodism continued for the rest of my life.”

Bishop Huie – “Isn’t this a great group, give them a round of applause. Well done. Well done.”

Rev. Carol Bruse – “Thank you so much full members of our Annual Conference. Our newest members, we invite you again to come tomorrow night at 7:00 in this space for the holy moments when they will be ordained before us as well as the others commissioned. Thank you. One more thing to celebrate on behalf of Vicki Harris who coordinates professional certification for the Board of Ordained Ministry, we have two persons who have achieved the honor of receiving their professional certifications, both in Christian Education this year. We would like to award those at this time. For those of you who do not know about professional certification in the church, it is a way to recognize individuals who have been called to serve in a particular area of specialized ministry. It takes quite a while. It takes quite a bit of work to achieve this incredible honor. Training in Bible, theology, United Methodist studies, skill development, professional experience, work hard to have a community of support, be accountable to the Annual Conference. There are 12 areas of specialized ministry, both of the candidates we are certifying today are specialized in the area of Christian Education. Susie Crafton and Rhonda Taylor. Susie Crafton broke her arm severely. She is in the hospital and she is not able to receive her award, but she has worked so hard on it. The bishop allowed one of her pastors, her associate pastor Rev. Kristin Bogart from Atascocita United Methodist Church, who will be receiving this honor from the bishop on her behalf. And also we will welcome Rhonda Taylor.”

Bishop Huie – “The Apostle Paul wrote, now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord. And there are a variety of activities, but it is the same God that activates all of them in everyone. To each is given a manifestation of the spirit for the common good. We have gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us. Sisters and brothers in Christ, these women standing here today have discerned the special gift of Christ’s Holy Spirit given to them for specialized ministry in the church and the world. They have sought and met the standards of training, experience and continuing study necessary to achieve and maintain excellence in specialized ministry. They have met the standards of the United Methodist Church for professional certification and have been approved by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and your peers and friends on the board of ordained ministry for professional certification. It is fitting and appropriate to recognize your achievement and to bless you for special ministry. Here are the certificates that will go…you get that one and Rhonda here’s yours. And if you will give me the privilege, I will pray over you. Gracious God, by the gifts of your Holy Spirit, you have blessed your servants to bring grace, healing, mercy, hope, and love to your children. Help them to understand and live into the mystery of your love. Deepen their sense of purpose as they fulfill their gifts in ministry. Susie I bless you to be a faithful servant among the people. Rhonda, I bless you to be a faithful servant among the people. Fulfill your gifts given to you given by God’s Holy Spirit. Strive to excel in them and serve with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. Amen. And let us all pray. 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 these persons. Continue to bless and keep them as they go forth and serve in the light of your sacred kingdom. Amen.”

Bishop Huie – “All right that concludes the report. I believe that concludes the report of the Board of Ministry and I would like to ask those who are offering the benefits report and equitable comp, if all of you would just come on up here and we’ll be ready to go. I believe Rick Sitton will be giving the pensions report, Sharon Sabom health and then we will move directly into equitable comp.

**Benefits**

**Pensions – Rev. Rick Sitton**

Rev. Rick Sitton – “Good afternoon Bishop and members of the Conference. I’m here to represent the board of pensions and their work. You’ll find the report on pages 85-110. I’m going to presume that you read it last night
when you could not sleep. It is a lengthy report and I encourage you to read it all. I want to thank Gail Ford Smith, Mark Hellums, Nancy Slade, Barbara Kilby, all the members of the committee and I would like for them to stand and at least thank them and have the Conference thank them. I’m very mindful of time and so I’m going to run through the highlights of the report with slides on the screen for you and you can follow in the journal. The 2016 budget recommendations will continue to recommend that the clergy retirement funding remains at 13.8%. This is unchanged from last several years, based on the changes that General Conference brought to us. Past service rate for pre 1982 pension plan, which is the highest in our denomination, we’re recommending it be $849 which is up from $840 from this year. Continuing to fund the surviving spouse rate at 75%. We also recommend the continuation of funding the pre 1982 requirement group and their health benefits subsidy. You’ll find that on page 93. The church apportionment we are asking to be reduced from 700k to 500k that’s a $200K decline and that’s because of good stewardship we’re passing on. The Conference program expense, which is paid for through the pension reserve fund, we are requesting to be at $24,250. There are other budget recommendations as well. One time contribution of 1.5 million dollars is being made to the pre 1982 plan to fully fund it at 100% which is our joy to do. The reimbursement, also over 65, age 65 and over, for medical expenses, a total of over 1.1 billion projected. We also want to continue the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan, UMPIP, the non-matching contribution of 3%. Now the churches fund 1% of this and that’s included in the overall request. The Board of Pension funds 2% and that’s funded out of the reserves. On July 1, 2015 the pension unrestricted reserve fund is going to have a name change that will bring some clarity and it will simply be called the Pension Reserve Fund. Currently we use our pension reserve fund to fund many commitments that help clergy in this Conference. There is a provision for 2% UMPIP non-matching contribution and also the provision of 1% of the defined contribution match…which enables clergy to sustain a level prior to what happened at General Conference a few years ago. This is able to be done because of the pension unrestricted reserve fund. We’re also paying the retirement medical and benefit administrative expenses…and you’ll also note, there is a decrease in the reserve position, an actual decrease of about half a million dollars. For the 2015/2016 budget projections, we are projecting to spend down the reserve fund a little bit. We have a very healthy balance and we believe that based on 4% estimate of growth that this is healthy to do for the conference. This healthy reserve fund levels will allow our conference to provide an incremental increase in benefits to plan participants and expense relief to local churches in the form of reduced apportionment and billing rates. So as a result, in 2015, the projected reduction in the reserve position is about 1.176 million and the projected reduction in the reserve position overall is 2.352 million. Keep in mind that that is because we are making a one-time payment of one and a half million dollars. So that we can fully fund the pre 82 plan. Bishop Huie, I submit the Board of Pension’s committee report for the acceptance by this annual conference.

Bishop Huie – “All right the report is before you. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, if you would approve the Board of Pensions report would you raise your hand please. Thank you. Any Opposed? Thank you. Then the Board of Pensions report is approved. Thank you very much.”

**Health – Rev. Sharon Sabom**

Rev. Sharon Sabom – “I’m Sharon Sabom. I’m short and so is my report. I’m going to give you the highlights because I trust that all of you this evening, will read the most exciting report you have in the pre-conference journal. I would like to thank our hard working committee and our investment committee. If you’re here would you please stand. They have done an absolutely outstanding job. Thank you. Here are the highlights. In 2016 we have some upcoming changes. We are going to ask for an apportionment reduction to the tune of $800K starting in 2016. Can I get a hallelujah? This reduction is due to the success that we have had in the wellness program and the accumulation of the rate stabilization reserve. On your high deductible plan, in order to stay in compliance with the federal regulations in 2016, the adjustments will be announced during the open enrollment time. Other wonderful 2016 changes coming. Hearing aid benefit will be extended to full time laity employees. The increase in the out of network out of pocket maximum will change from $47,700 to $52,000 per year. And due to the success of the wellness program, we have a 1.9 million surplus and of that we are going to use $100k to fund the intentional interim ministry program. It funds our increase in wellness incentives. In 2015 the wellness incentives are $2,700. And in 2016 will be $177,000 and the remaining will be in our rate stabilization fund. The pre 92 retiree group health subsidy will be $75 for the retirees. And $55 for the contingent annuitance. Retiree Medical subsidy remains at $190 per Medicare eligible participant. I draw your attention to the slides on the
wellness plan changes. We’re especially happy to announce the wellness plan for youth. We are going to keep getting everybody involved. I invite you tomorrow to attend the group health fair benefits fair that we are going to be having from 8 until 4. It is going to be on the 4th floor. All of our group health vendors will be there. You can get your blood pressure checked. You can get your body composition checked. That is the muscle to fat ratio. Do that after the blood pressure. And then go take advantage of the massage chair because you…you know. We will also be having available pedometers. If you haven’t gotten yours yet to enroll in the walking program, then by all means do it. I encourage you to find new ways to use that pedometer. To get those points and get those rewards. Tying it to your dog and sending the dog to chase the squirrel is not how we do it and you know who I’m talking about. And if you watched Clay Whitaker last night during the praise service and I wanted to put my pedometer on his belt just to get…I have found that if you go dancing at Luckenbach, and you get a really good two step or really fast polka you can really rack up those points. Let us know how you are getting them. Bishop, I would like to ask that this report be accepted, but we do it with enthusiasm because it is so good!”

Bishop Huie – “All right. So with enthusiasm, will you approve the report from health benefits as it has been presented to you? Is there any discussion? All in favor…I started to say do a jumping jack, but that is really too much…would you raise your hand please? All right, any opposed? All right, thank you so much and it is so approved. All right, we come now to the report from the Equitable Comp Committee.”

**Equitable Compensation – Lorraine Brown**

Lorraine Brown – “To Bishop Huie and to members of the Texas Conference, my name is Lorraine Brown and I am the chairperson of the Committee of Equitable Comp for the Conference. Bishop, the first thing I’d like to do is we need a correction in our report to be made; and that’s on page 66. In the bold writing that is up under the chart on page 66, where we said that we all churches that are on equitable comp, that we require them to provide an annual salary increase; we would like to change that word to encourage because we can’t require them.

Bishop Huie – “All right. Do you see where she is? It is in the bold-faced type and in the top line all churches slash charges receiving equitable comp are encouraged instead of required. All right, that is the correction. All right.”

Lorraine Brown – “Last year we were asked to go back to the committee and work on a year for increase in salaries and we added a District Superintendent to our committee as we worked and so we are recommending minimum salaries for full time appointments to be raised basically $1,000 in 4 years. An example of that is that a full time elder would go from $36,204 in 2015 to $37,000 in 2016, $38,000 2017, $39,000 in 2018, and $40,000 in 2019. Minimum salaries we have not raised since 2010. And we are again encouraging that those that are on equitable comp would do an annual salary increase so that you can reach these minimum salaries by the year of 2019. And on the last sign that we have, it defines what minimum salary is and how it applies to a full-time appointment and it consists of the total cash salary, housing related allowances and utilities, and that’s utilities paid for the pastor, and accountable reimbursements – and utilities are not included in your accountable reimbursements. Bishop Huie, I would like to say I appreciate the work of our committee and the staff and if there are any members of the Equitable Comp Committee out there would you please stand? Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. Thank you. We have several people standing in the back.”

Lorraine Brown – “And Bishop, we would like to move for our report to be adopted.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, the report is before you. It will become part of our policies should you adopt it. The correction is included in the report along with these figures. Is there any discussion? If you…oh, yes sir?”

Rev. Ralph Hale – “Ralph Hale, Stewart Memorial in Buffalo. On page 73 you’ve got qualifications to receive equitable compensation and they’re under review. We are not approving these are we?”
Lorraine Brown – “They’ve been approved previous years back. I think 2010 or 2011. We have them in this report for your information, but they’ve already been approved.”

Rev. Ralph Hale – “The 75 in attendance…”

Lorraine Brown – “Yes, that was a few years back.”

Rev. Ralph Hale – “They’ve already been approved?”

Lorraine Brown – “Yes”

Rev. Ralph Hale – “All right.”

Bishop Huie – “Yes, it has been approved previously. All right are you ready to vote? Other conversation? Are you ready to vote? If you would approve this Equitable Compensation Report, as you have seen it presented and corrected, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. Then, it is so approved. Thank you very much, all three of you. We are grateful for that. Well, thanks to everyone we are actually just a bit ahead. I saw Dr. Gil Rendle in the room just a moment ago. Gil are you here now? I’m not seeing him. All right. B.T. has got some announce…oh, here he comes. All right. So we’re going to go ahead and hear from Gil now, and B.T. has a couple of announcements. And that, if we have any extra space, that will give a little bit of extra time for you at the dinner break. My privilege to introduce Dr. Gil Rendle. Probably the best way to say, and I shared this with the laity, it would be hard to name anyone who has been more influential in United Methodism in the last few years than Gil. He does not hold an office anywhere; at least that I know of. He is on the staff of Texas Methodist Foundation in leadership ministries. Prior to that, he worked for the Alban Institute, remember he is a clergy member of his own Annual Conference. I met Dr. Rendle about, I think it is 11 years ago now. He did a presentation to the South Central Jurisdiction bishops and when he walked out of the room, the bishops looked at one another in amazement and said, ‘he knows us better than we know ourselves.’ And that became the beginning of now a 10 year – 11 year – connection and we have a peer learning group among the South Central Jurisdiction bishops. We meet twice a year and Gil leads every single one of those groups. He’s now doing that in several other places in the jurisdiction…I mean in the denomination. And then again in the Jurisdiction and this would include our superintendents. He has, for the last 11 years, led a peer learning group for all the district superintendents in our jurisdiction. It also meets twice a year. So it has been a great opportunity for learning. I’m honored, Gil has been a tremendous help to me personally as I have tried to lead this Annual Conference and lead the church. And he is a friend, a colleague and Gil, I’m glad you’re here. So, now, see after all of that you’ll just – I don’t know how you’re going to blow them away, but I’m sure you will.”

Dr. Gil Rendle – “Well, first of all thank you bishop. Thank you so much and for such a warm and wonderful introduction. Now the one thing that I would say is that Bishop Huie has said that I’m supposed to know bishops better than they know themselves. Therefore, I’d like to suggest that perhaps our bishop has moved ahead too quickly. And there are two more items of business to be cared for, which I would defer to, as long as you don’t forget that introduction.”

Bishop Huie – “Gil, this is why we love you. B.T. just told me I jumped up too fast. You all have seen me jump up too fast before. This is not new to you. We’ve got two other items of business here. It was on the next page and I just moved in too quickly. So, we want to take a minute here – y’all don’t forget Gil’s introduction here because I’m skipping it on the next side – we want to take a move here to welcome of two former Rio Grande Conference churches that will be transferring into the Texas Annual Conference. At this time I would like for those who are associated with these churches, Diane McGehee would you come forward. We have El Buen Pastor and El Mesias and I believe that Dr. Robert Lopez who is the Crossroads District Superintendent from the new Rio Texas Conference and Dr. Ruben Saenz who is executive director for Mission Vitality in the Rio Texas Conference, at least I heard that both of them were able to stay this afternoon and could be here as well. So Diane, please make the introductions.”
Rev. Diane McGehee – “So, we have the great honor and privilege of welcoming two former Rio Grande Conference Churches into our Conference. They are in the Central South District, so I want to invite District Superintendent Andy Noel to come forward. But first I want to introduce you to Robert Lopez who is the district superintendent for these churches in the Rio Texas Conference so that he can call them forward and introduce them.”

Rev. Robert Lopez – “Mis hermanos y hermanas...(he greeted the Texas Annual Conference in Spanish first)...Friends, I simply want to give a welcome on behalf of Bishop Jim Dorff, the Episcopal leader of the new Rio Texas Conference. We have been in existence only 5 months, praise the Lord. God has been doing a new thing. I know that sounds a little bit like a cliché, but He has indeed been giving us a new vision, a new direction, new purposes and new challenges. And today, I come simply to say goodbye, if you will, to two very wonderful historic Rio Grande churches. El Mesias in Houston and El Buen Pastor in Houston. And I know that many of them are here and bishop if it is in order, I would love for them...maybe you all could just come and line up here so that folks can see you if you are here (applause)...I simply want to just give one word of encouragement to these wonderful congregations (he spoke to them in Spanish about the upcoming opportunity)...we are indeed sad that you are leaving, but at the same time we are excited that you have a home right here in the Texas Conference. So Bishop Huie I represent these wonderful churches and as they transfer from Rio Texas to Texas Conference, they are here before you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Let me invite you all to turn around because folk would love to see your faces and that would be great. (Applause) The transfer of these two churches actually requires two votes. One by the Texas Annual Conference receiving them and one by the Rio Texas Conference offering these two churches. And it begins with the receiving and then two weeks from now at the Rio Texas Conference they will also vote. And then it will all be official. So if I could ask this Annual Conference, would you receive these two congregations El Buen Pastor and El Mesias, into the Texas Annual Conference, would you please say yes? And welcome them!”

Rev. Andy Noel – “It is my delight, on behalf of the people of the Central South District also to welcome our new sisters and brothers in Christ into our district. Thank you so much and welcome to you all.”

Laity rep – “On behalf of the laity of the Central South District, we welcome you to join us.”

Bishop Huie – “We are delighted, we are delighted. All right, and the final item of business before we turn to Gil is our next retirement video. And if you would focus your attention on the screen we’ll be able to see our third retirement video today.”

Retiree Video #3

This retirement video honored Sandra Smith

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Order of the Day – Gil Rendle
Monday, May 25, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Clergy Delegate Elections
Monday, May 25, 2015, 7:00 p.m.
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Rev. B.T. Williamson made an announcement at about 10 minutes till 7:00 p.m. reminding folks of where the bar of the conference is and that visitors needed to be seated outside of the voting/bar area of the Conference.

Bishop Huie made some opening remarks and encouraged people to get settled.

Rev. Russell Hall, as invited, restated the bar of the conference.
Rev. B.T. Williamson explained that we would walk the body through the voting process. He described the handheld unit and how to use it by placing the card in the back of the unit. He described each of the applicable buttons on the device and how to utilize them. He stated that the tellers would be posted throughout the bar of the Conference to help if there were problems.

Rev. B.T. Williamson restated the bar of the Conference. Having explained the appropriate way to use the handheld voting devices, he continued with a description of how multiple positions within each ballot would be handled. After being given time to enter a vote for a position, the Bishop will announce that that position is closed. Once all positions for that ballot are complete, the Bishop will announce that the ballot is closed. After a few moments of calculation, we will present the results on screen, announcing first how many were elected, then who was elected in what order and with how many votes. After the elections are announced in this way, we will only read the top 22 names that follow the elections, but we will show all results for each ballot on the screens.

A description of invalid ballots was given that included the reasons that a ballot may come back invalid. These reasons included: voting for the same candidate twice, not voting for all positions in a ballot, entering a number that was not in the system, or voting for a person that was previously elected. An opportunity was then given to practice with the devices and see the result.

The body was reminded that if they were having any problems to please raise their hand and someone would come to them.

There was a question raised from the floor about what was needed to win and the formula for winning votes was provided.

**Election of Clergy Delegates to General Conference**

At this point, Bishop Huie opened the voting for the first ballot and proceeded to walk through voting for all 9 positions for ballot 1. What follows is a summation of the voting results for the election of clergy delegates to **General Conference** as provided by Lumi Voting:

### Ballot Number: 1

- **Positions open:** 9
- **Number of Elections:** 2

Information on those elected (in the order elected):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1047</td>
<td>Chap Temple</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1028</td>
<td>Kenneth Levingston</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ballot Number: 2

- **Positions open:** 7
- **Number of Elections:** 0

### Ballot Number: 3

- **Positions open:** 7
- **Number of Elections:** 1

Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1029</td>
<td>Morris Matthis</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ballot Number: 4  
Positions open: 6  
Number of Elections: 3  
Information on those elected:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1050</td>
<td>Laceye Warner</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1048</td>
<td>Ben Trammel</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1051</td>
<td>Steve Wende</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 5  
Positions open: 3  
Number of Elections: 0  
Information on those elected:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 6  
Positions open: 3  
Number of Elections: 2  
Information on those elected:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1021</td>
<td>Matt Idom, Jr.</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1014</td>
<td>Janice Gilbert</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 7  
Positions open: 1  
Number of Elections: 0  
Information on those elected:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 8  
Positions open: 1  
Number of Elections: 1  
Information on those elected:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1023</td>
<td>Edward C. Jones</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concluded the clergy delegate election for General Conference delegates.
**Election of Clergy Delegates to Jurisdictional Conference**

Bishop Huie then opened the voting for clergy delegates to *Jurisdictional Conference*. What follows is a summation of the voting results for the election of clergy delegates to *Jurisdictional Conference* as provided by Lumi Voting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ballot Number</th>
<th>Positions open</th>
<th>Number of Elections</th>
<th>Information on those elected:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1053</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vote ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ballot Number: 7
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 8
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 9
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
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<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 10
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

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<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 11
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 1
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1038</td>
<td>Tom Pace</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Election of Clergy Delegate Alternates

Bishop Huie announced that we were ready to now vote for the 4 alternates.

An unnamed individual from the floor made a motion to take the top 4 remaining vote recipients from the last vote for Jurisdictional delegates as our 4 alternates.

The motion was given a second and Bishop Huie reiterated what the motion on the floor was.

Jason Burnham made a speech against the motion. With no other discussion, Bishop Huie called for the vote. The vote did not carry and voting resumed in the same fashion as before, but now for the 4 clergy alternates.
What follows is a summation of the votes for the 4 clergy alternates as provided by Lumi Voting:

Ballot Number: 1
Positions open: 4
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 2
Positions open: 4
Number of Elections: 2
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1040</td>
<td>Rob Renfroe</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1010</td>
<td>Justin Coleman</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 3
Positions open: 2
Number of Elections: 2
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1018</td>
<td>Vincent Harris</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1037</td>
<td>Jeff Olive</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concluded the clergy voting for delegates.

Bishop Huie stated that there would be a blessing of the delegation lay and clergy together and then she asked for us to stay with her for just a minute more. Rev. Doug Wintermute was invited to give an update on some of the storm damage throughout the East Texas area and he offered a prayer and we were dismissed for the evening.

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**Laity Workshop with Gil Rendle**
*Monday, May 25, 2015, 7:00 p.m.*
*Ballroom of the Americas*

This workshop was held while the clergy were voting on delegates and is available in both audio and video formats in the secretary’s records.

**Second Day of Annual Conference**
*Tuesday, May 26th, 2015*
*Hilton Americas*
*Houston, Texas*

**Worship Celebration**
*Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 8:30 a.m.*
*Lanier Grand Ballroom*

An audio recording of this time of worship is on file with the Conference Secretary and since it was mostly an endeavor of music and teaching about leading music, the transcription is not included here in these Daily Proceedings.

**Business Session III**
*Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 9:00 a.m.*
*Lanier Grand Ballroom*

Bishop Huie -“Please, come in and find a seat, please. I know the crowd is thin, I’ll speak to that in just a moment and if I may I would like for us to begin this business session with a word of prayer. New every morning
is your love great God of Light. And all day long you are working for the good in the world. Stir up in us a desire to serve You, to live peacefully with our neighbors and to devote each day to Your Son our Savior Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Friends I know that many of you are watching the television, perhaps some of you are not. I also know that if you look around you see kind of a thin crowd here. The reality is that those storms that blew through last night did lots of damage here in Houston, some schools HISD are closed; many other schools are doing late openings; lots of businesses are having their employees not come in today. We had lots of questions about what are we going to do here with the annual conference. The answer to those questions my friends is that we are going to keep going. And the reason is not because, I mean not because we are trying to be leaving people out it’s the simple reality that we are under contract to this hotel, we are under contract to our computers that do the voting machines so it is incumbent on us to be able to just keep moving along. Now we are hoping that the weather is showing a break in the rain which you can see that break right now, although by later this afternoon they are saying about 30% chance of rain again in Houston. But we are hopeful that the water –it is going down – and we are hopeful that we have got hundreds of people that are calling in, texting us on twitter and Facebook saying – saying what we are saying - we are continuing and that we are hoping that the waters will recede enough so that certainly by the time the afternoon session begins at 1:30 and we move into the voting for delegates for laity that the water would have gone down low enough that people who are staying in other places in Houston and those who live here will be able to come. But in the meantime we … Methodist reality is those present and voting even when we are in this kind of setting where people are trying to get here but they cannot. Let me do a brief word on what I know what people have talked to me about in terms of damage throughout the conference. There have been as you know if you are watching the weather, there have been some tornadoes there’s been a lot of heavy wind and so Henderson appears to have had some damage to the church – it doesn’t look like it is major damage but a dollar store there is collapsed so people from Henderson I think have already headed back. Jacksonville looks to be okay again lots of downed trees lots of broken limbs lots of more minor damage. Here in Houston it’s the easiest way to see is all the television stations that are local are running loops of what’s going on. Mostly high water situations here at least as best I can tell from the news this morning. So there may be others of you I am sure we will hear other reports throughout the day about what’s going on and if you will come up – if you know something that you would like to share just write it down and give it to BT and what we will do then is at the beginning or the end of each session just try to let you keep up to date. Because I know you are concerned about folks and about our congregations, our church property, but also so you can hold them in your prayers and so you can make a connection with them as we go forward. So that’s basically where we are and with that what we will do now is start the morning session of business and that begins with the retiree video and then we will go directly to the CF&A report. So join with me in watching the retirement video first.”

Retiree Video

This retiree video honored Stephanie Scott.

CF&A Report

Stacie Hawkins: “Bishop Huie, brothers and sisters of the Texas Annual Conference it is again my honor to serve on the Council of Finance & Administration and my privilege to bring to you our report for 2015. Would all the members of CF&A, if you are here please stand so you can be recognized at this time? Amen. Thank you for your service to the Council. We also offer our gratitude to our treasurer, Dr. Elijah Stansell and his entire staff for how they lead the conference in the fiscal operations daily. God bless all that you do for the conference. Is Dr. Stansell here, or any of his staff here? Amen. And now we pause to say thank you to you Texas Annual Conference – you have shown really that you are committed to transforming lay & clergy leaders, equipping people to lead others and pass Christian discipleship and we celebrate you today. If I may borrow from Reverend Danny Yang, your soy sauce can definitely be seen sprinkled throughout the conference, as demonstrated by your faithful connectional giving. We especially celebrate the east and west districts today for paying 100% of your apportionments. Bishop Huie, there are several parts of our report today, I would first like to call your attention to the rules found on page 123-125 of the pre-conference journal. They include the special dates, the deadlines, and other pertinent information for the upcoming year. These items are informational only and do not require … approval. We do have two recommendations; however that require approval from the annual conference today. The first item for approval is regarding the Emergent Leaders Endowment. Bishop Huie, in your episcopal
address you shared the intent to invite congregations to invest in the next generation of clergy by contributing to this endowment. CF&A has approved the request to approach our local congregations and we would like to place this before the annual conference for approval at this time.”

Bishop Huie: “All right that is properly before you… Do you want to do each one of these separately? All right, so it is properly before you it comes from the Committee, is there conversation about this? For or against? Are you ready to vote? If you would approve this recommendation from CF&A would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed? Thank you, it is so approved.”

Stacie Hawkins: “Our second item for approval is the 2016 Budget found on pages 150-153 of your pre-conference journal. Please disregard the heading it says 2015 Budget it should say 2016 Budget. The core leadership team along with center leaders and CF&A have all reviewed the budget and we are pleased to submit this budget for 2016 in the amount of $22,753,159. This represents a small decrease you notice from 2015 and we just can’t say enough about the commitment on the part of our center leaders, how they ensure that we are faithful stewards of what the local congregations give to us. So we thank you center leaders. The 2016 Budget is before you Bishop Huie and CF&A request its approval at this time.”

Bishop Huie: –“All right it is before you is there any conversation? Yes, just step right up to the microphone. Thank you”

Rev. Jim Welch: “Bishop, I would like to move that one portion of the budget is removed for discussion. In the budget on page – well, I don’t have the page number – there is a line item under the missional area for Texas Impact and I would like to take that out of the general vote on the budget and discuss it separately. I would so move that.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, so what we are talking about here is a discussion for that one line item. That’s a proper motion before you. Is there a second to his motion to look at Texas Impact separately? That line item. All right now is there – let me give you the privilege in speaking to it first and then I will see if there is discussion?”

Rev. Jim Welch: “There will be discussion, Bishop. By the way I am Jim Welch from Kingwood United Methodist Church and the reason to pull that, while I am in deep sympathy of much that Texas Impact does it is a lobbying organization that’s put together within the state of Texas from various, various bodies, Christian bodies within Texas that lobbies the Texas legislature and while they do wonderful work there’s portion of what Texas Impact does that I think would run counter to the general approach of what this annual conference might take to that and while I am appreciative of what they do, in particular around one item and that’s around environmental issues I really think we need to think long and hard about rather we or not we lend money and support to that lobbying organization. So that’s the purpose of taking it off for separate discussion Bishop.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, so we have a little bit, you’ve got his purpose for taking it off with a little bit of the rational so we will do that. So what you are going to vote on right now is are you separating this, this line item for which there will be for and against discussion if you so desire. You are voting on do you want to pull that out from the whole budget or do you not want to pull it out from the whole budget. Do you understand what you are voting on? All right, so you are not voting on Texas Impact at this moment, you are voting on rather you want to take it out, take the line item out for separate discussion. All right, if you are in favor of pulling it out for separate discussion would you raise your hand? All right, if you are opposed would you raise your hand? All right then it is taken out for separate discussion. Now we can have the discussion about Texas Impact and rather or not as an annual conference you want this funded. Ok Jim?”

Rev. Jim Welch: “Thanks Bishop and thanks annual conference for that. Over the years Texas Impact has done wonderful work. My friend, Randy Smith, has been head of Texas Impact and continues to serve on their board and some of the lobbying that they do particularly in regards to what happens in Texas prisons, what happens with children, what happens with sex trafficking, all those kinds of things are wonderful in what Texas Impact does but there are other issues which they address and lobby on behalf of the church that do not speak to the issues that many of us support. One of those is the ongoing discussion between environmental agencies but the state agency
on air control and the federal agencies on air control and while I am certainly no expert on this I think it would be beneficial to us if we withdraw that money. I wish the money that we gave to Texas Impact could be channeled in different ways; I wish we could specify but we can’t do that. If we give money to it it would support things that I think many of us would not support.”

Bishop Huie: “All right”

Jim Welch: “And I’m not going to try to speak as an expert here but I think there are some here that will.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, let me say thanks to that, now let me get, let’s get the other side. I’m trying not to have to turn the timer on just yet but let me try, I see someone at this microphone and then we’ll be, I’ll try to go back and forth between the two. All right.”

Rev. Diane McGehee: “Director of the Center of Missional Excellence. This is item in my budget. Texas Impact does an incredible job for us speaking on our behalf on issues on property taxation. As Jim has mentioned trafficking, on issues just recently about rather or not legislation is going to be adopted that would allow the church to be sued over things that are really a matter of religious decision making. And we have folks on Texas Impact who are members of the Texas Annual Conference who represent us well, who are our voice and even with the respect to the environmental I am not an expert either but sometimes in order to accomplish a purpose there are certain sorts of ways that things need to be approached that we might not particularly understand in terms of the legal implications and everything else so I just think this is a matter of trusting that we have people on Texas Impact who are committed to the gospel, who are committed to trying to live that out for us. They may not always do that perfectly but I would advocate that we allow it to remain in the budget as an important piece of our advocacy as a conference.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, thank you now. Is there someone who wishes to speak for, on the other side, for the motion? All right, yes sir?”

Jake Anderson: “I am an environmental attorney and also an adjunct professor at the Houston Law School where I taught clean air act class. My first familiarity – and I am a delegate for Kingwood UMC. My first experience with Texas Impact was about four to five years ago and I was taking a look at some of their environmental comments and I noticed one that they had stated, they said that the US EPA declares TCP’s air pollution permit system violates the clean air act. Being a professor and doing this for a living I know that’s almost completely wrong. Most of the system of course has been approved…since then Texas Impact has initiated litigation with other environmental groups against US Environmental Protection Agency as well as TCQ as well as much of the industry in the Houston area and the energy industry. Although I very much support what we are doing in terms of, and think the church needs to speak more to, protecting the environment when it comes to the varying details about how we implement this. I think there is a role for church, a role for the clergy and there is a role for the laity. There are many members writing from this body and we all have different gifts but when it comes to the technical details of how we implement this I think that is best done by the people that are the laity and those that serve Christ the best we can in our civic capacity. I will leave you with that but would encourage all of us to look at this issues and to think about what is the proper role of the laity and to trust that role and to trust that the Gospel is working through the laity as well as the clergy.”

Bishop Huie: “All right thank you very much. Now I see another hand here so this would be a speech in favor I am assuming of the Texas Impact line item remaining in in the budget.”

Dr. Randy Smith: “Thank you Bishop and members of the annual conference. I am Randy Smith, a retired pastor now but for 16 years I have served on the board of Texas Impact. Most recently as secretary, vice-president, treasurer, president, and now serve as past president on the Texas Impact Board and thereby serve on the executive committee of Texas Impact. I don’t have time today to tell you all that Texas Impact has done on behalf of the religious community of this state. But I will ask a few questions just to see if some of you were aware that some of the ministries and work that you do in your local churches have been impacted by the work of Texas Impact. How many of you have a summer feeding program in your church? Some of you do. Well you
can thank Texas Impact for working with the Texas Agricultural Commission to get you the funding that you get that makes it possible to do those programs in your local churches. Now the issue here seems to be on the environmental issues. I have been in conversation, long conversations for multiple years with Mr. Anderson and he knows that. We have had major long emails all about this. Mr. Anderson has made his points very clearly and generally he has been fair in his way of recording them. But this last time he went over the line as far as I am personally concerned when he basically said that we have entered into suits against major corporations who are in the oil and gas industry, that’s not true. Texas Impact has never entered into any legal proceedings against any oil and gas business whether it is located in this state or this city or not…”

Bishop Huie: “Randy, one minute, one minute remaining.”

Dr. Randy Smith: “I understand that Bishop, we have never done that. What we have done is entered into a, into litigation that is designed to clarify who is going to be issuing permits in the state of Texas. Will it be the EPA? Or will it be the Texas Quality organization, TCEQ, I am so used to using TCEQ I can’t remember their real name. We entered into that legislation or order to be able to know who is was we were supposed to work with on environmental issues because right now in the state of Texas it is not clear … who will be issuing permits …”

Bishop Huie: “10 seconds”

Randy Smith: “So I would ask you to let us do our work. Trust us. We’re not going to sue Exxon. We’re just not. We never have and we never will.”

Bishop Huie: “Ok thank you. All right you have heard 2 speeches for and 2 against, is there more conversation or are you ready to vote? All right so what is in front of us here is the motion to remove the Texas Impact line item from the conference budget. If you are in favor of that you would vote yes, if you are opposed you would vote no. Do you understand what you are voting on? All right so if you are in favor of the Welch motion to remove that line item would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. The motion is defeated. So let’s go back to the conference budget as it is before you, and the whole budget is before you. Is there more conversation? Are you ready to vote on the budget? All right, if you would approve the conference budget as it’s been presented including Texas Impact would you please raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. The conference budget is approved.

Stacie Hawkins: “Thank you Bishop. Lastly Gil Rendle shared yesterday that the United Methodist Church is the healthiest he has ever seen it and the applause wasn’t that great. I encourage you to continue to move outside your comfort zone, dispel the chatter of what can’t be done with what we already have and watch the Lord move like He has never before. You never know what you have right under your nose. There’s a story of a man who fainted in the middle of a busy intersection on a stifling hot day. Traffic quickly piled up in all directions and a woman rushed to help him. When she knelt down to loosen his collar a man emerged from the crowd, pushed her aside and said “it’s all right, honey, I’ve had a course in first aid.” The woman stood up and watched as he took the ill man’s pulse and prepared to administer CPR. At this point the woman tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Excuse me when you get to the part about calling a doctor, I’m already here.” Annual conference, we thank God that we have all we need, all we need is already here. Bishop Huie this concludes our report.”

Bishop Huie: – “So if you would approve thank you. If you would approve this report in its entirety would you please say yes? Any opposed, no? It is so approved. We move now to the report of Trustees and Reverend Keith Broyles is coming right up. Thank you Keith.”

**Trustees Report**

Rev. Keith Broyles - “Last year during annual conference we brought on Reverend Scott Moore on to the staff, not the staff, but helping the trustees with the mission depot and the building of that and he was going to be here with a report this morning but Elijah is bringing that report this morning.”
Rev. Dr. Elijah Stansell - “Good morning Annual Conference delegates, I am going to read you Rev. Moore’s report. He was flooded in in Conroe and could not make it back to be with us. It reads and I quote, ‘We have selected the architectural engineer, Mark Todd. The design is complete. It is 10,500 square feet of warehouse and 5,500 square feet of office space. We have also selected Diamond Commercial Construction, negotiated a contract with them. They have completed many projects in the Montgomery County area. Weather this spring has delayed and continues to delay our start. Although the property itself has handled the water very well; those who have previously said it floods; it has not flooded. There is a copy of the brochure on the task force table on the third floor. It explains all of our future plans. Hope you will go by and take one. God bless you.’ Are there any questions?”

Rev. Keith Broyles: “I would like to thank Elijah and Scott, and all of my Board of Trustees but particularly Mr. David Wilson who was my vice-chair and has also worked very hard on the mission depot and other areas as the trustees have needed him. Our report can be found, Bishop, on pages 120 & 121 of the preconference journal and I move its adoption.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, the report of the Board of Trustees is before you, is there any discussion, questions, conversation? Are you ready to vote? If you would approve the trustees report raise your hand please. Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. It is so approved. We will turn now to the Nominations report and Election of Institutional Trustees and that will be given by the Reverend B.T. Williamson.”

**Nominations and Election of Institutional Trustees**

Rev. B.T. Williamson: “Thank you Bishop. On behalf of the Nominations Committee we bring you this report. It was distributed as an addendum, electronically as a supplement to the pre-conference journal. It was distributed at the time of registration when delegates came to the sessions here. So it has been properly on the table for 24 hours and it is before us once again. The first page are recommendations for elections for a one year term to complete out the quadrennium. These names have been vetted by the Core Leadership Team, Nominations, Religion & Race, and are with the terms of inclusivity for the overall ballot of this annual conference that we had established. I move the election of these persons on page 1 of this slate.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, you have heard the report are you ready to vote? I don’t see any – so if you would approve these nominations as they have been distributed on the table would you raise your hand please. Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved”

Rev. B.T. Williamson: “Thank you Bishop. On the opposite side of that same page are the Institutional Board confirmation for Lakeview, Methodist Hospital in Houston, and Southwestern University.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, these have been placed properly before you, are you ready to vote? If you would approve of these nominations to the institutions would you raise your hands please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson: “Thank you Bishop and the last item of business we bring before the conference can be found on page 242 in your pre-conference journal. This relates to Southwestern University. This report recommends bylaw changes and certificate of formation changes. All conferences within the state of Texas must confirm these recommendations and they are before the body now.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, they are properly before you. This is for Southwestern as for many institutions their bylaws have to be approved, in this case, each of the annual conferences in Texas. So this is before you. If you would approve these bylaw changes, are there any questions, conversations? If you would approve these bylaw changes would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed, thank you. They are so approved.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson: “Bishop that concludes our report.”
Conference Advance Special

Bishop Huie: “We are moving along here – let’s turn to the Conference Advance Special. And Lani Rousseau will be coming forward to offer that report and action item.”

Rev. Lani Rousseau: “Thank you Bishop and good morning annual conference. I see that the seats are filling up and so people are making their way here and we are so grateful. I bring you greetings from the Missions Committee of our conference and also from the young people who have been impacted so incredibly by Zoe in Kenya. I was part of the delegation that got to go as a pilgrim on that journey far across the world my first international trip and it was one that changed my life. I am here to bring you greetings from them and just share their gratitude. I am going to tell you that the enthusiasm that I have cannot be condensed into such a small space. When the committee asked me to come forward I said it’s going to be impossible I’ll talk all day but I know I can’t. So you are going to have to find me later. If you want to know and experience something it is important to have a witness. Pentecost was about being a witness. We know about Peter’s famous witness to the reality of Jesus the risen Christ. We saw lives resurrected, changed, transformed – actually I say rather than transformed brought to their full fruitfulness that God had always intended in the lives of the children that we encountered. In three short years Zoe can impact a life from total devastation and poverty to one of business ownership, community leader, inspiration mentor, head of family, and change agent in their villages and in the country. We were amazed. We got the opportunity to visit with graduates on our first day and went backwards. Our group was so moved by what we saw, what we were witnesses to firsthand, the stories that we got from Samson and Judy, Zechariah and all the others, that spoke to us individually that we felt strongly that the Texas Annual Conference could be inspired to support 25 working groups from our churches. How many churches are already involved in supporting the Zoe project either as hope companions or as other supporters along the way? Would you show your hands? Did you know that even a small church can have a huge impact? It takes $7,500 a year to support a Zoe working group and the commitment is for 3 years. If you get 20 other churches or 20 people to commit to give you can also be a hope companion. It is a relationship not a sponsorship. We received so much from the young people that we met that we were encouraged, not only to encourage you but willing to travel across the conference to bring the message of Zoe and our enthusiastic witness we sought, we believe, we want you to hear the stories of transformation, of lives made new and not just for the short term, as relief does but in ways that continue to grow. Graduates are continuing to fund new businesses, educate other orphans and share that love as we heard flowing over God’s grace. If you have never seen the Holy Spirit at work, we did. The Gospel is being lived out in places in the world that are filled with hope. So if you want a little piece of this to know that your investment is empowering lives, not just taking care of them for the moment but empowering change for all God’s children. I encourage you as the mission committee voting to recommend that we support as our advance special in 2016, once again, Zoe Ministry.”

Bishop Huie: “All right, the recommendation is before you. That this, for the next year, that we support, that this Annual Conference supports Zoe Ministries as our annual conference special. Is there conversation about this? Discussion? If you are in favor of Zoe becoming the advance special, conference advance special for the next year would you raise your hand, please? Thank you. If you opposed, would you raise your hand please. Thank you. It is so approved. “

Rev. Lani Rousseau: “Thank you Bishop”

Bishop Huie: “Thank you Lani”

Retirement Videos

This retirement video honored Harold Travis and Wineva Hankamer

World Methodist Conference 2016 – Bishop Ivan Abrahams

Bishop Huie: “We have a real treat with us this morning Bishop Ivan Abrahams from the World Methodist Conference is with us. B.T. is going to introduce him and just a reminder the World Methodist Conference is
coming to Houston and that will be happening at the end of August of 2016. Just 15 months from now. B.T. say a word about Bishop Abrahams. Bishop Abrahams I know you’re here. There he is. So come forward. We want to give you an opportunity to speak to us and he’s got a two minute video that tells us a little bit more about what’s coming.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson: “Every five years the Methodist family from all around the world gets together. The last gathering was in Durban South Africa and the hospitality, very gracious greeting, support, behind the scenes logistics provided by the Methodist Church of South Africa led by Bishop Ivan Abrahams. Since then he has gone on to become the head of the World Methodist Council and Conference, which is located in Lake Junaluska in North Carolina. Through his presentation today you will learn more about the wonderful work of the World Methodist Conference and Council and also to be aware of the privilege that we now have to offer the same kind of hospitality that this conference offered to the world 5 years ago. With Bishop Abrahams, Elizabeth Redman, and Barbie Bowser as the World Methodist Conference booth out in the foyer, I hope you will drop by and get better acquainted and also indicate the potential interest of your church to share in the hospitality. We have a team of representatives from our annual conference who have been working for two years now and with 15 months to go we are headed down the home stretch. We are excited about the opportunity to host our brothers and sisters from all over the world right here in Houston Texas in this very room, and that’s why they have been here to see how we do it so they can get a head start on the event coming up next year. Without further ado please welcome our brother in Christ the Bishop Ivan Abrahams.”

Bishop Ivan Abrahams: “Thank you Bishop Huie, B.T. Good morning Texas Annual Conference. It is a singular, honor, joy and privilege to bring greetings and best wishes on behalf on the World Methodist Council. Especially as you meet under this very exciting and challenging theme, Transforming Lay and Clergy Leaders. It is also very interesting to note how your theme resonates with the work and witness of so many other conferences around the world. Essential dimension of Methodist self-understanding has been our cording to proclaim and practice Christian holiness and to strive toward Christian perfection. We are all on a journey of re-discovering what it means to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the Wesleyan tradition in our contemporary society. Methodist can and must be nothing less than transformed people that seek to transform the world.

World Methodist Council is an association of 18 denominations in 134 countries representing 80.5 million people in the Wesleyan Methodist Nazarene United and uniting church tradition. I pray that during your conferences deliberation a model of history will be bent towards greater justice and peace as you seek to give transformational leadership in church and society. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank you, Bishop Huie and the members of Conference for your kind invitation for the World Methodist Council to be hosted here in this very same venue in September next year. We will be running events with women clergy and lay women as well as young adult groups. Since taking office as general secretary my mantra has been that a new day has dawned for the World Methodist Council and therefore it will not and cannot be business as usual. We have an opportunity to cross years, to tear down barriers, to dare to venture and to break new ground. The passion and commitment led by the, led by B.T. Williamson, as well as the energy generated by our program team under the leadership of Sandra Roakee in Nashville is frighteningly contagious. I’m bored with great hope and expectation as we plan for this conference. I wish to share some of that excitement with you.

Friends, the difference between mediocrity and greatness is passion, it is passion that drives us and give us an infectious zeal for life. Passion is the engine room of our dreams and our hopes and our aspirations. It is what Plato calls the madness that comes from the gods; that burns within the marrow of our bones and gives us fire in our bellies and the recesses of our souls. Passion is that unquenchable fire that comes from the Divine. … says you have to see the future in order to deal with the present. At a time of increased cynicism, religious narcissism, and toxic conversation about schism within the United Methodist Church. I wish to encourage you to hold fast to your dream for a more inclusive church where everyone can find hope and healing. I believe very, very passionately that Methodism has a distinct contribution to make in our day and age. But we need to be more discerning, we need to be a bit more bold and perhaps as Wesley claimed we need to be a bit more vile as we venture beyond the idyllic safety and security of our sanctuaries and speak into the public political and social realities to transform this world that God so loves. If we don’t believe that we can make a difference then we have no future at all. It is my vision that the World Methodist Conference in Houston will be the most inclusive in
its 135 year history and there is reason to celebrate as we have come of age. This will be the 21st World Methodist Conference and where better to throw a party and invite the rest of the global Methodist family than to Houston. Especially as we gather under the unified theme ONE subtitled One God One Faith, One People and One Mission. The conference will invite participants in conversation about the distinction between unity and uniformity within the Wesleyan tradition. In many ways this eastern part of Texas is a microcosm of the world, and you lead in many, many fronts. I was blown away, absolutely God smacked at some of the statistics around this area. According to the Census Bureau Houston Metropolitan area is the most racially and uniquely diverse community in the USA. With over 100 different languages are spoken and no group is a particular majority. As the World Methodist Conference learns how to function better as a body that is unified but not uniformed we constantly look for practical examples and for this reason we decided to come to Houston and learn from you.

The setting for the 2016 Conference underscores our intent to explore, to ponder, and to marvel at the unique yet fundamental principle of the Christian faith, the Trinity. 3 persons of the Trinity is distinctive but not distinct. In his sermon Wesley proclaims that the three in one God is a mystery. But then I ask what better place to explore the mystery than in Houston, the home of NASA, and its work and the work of other international space agencies. We know that we live in an ever expanding universe with 100’s and billions of galaxies and 100’s and billions of stars in each galaxy. However, this figure boggles the mind; we cannot comprehend except to stand in awe and wonder at the works of our Creator God. I am very aware that the annual conference has made a distinct effort to invest in its young people. As the World Methodist Council looks to the future we must also find ways to capture the imagination of and empower youth and young adults.

Again friends it is 45 years since the conference and council met on United States soil and I want to believe that this will be a turning point, a watershed moment in the council. Here we will gather to express our unity to celebrate our diversity and to give thanks to God for past accomplishments, but more importantly to focus we will focus on the future. And I’m glad that we will do so in partnership with the Texas Annual Conference which embodies the ethos and shares common goals with the council. The Council will provide us with an opportunity to listen and to prayerfully discern, at least 5 clear things that God is calling the Methodist people to do during the close of the second decade of the millennium. The conference will be a place where we can be inspired by great Methodist teachers and speakers. A place to network. A place to share stories of what God is doing in the Wesleyan Methodist family. A place to incubate audacious dreams. A place to cast fresh vision. A place to state strategic objectives for closer cooperation within the global Methodist family. And the council is a very privileged instrument. It is the only body that draws together the 80 denominations within the family. We have a wonderful past. We stand in a great tradition and I am an eternal optimist; a prisoner of hope. Who passionately believes that the golden years of Methodism don’t lay behind us, but lay within the future. June Jordan, American Poet and human rights campaigner when speaking at the United Nations to commemorate the protest of South African women against apartheid said, “We are the ones that we have been waiting for”. In other words, transformation is in our hands. And I want to urge us, to write the next chapter of Methodist history as we tackle the challenges of the 21st century and together chart a new and brave course into the future.

Sunday we celebrated Pentecost and Aldersgate’s Day; my prayer is that our hearts will be more than just strangely warmed and that the Holy Spirit who is present with us, will further descend upon this place in power and in might, so that the flame of Pentecost and Aldersgate will be rekindled and burn like a runaway bush fire within the Texas Annual Conference. I’ve also reminded that Pope John XXIII, when he summoned the Vatican Council in 1958 and 1959, a reporter asked him ‘what do you expect of the conclave?’ He walked over to a window and opened it and said, ‘this fresh air.’ And once the window was open, the Holy Spirit blew a mighty wind in their direction. I pray that the same will be true for us. But we need to remember that when we invoke the power of the Holy Spirit our well prepared plans and agenda must be disrupted, because it cannot, it cannot and will not be business as usual. For the wind of the Spirit blows where it wishes. Friends, as we march towards tomorrow’s world, I challenge you to move forward with unmatched boldness and commitment. And that you will draw new energy from the same transcendent God who guided our fore-bearers. It is further my hope and my prayer, that when this Conference rises, you will have the same conviction of the early disciples when they met in Rome recorded in Acts 16:28, when they were able to say, ‘we and the Holy Spirit agreed.’ We’d like to share a 2 minute invitational video. Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your support.”

Video was presented about the upcoming ONE conference
Bishop Huie – “I hope you can see what an exciting line up of speakers and preachers that is. And again, if those of you are interested in helping host with hospitality, we want and need your help here. We are expecting the world, so come and be a part of that and give your congregation members a chance to know Methodists from around the world. All right friends, that concludes our morning…not the whole morning session…the top of the morning session, let me say that. We are going to take a short break here. I think what we will do is come back in at 10:20. That gives you a little shorter break but that gets us started a little bit later. So come back in at 10:20. We will begin with a retirement video and we will move in to the resolutions. So, take a break. We will see you at 10:20. I’ll get started on time.

Resolutions Presentation #1
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 10:15 a.m.
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Bishop Huie – All right friends I know that was a short break, but we want to keep moving along here. And so, I would ask if you could just make your way quietly to your seats and we’re going to roll the retirement video. Again, we are trying to do as many of these as we can prior to the retirement service which will be later this morning. So please be seated.

Retirement Video (10:15)

This retirement video honored Willie Sears.

Resolutions Presentation #1

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you, thank you. All right, the next series of items for our conversation this morning are the resolutions and as you know we have 14 resolutions in all. It is our hope that we will be able to deal with the first 4-5 this morning and then the rest will roll over to the time set aside for resolutions tomorrow. Let me call your attention to the procedure for dealing with resolutions that are in your Conference Rules that are in the Pre-Conference Journal. It is a rather lengthy process that is outlined there on pages 17, 18 and 19. I’m not going to read you all of that, but I want to call your attention to the part that has to do with the conversation that we’re going to have right now. And it tells about how we’ll time this and how we’ll arrange speakers. So this is item F on page 18 for those of you who are following this. And let me just call this to your attention. When the resolutions proposals come to the floor of the Annual Conference, there may be one predetermined speaker for and one predetermined speaker against the resolution or proposal. Predetermined speakers are allowed a maximum of 5 minutes. An additional 6 minutes will be allowed for alternating comments no longer than 60 seconds each for and against the proposal. So, in other words, 3 speeches for and 3 speeches against, each one minute long. All the comments will be made in the spirit of holy conversations. A minute of silent prayer will precede the vote on each resolution. So I call that to your attention just to help you know that we’re going to run this pretty much by the clock. In terms of the timing and so we have our assistants over here, I think with cards. You want to hold those things up Jan? That means you’re on. That’s a go. This is the warning…15 second warning. That’s, you’re done now. And if you don’t get done BT will cut your microphone off. Really try to help us here. Again, we have 14 we want to be responsible. There has been some discussion in the pre-conference meetings. This isn’t the first time you’ve seen these. So my guess is you’ve seen the responses there.

Now one more bit of information and then we’ll go to the resolution. How we will vote. This morning…these are the more sensitive resolutions…these first four or five…we are going to vote on these with a paper ballot. Our tellers will be handing those out and as we go through each one you will have the opportunity to vote…and be sure you’re within the bar of the conference…B.T. announced that a few minutes ago…so you don’t get a ballot unless you’re within the bar of the conference and a voting member of the conference…then there will be a moment of silence, you vote, then we go to the next resolution and we’ll follow the same process. We did this last year, so some of you are familiar. And then when we get to the last one that we can handle for this morning then we will ask the tellers to receive those ballots. They will count them and then we will announce the outcomes tomorrow morning. If you are willing, when we go to the second time set aside for resolutions tomorrow, the last day, if it is acceptable to the body, I would ask that you allow your presiding officer to call the
vote with the help of the secretaries and the assistant to the bishop so that we could do it by show of hands which will help us move on a little faster. If there are some of you out here that think you want to have a count vote each time, which is always the privilege from the floor to ask for, but if you do that, please let us know today because we will have to have the tellers there ready. Otherwise it will take a very, very long time to get through all 14 of them. So, its up to you the body, but what we are prepared to do is today we vote with written ballot. We announce that tomorrow and then tomorrow as you vote it would be with show of hands, presiding officer would call the vote with the help of the assistants up here and then we would move on to the next one. And that way you know the outcome of each one when you leave the Annual Conference. O.k. are we good? Does everybody kind of get the pattern here, what we’re trying to do? All right, so, having said that, B.T. has the list of those who are the predetermined speakers and remember those persons get 5 minutes each. If there is not a predetermined speaker, then we go directly to the conversation and they’ll be one minute for for and against. All right, let’s move to resolution number 1. And let me find the page number…page 32.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, resolution number 1, a resolution on human sexuality, speaking for Chap Temple and Jim Bankston. There is no one speaking against.”

Bishop Huie – “All right.”

Rev. Chap Temple – “Good morning. Well when it comes to discussing controversial resolutions, there is nothing like jumping into the deep end of the pool is there? So here we are. Some may be a little surprised to see Jim and I here. Dr. Bankston and I have not always been on the same page on some of these issues. In many ways we still may not be. We are agreed that we have to do something to cease the conversational cul-de-sac, the endless loop in which our church has been stuck for almost 40 years. The issue is a very complex one. Some will say it is about human rights and respecting all persons. Others will suggest it is about how we obey a higher moral authority that lies beyond us. Most would say it comes down, ultimately, to not just how one interprets the biblical witness, but which parts of that witness ought to hold sway. But in the mean time we continue to fight and we continue to whittle down our witness and quite frankly people on both sides get hurt. The differences in our convictions have created a contentiousness that has crippled us all across the board. Resolved that Adam Hamilton and others have proposed a way forward that would give local churches the right to conduct same sex marriages and annual conferences the right to ordain anyone. But all that will do is take same dysfunction of the General Conference and transfer it to our annual conference and to every annual conference and to every local church. So others have proposed a different solution. A jurisdictional one, suggesting we simply say we have an impass divide into two new ideological groupings, rather than the 5 ones now out of geography. That, my friends, is simply prelude to formal division.

So in contrast we are offering something that we think can buy us just a little breathing room and can reduce some of the harmful byproducts of our current stance without changing our position. It is a rewrite of paragraph 161F in the Book of Discipline. The section of the social principals. It begins by recognizing that all of this part of our lives, sexuality is not simply accidental, it is by the gracious design of God. And so this is a gift that requires careful stewardship and exercise. It affirms that there are any number of distortions of this gift which have found their way into our human lives. Promiscuity, infidelity, bigamy, serial marriages, and more. But it suggests that at least in so far as the majority of Methodist read the scripture, sexual behavior is only to be affirmed when it is within the context of a legal and spiritual covenant of a loving marriage between one man and one woman. Now right away most will notice that this rewrite removes the most abrasive language in our current statement. It’s the wording that has caused pain. May I be clear, this rewrite does do that. It does not weaken our stance. It does not weaken our call towards holy living. Will it resolve the conflict that we face across our church? Sadly, no. But it gives us the chance to at least change the tenor of the conversation and to be more gracious. We would no longer single out one segment of the population. We will instead call all of us to a greater standard. Some will not be able to support this, I know. Believing that it does not go far enough. Some on the other side who are concerned about a philosophical slippery slope may be hesitant to vote for it, thinking it opens the door too much. May I urge you, my brothers and sisters, may I urge you to be courageous today and step past whatever fears and hesitations you may have. This is a genuine way forward. This is a true compromise, not a compromise with truth, but with our propensity to believe that we alone must be right in all of our understandings. Let there be a
new possibility that begins to bubble up within our whole church. Let it begin here in the Texas Annual Conference. Jim.”

Dr. Jim Bankston – “Thank you Chap and others that have enabled us to have the opportunity to vote on this resolution. Chap and I still don’t look at it exactly the same way, but we both support it. I hope you consider it prayerfully. We have two petitions before us today. The one that we’ve had almost unchanged for 44 years and a new one that would allow for some movement for our church. The main difference is that the sentence that reads, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching is left out of the new petition. If you agree, in light of our continuing prayerful and faithful conversation over time, that the time has come to at least remove that sentence from the book of discipline, then I encourage you to vote in favor of the new resolution. This resolution does not expand our understanding of marriage to include same sex marriages. That will give comfort to some of you, and cause concern for others. This is a matter of sincere conversation across our nation by families around the dinner table, other religious bodies, and the Supreme Court of the United States. America is changing its mind about this matter according to all the recent surveys. This resolution, however, does not address that. Others do. You can vote your conscience on this. This petition is basically about that one sentence. Leave it out…Leave it in or take it out. I believe the credibility of our witness for a whole generation is at stake. I hope you believe that the time has come to omit that sentence. Let’s allow the Texas Annual Conference to lead the general church in making some movement after 44 years. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you very much. As you heard, there is no predetermined speech against this resolution. So where we are now is in speakers from the floor, both for and against, and you will have one minute each. So is there someone out on the floor that wishes to speak for or someone who wishes to speak against? Just let us know which direction you’ll be speaking on.”

Kent Ping– “I would speak for…My name is Kent Ping and I go to Deer Park United Methodist Church. Brothers and sisters and siblings in Christ, all of us have heard the story of the good Samaritan from our earliest days in Sunday School. Jesus told this story to show us what loving our neighbor looks like. The Samaritan that stopped to help a person on the side of the road was Jesus’ example. The priest who did not stop to help was not his example. Luke says he passed by on the other side. The Levite who did not stop to help, was not Jesus’ example. Again from Luke, a Levite passed by on the other side. Today we have people on the side of the road in the Methodist Church. Let’s all be like the Samaritan; Christ’s example. Let’s cross the road to help those who others have passed by. Feel the love and the acceptance of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Please vote in favor of resolution one.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. All right, that’s a speech in favor. Does someone wish to speak against this resolution? I’m not seeing anybody come…o.k. Here we go. All right, this will be the microphone over here, speaking against the resolution. Yes…because we are going to need a translator here, this will be 2 minutes so it will allow a minute for a translation. If you will give us your name and where you are from.”

Fanny Casada – “Good morning to all of the Texas Annual Conference. My name is Fanny Casada and I come from the West District. I have not come to make you laugh or to receive applause. I am here to speak to you to your spirit not your minds. And I want to remind you of what the scripture says that the flower may die, but the word of God will stay forever. And the scripture says that the small door leads to eternal life, but the big door leads to death. Can we pretend to make it wider? The Bible says it clearly…marriage is between one woman and one man. We may change the Book of Discipline but we can never change the Bible, and so I make a call for your voting and are we here to ourselves or are we here for God?”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. All right, so that is a speech against. Do we have someone now who wishes to speak for? I actually saw him first so…”

Rev. Stacy Anzick – “I’m not a speech for or against, I just have a question for the creators of the resolution.

Bishop Huie – “A question, o.k.”
Rev. Stacy Anzick – “Especially given the speech we just heard, are we asking the Texas Annual Conference, and then are we asking General Conference to define marriage as between one man and one woman?”

Bishop Huie – “Chap you would need to go to the microphone for that. All right, she is asking a question and I would ask Chap and Jim to respond to that as the makers of the resolution.”

Rev. Chap Temple – “As Jim mentioned, this resolution does not change our current position on marriage which is one man, one woman. This does not speak to that.”

Bishop Huie – “O.k. Thank you. Let me take now a speech…o.k. Jim, sorry.”

Rev. Dr. Jim Bankston – “I just wanted to say that if we keep the current language in the discipline that is our stance and if we pass the new resolution, that’s still the stance that will be reflected.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Now I am going to take a speech in favor of the resolution. Right over here. Thank you.”

Rev. Andy Noel – “My name is Andy Noel from the Central South District and I’m speaking for the resolution. I think of the analogy from over 200 years ago of a great division over the question of slavery, where Christians on both sides interpreted scripture in very different ways. Ultimately, the change came from appealing to first principals of humanity. And that all of us are created equal in the eyes of God. In Methodism we have the equivalent of that in our General Rules. And we have our first principal that says do no harm. By deleting very painful language for our GLBT brothers and sisters around homosexuality being incompatible with Christian teaching, we are alleviating that and we are now doing no harm. So I applaud those who authored this to bring together into one vision through this first principal that dates back to the origin of our movement of Methodism and I move that we do approve this resolution.

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Now is there someone who wishes to speak against the resolution. Yes sir.”

Rev. Ralph Hale – “Ralph Hale, Stewart Memorial. I want to stand up here and say I don’t know. I don’t know whether I’m opposed to it right now or not. What worries me is that a long time ago I was ordained here a deacon; just an associate member of the conference. And we were asked the questions that John Wesley asked. A few years later we changed it to the historical questions and we all giggled. And now we ask historical questions that don’t mean much. We ask them and they are ceremonial. You use the word here historically we believe and then you say that’s our stance. Is that word historical where we stand or where we did stand? And I guess it is a question that would depend upon how I would vote.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, we will try once more to try to answer the question, and then after this I’m going to just do speeches.”

Rev. Chap Temple – “Yes, Bishop, thank you. It does use that language. I would call your attention that it is in the present tense, such relations are to be affirmed only when practiced within these bounds.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, I’m ready for another speech against…we’ve had two speeches for, two speeches against.”

Rev. Stacey Anzick – “Is it possible to make an amendment?”

Bishop Huie – “Yes, technically it is. So it’s not just that…it is. I shouldn’t say technically, but this will be interesting. All right.”

Rev. Stacey Anzick – “I’m sorry if that’s inconvenient. I’m just curious if, because there seems to be confusion around the word historic, I’m curious if the writers of the proposal would consider eliminating the word historic.”
Bishop Huie – “If the writers would agree or not, this resolution now belongs to the body. So if you’re going to make that motion, if you’re going to make an amendment, you’re going to move that the word historic be deleted…is that what your amendment would be?”

Rev. Stacey Anzick – “Yes.”

Bishop Huie – “Then the body has to decide that. Do you understand? You can’t…they can’t decide for the body because the resolution belongs to the body. So do you want to make that amendment?”

Rev. Stacey Anzick – “I would like to. On the third line, the beginning of the second sentence that says ‘in our historic understanding…’ to eliminate the word historic.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so the amendment before you is to eliminate the word historic in line 3 and you are allow to say why you think that’s important.”

Rev. Stacey Anzick – “I think that it is important because I think that is where a lot of the confusion is. It is really that simple.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Now is there someone who wishes to speak against that amendment? We are only on the amendment.”

Rev. Ernie Turney – “Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. There were 4 of us who worked on this for 6 months. We spent hours and hours and lots of lunches and lots of prayers. It comes from 2 different ends of the conference. Please let’s go forward with what we’ve worked very, very, very hard to get to this day and to this place. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – All right. You’ve heard a speech for and a speech against. We can have more speeches or are you ready to vote? I’m sorry, you’re quite right. There was not a second. I saw some folks there nodding, so I took that and I beg your pardon. That was my error. Could we have a second. Yes. It is properly before you. My apologies for not getting a second allowed and recognizing that. We have heard a speech for the amendment, which is to remove the word historic. We’ve heard a speech against the amendment, which is to remove the word historic. Now do you wish to speak to the amendment or to the resolution? All right, hang on just a minute. Just sit down right there and I’ll come get to you. Just stay right there. Now are you ready to vote on the amendment that has been proposed? All right, if you’re in favor of the amendment which would remove the word historic, would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed to the amendment, would you raise your hand please? The amendment does not carry. So the word historic remains in resolution. So where we are now, we are back to the discussion on the resolution. We’ve had 2 speeches for, 2 speeches against. And the gentleman right here, I believe wishes to speak. And you need to tell us your name and whether you are speaking for or against and you’re going to be using a translator, so he gets two minutes. All right.”

Jose Sorea – “My name is Jose Sorea. I am from the First United Methodist of Bryan. And I’m going to read paragraph 161f. Here it says very clearly that a marriage is a monogamous heterosexual marriage. And I believe that if we take that out we are saying otherwise that is not so. And then there it says the United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and is incompatible with Christian teachings. And I believe that if we take that out we are practically saying that we are in favor of those practices and that they are compatible with the Christian teaching. That’s all thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. So we’ve had 3 speeches against, 2 speeches for. There’s room for one more speech in favor of the resolution. Does someone wish to speak? Yes sir. Come right on in.”

M.J. Gallop – “My name is M.J. Gallop, Holy Covenant, Katy. When I read the opening line that human sexuality is a gift intended to bless the lives of all those who are created in the image of God, my heart leaps for joy because I have experienced that gift in my marriage to my husband. And I know that many of you self-avowed practicing heterosexuals also have experienced that same gift in your marriage. Some of you are appalled
by what I’m speaking of right now because of your deeply held scriptural convictions. However, I think you might find statements in this resolution that resonate with your heart just as deeply as they do mine. Is your heart right? Is my heart right? Well, then why can’t we join hands and just one time vote on something together. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, this concludes our conversation on this. So we’ve had 3 for, 3 against. I’ll take a moment – a minute here – of silence and then…is there anybody here before we move into the silence who should have a ballot, but doesn’t have a ballot. Because raise your hand. I see one person way in the back. Are you in the bar? I can’t tell. I don’t think you’re in the bar of the Conference. I can’t really tell from here, but it doesn’t look like it. If they’re not in the bar of the Conference they don’t get a ballot. Just trying to clarify. All right. Pardon me? There are lots of empty seats up here. All on the front row. Isn’t it great? Just where Methodists love to be. Actually, there’s some inter-mixed here. All right, friends let’s just take a moment of silence. There have been lots of speeches – heartfelt beliefs here – let’s take a moment of silence. I’ll then invite you to mark your ballots. (Silence) Amen. Please mark your ballot regarding the resolution on human sexuality.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, we are going to move now to resolution number 2, it is on page 34, Calling on the Texas Annual Conference to Petition General Conference to Remove Restrictive language on Marriage from the Book of Discipline. B.T.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you bishop. Speaking for this resolution will be Jim Evans and has Marty Nicholas been able to make it back in to the Conference? Marty Nicholas? I believe he was one of our stranded last night. There will only be the one set in favor.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so we will have one predetermined speech in favor and then we will move, just as we did earlier, to the discussion on the floor. Please go ahead.”

William Flowers – “Hi, my name is William Flowers and this is my husband Jim Evans. We are members of Deer Park United Methodist Church and we are here speaking for Resolution 2. Between us we have 5 children. We are legally married on March 19, 2010 in Connecticut. Our children and a number of our friends were there to be a part of our wedding ceremony. Unfortunately for us and our children, our wedding was presided over by a stranger from another denomination. Our pastor at the time, Deborah Proctor, could not officiate our wedding. That did not diminish our love, but it did diminish the church’s role in our life and in our children’s lives. After our wedding, many of our friends began asking when we could have a reception here in Houston, so that they too could celebrate our marriage in some formal manner. Since William and I were not getting this arranged quickly enough, friends from our Sunday school class began making preparations for our reception. Of course they first looked for a venue and our church was the most obvious place. They were shocked to learn that if the event were to be held at our church, there could be no acknowledgement of the fact that this was a wedding reception, because it was our wedding reception. A reception for Jim and William. There could be no wedding cake and there could be no announcements or invitations that indicated that it was a wedding reception. They then approached Bering Memorial UMC and they were told the same thing. Since they wanted the celebration to clearly be about a wedding, our friends rented a room at the Deer Park Community Center where it would be permissible to acknowledge our love and marriage. We had a wonderful wedding reception; not at our home church, but at our city community center. We and our children and our friends, and fellow church members felt the sting of exclusion. We should have been in our church with Pastor Deborah. Our wedding had to occur in Connecticut because of Texas Law, but the United Methodist Church pushed us outside its doors if we were to have a local celebration of our love and marriage. We need change. I know a lot of you are thinking, why do we have to be talking about this? Why all of these politics in church? Well there was politics in the early church too and it wasn’t fun then either. But it was over the same issue: which type of people can we as good followers of Jesus, allow to be a part of the mission and ministry of this church? They struggled with the acceptance of Gentiles and more recently our denomination struggled, and struggles, with full inclusion for women. In these and similar struggles, the followers who resisted the change have always had scripture to back them up. But the answer has always been for inclusiveness. We believe that God includes us as a family as well. We have heard that we should go somewhere else. That we have imposed ourselves upon the church. We hear, well you chose to come here. And we say, but we were invited by the same Jesus that invited you. The same Jesus that Paul
speaks of. The Apostle Paul loved God and served God with a passion, but at a time when he was called Saul, his righteous indignation – and I do want to emphasize righteous – because it was based upon a very persuasive interpretation of Scripture – his righteous indignation persuaded him to protect his religious institution and that meant preventing people from practicing Christianity. He did this until God blinded him. Only when he could not physically see, did he realize that he had not been able to see spiritually. He had not been able to see God’s work in the lives of Christians. Paul or Saul discovered that he had been working against God’s children and against God’s purposes despite his vast knowledge of and commitment to the Scriptures. Is it possible…Is it possible that God’s work in the lives of all people is to bring about love? Imagine that we, that you, who are like Paul, what if this church is like Paul…what if we…who are committed to God’s work and are knowledgeable about Scripture, but is it possible that you the Church…we the Church…are also like Paul in a very human way? We are wrong. We are just as good as Paul but with scales on our eyes still. What if our work, as Paul’s, has prevented people from practicing Christian love and ministry? What if the scales on our eyes have kept us from seeing spiritually? And we, like Paul, have not seen God’s work in the lives of Christians? We urge you to vote for resolution number 2. Thanks be to Christ.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Now once again, the other predetermined speaker was Dr. Marty Nicholas, unless he’s here, like all things with this conference we are going to move forward. So what we’ll do now, not seeing him, we are going to move to speeches for and against. Remember these are one minute each. So the floor is opened for resolutions…not resolutions…open for speeches either for the resolution or against the resolution. All right, right here on my left. And then another on my right. So we’ll just…I’m going to try to keep these alternating sides here. All right.”

Jordan McPhail – “Good morning. My name is Jordan McPhail and I’m a lay delegate from St. Luke’s United Methodist Church and I’m a nominee to represent the Texas Annual Conference as a delegate to General Conference. I have been looking forward to getting married since I was a little girl. I am still looking forward to getting married one day. I have dreamed of getting to meet the love of my life and getting to stand up in front of the church, in front of ministers who love me, in front of my family and friends, to make a vow to each other and to God to be married forever. I am still looking forward to that part of my life. To marrying the man that Christ brings into my life. And I’m lucky. I’ll get to stand up in front of the church, in my church, but there’s many in the church that don’t get to. I was lucky enough to be in a wedding earlier this month of friends of mine from church whom I met at a Bible study who didn’t get to stand with their minister in the church because of who Christ brought them to love. And I’m reminded of the verse in Matthew, let those who Christ brings together, let no one put asunder. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “I’m sorry, I had a little difficulty in hearing you. Were you speaking for or against the resolution?”

Jordan McPhail – “For”

Bishop Huie – “For, o.k. thank you. Sorry. I just couldn’t quite catch every word you were saying. All right, thank you. All right, are you speaking for or against? All right, thank you.”

Candace Lee – “My name is Candace Lee and I’m with the First United Methodist Church in Mont Belvieu. We are United Methodist. Our faith is grounded in biblical scriptures. Our affirmation of faith on page 881 in our Methodist Hymnal is very clear on our foundation and our beliefs. The word of God as it is written in the Bible guides our path and our faith. We should never allow the secular world to determine who we are, because we are different. We are Methodists and resources and our time should be spent building God’s kingdom on this earth. The song ‘On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand’ resonates in my heart and my mind every day. Let us be about kingdom building, disciple making, living our faith, and making the difference for Christ and stop trying to please the secular world.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. There is no applause here. We don’t need outcries. Remember we are in a spirit of holy conversation. I didn’t say that, maybe I should have. I’m hopeful that it’s beginning to kind of sink into our culture that we’re going to be respectful of one another. So, now do we have a speech for? No? Do I
only see speeches against? All right. I need to alternate. Is there someone speaking for coming up? And then I’ll take the person speaking against.”

Bryan Wharton – “Bryan Wharton, Spring Faith. I came to faith late in life. Out of a carrier in military and 14 years of policing. I swore after those two experiences that I would never again allow my life to be used to oppress, to hold down, to restrain, merely to support some structure, some power system. We have an opportunity here to prepare ourselves for the day when the law changes. The law of the state of Texas when the constitution is enforced and all people are free. Please take the hammer from my hand. Do not make me an instrument of oppression. And I feel like here is our opportunity to free pastors to minister to their community. I thank you all for your love and concern, but I don’t spend any of my time in your church preaching to your community. I live in mine, let me live in mine.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. Thank you. That concludes the speech for. Now there’s a speech against. The gentleman right here on my left.”

Mark Davis – “Mark Davis, St. Johns United Methodist Church, Baytown. I speak not either for or against (Bishop Huie interjected: “Is it a question?”) It is a statement to ask for us to consider this question in the historical value of the church as Wesleyan. (Bishop Huie began to interject)…my statement is against. I stand before you a sinner. I stand before you a transformed person because of the Wesleyan movement. The forgiveness of my sins to allow me to minister to people with love. I ask that we consider repealing all of the language that is before us and go back to the discipline book of 1960 where this subject was never in the Book of Discipline to begin with. Let’s let the Holy Spirit through the biblical teachings of the Bible …God be God…and we as man be able to love and be able to minister to our congregations, be able to minister in love without human sexuality tearing us apart.”

Bishop Huie – “The end. All right, he said it was a speech against and that’s how I’m going to count this. So we’ve had 2 speeches for, 2 speeches against. Does someone wish to speak for? All right, one other person… I saw this gentleman back here and I’ll pick up you as a speech against. Yeah, come on up to a microphone. Let’s go right here, I’m going to try to keep us going here. This is a speech in favor and please begin.”

L.A. Myers – “I’m L.A. Myers and I’m a delegate from Fulshear Church. Some 20 years ago, my wife and I were shocked when our handsome athletic honor student from Rice University came home and told us he was gay. Which was a major shock, I have to say, for me. When I hear these kinds of things, I have to believe that the only way we could be discussing this was if someone believes that this is a matter of choice. I firmly believe it is not. I’ve spent most of my life managing in medical schools and I’ve watched the development of the process of the embryo growth, and I feel like that’s probably an important thing in here. I also get a little distressed when I see us pick and choose the scripture. I think it is a wonderful thing that we stop eliminating women from speaking or we wouldn’t have been able to hear your wonderful speech.”

Bishop Huie – “Time. Sorry. I beg your pardon but these are the rules and I’m trying to stay within them. So a speech against. Dan you’re standing there. This is the last speech and then we’ll get to voting.”

Dr. Dan Hannon – “Dan Hannon, Christ Church in the Woodlands. I rise to speak against. I speak to the language first when it says restrictive. That implies that if you do not support it then you are bigoted, because it assumes the language is restrictive. Our discussion just previously was about having open conversation. I think that this speaks to the incrementalism that has gone on for just over 40 years, if we plug at it long enough, we’ll get our way. And so it looks like resolution number 3 will begin to speak to that incrementalism, so I ask the Conference to not vote in favor of this; to allow what we did in Number 1 to take forward and to work and so speak against it because of the use of the derogatory words restrictive language.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. That concludes our conversation about this. Let’s take a moment of silence and then I will ask you to mark your ballots. All right, please mark your ballots for Resolution Number 2, Calling on the Texas Annual Conference to Petition General Conference to Remove Restrictive Language. Now friends, I
want to push the envelope just a little bit here. It may cut us a little bit short on lunch, and do this third resolution before we go to the retirement service. So B.T. tell us who the speeches are for and against.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Resolution number 3 found on page 36 of the Pre-Conference Journal; the resolution Calling Texas Annual Conference to Petition General Conference to Empower all Persons Called to Ordained Ministry to Fully Exercise their Gifts and Graces. Is Jim Foster in the house? Has Jim been able to be here? Jim Foster will speak in favor of this resolution and Jim Leggett will speak in opposition. Thank you gentlemen.”

Rev. Jim Foster – “I stand before you today to ask you to join with me and with others as we seek to be more loving in Jesus name and remove the negative, hurtful language in our Discipline towards those who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender, as we affirm that all persons are of sacred worth. About the time that I had completed 9 years as your Area Provost, I began to be involved with the center for courage and renewal. And learning about Parker Palmer’s circles of trust model. Over the past 9 years I have become more and more involved in the work of the center and I wish I had more time to tell you about that work. I mention it because it is through that work that I came to repent of the position I had taken in the past in regards to our church’s position on human sexuality. At each of the 4 General Conferences I attended as a delegate, I voted to maintain the language that we currently have in the Discipline. I regret that now. Because I have come to more fully understand the hurt it has done to the LGBT community. And the closed doors it has caused others to seek to do their ministry in other communities of faith. But even more importantly, I’ve come to more fully understand that Jesus would not speak to others in such a way. In one of the great post-resurrection experiences in our Lord, Jesus asked Peter a simple question. Peter do you love me? Jesus didn’t ask him what he believed about the resurrection or his virgin birth or the Methodist position on homosexuality. He didn’t even ask him did you go to the Confessing Movement Luncheon or the Breaking the Silence dinner. He asked, ‘Do you love me?’ And Peter responded, ‘Yes Lord you know I love you.’ I’m here to tell you that when I found myself being asked that question from the deep place within my soul, the answer came, ‘Yes Lord you know I love you.’ And my heart broke open to the truth of what we trust - that God’s grace is available to all and that all of the judgments we try to make belong to God, not to us. I’m retiring at this session of the Annual Conference and I have recently been diagnosed with Metastatic Esophageal Cancer. And I found myself doing a lot of reflection. One of the experiences that came to my mind early in the morning, was early in my ministry when the newly merged former Gulf Coast Conference…we were still learning how to be one conference…we still sat somewhat segregated in the sanctuary at First Methodist Church. I remember Dr. Bob Hayes, Sr. getting up and saying with such grace and humor, don’t worry about black folks coming to your church, we think most of your churches are dead. But I do hope you will get a black friend, and he was right. I hope you’ll get a gay friend and come to understand their struggles, and see them as Jesus does. You’ll come to the place that I have. Jesus would not speak to creation as we have done for almost 50 years in the United Methodist Church. I repent of supporting the language we have and will continue to work for more loving ways to relate to our brothers and sisters who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender. There was a time, and there is a time, when our conference is among those who lead in our denomination. And I hope we will become that conference once again as we lead our denomination in coming together over this issue that has too long divided us.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. We will turn now to a speech against. This is the predetermined speech, Dr. Jim Leggett.”

Dr. Jim Leggett – “The church was situated right there on the highway. All the cars would pass by and see the sign in front of the church and they would always see the words that were on the marquis. On this particular day, the marquis at the church said: honk if you love Jesus, text if you want to see him r...
male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or abusive, or cheap people, none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” Some of you were once like that, but you were cleansed. You were made holy. You were made right with God by calling on Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. What’s at stake here in these resolutions is the authority of Scripture. The Bible is very clear that the practice of homosexuality is wrong; it is a sin. And these other things that are listed in 1 Corinthians 6 are not time specific things, they are all eternal things. The second reason I encourage you to vote against these resolutions is love. I have several friends and several family members who are homosexuals and I love them very, very, very much. I’m highly convinced that it is not an act of love to change or ignore Scripture on their behalf. If I have a family member who is an alcoholic, it is not loving them for me to tell them it is ok to get drunk. If I have a family member who is having an affair, it’s not loving of me to tell them it’s ok to commit adultery. True love speaks the truth in love, rather than bending the truth to make everybody feel comfortable with their sin. A third reason I encourage you to vote against these resolutions is morality as defined by Scripture. This is a moral issue, not a discrimination issue. This is a moral issue, not a justice issue. Race and gender are justice issues. But acting out on same sex attraction is a morality issue, not a justice issue. Some clergy have a propensity towards alcoholism. They can choose to act on this propensity or to exercise self-control with the power of God’s Spirit. If they choose to act in the propensity towards alcoholism and frequently get drunk, then they should be disciplined as clergy. And if unrepentant, shouldn’t be clergy. This is not discrimination against alcoholics, but a living out of the above reproach commandments that are spelled out in 1 Timothy chapter 3. This is a moral issue, not a justice issue. I do not want to be that priest or that Levite that ignores my hurting homosexual friend on the side of the road. No, I want to come and pick up my hurting homosexual friend like the Good Samaritan and minister to him and love him well. But loving him well does not mean telling him that acting on a same gender attraction is morally o.k. And loving him well, does not mean that we ordain him. I am no better than my homosexual friend. I struggle with my own propensities to sin. But I do acknowledge those things as sin and I ask God’s Spirit who dwells inside of me to give me the power not to do them. And when I do them, I repent. I do not practice them or live in an unrepentant life style in them. I war against my flesh. I believe the most loving thing I can do is to call my friends with same gender attraction to do the same. So I encourage you to vote against these resolutions that are seeking to change the wording of the Book of Discipline on sexuality.

Bishop Huie – “All right thank you. Now you’ve heard the two predetermined speeches, for and against. The floor is open for speeches from the floor, for and against, 3 each. Thank you. I’ll start right over here and let me just ask you if you are going to speak I’m going to try to move this along. Line up at the mic and remember I can only do alternates. Here we go.”

Lee Jamison – “Lee Jamison, Huntsville First, I’m speaking for the amendment. When I was in college, I had roommates – more than one – who struggled with their sexuality. They were not struggling because they were deciding to choose something. They were struggling because their bodies had decided for them what their bodies chose and they were horrified at what their bodies had chosen for them. So they’re being driven by something. Paul in Corinthians also speaks to the nature of marriage and he speaks to the fact it is better not to get married. But why do we have marriage in Paul’s time when he is thoroughly convinced in his time that we don’t need to be doing this. He’s convinced of this because he thinks that these people should not have to burn with their sexuality. So marriage is there as a grace to them. Are we changing or ignoring the scriptures? (his ending was stopped due to being out of time),

Bishop Huie – “All right, a speech in favor. Now I would take a speech against the resolution. Are you speaking against the resolution? All right. Please go ahead.”

Mike Fraley – “Mike Fraley from Naples and Omaha. I want to applaud the Conference for this discussion today. We are doing what we should do, which is discerning. We need to discern whether this resolution is part of a movement of the Spirit or the movement of our society. Our society asks us to accept many things today, but we need to discern what is right and what is wrong; what is led by the Spirit and what is led by men. We are not part of this society. We are resident aliens; our home is in Heaven. And the Spirit is our leader. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. Now I’ll take a speech...are you going to speak in favor of...all right.”
David Meeker-Williams – “I’m David Meeker-Williams and I’m happily retired. I want to say two things. The first is when the Bible was written, the assumption was that everyone was straight and some people chose to behave in a gay way. Now we know that people are either given heterosexuality or given homosexuality. It is not a choice and if it is not a choice, then it is not a moral issue. Secondly, about how we interpret Scripture. Timothy is very clear that women are to have no authority in church and they are to remain silent over men. We had to decide if that was going to be literally true in our church or whether we would take Paul literally in Galatians 3:28 when he said in Christ there is neither male nor female. Happily we came out on the more generous and inclusive love of God. I think in this case we would do that with our lesbian brothers and sisters as well. If Paul wrote Galatians today, he would say in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, gay nor straight. Vote for.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. Now we’ll call for a speech against. All right I saw this gentleman first. (I’m a ‘for’ anyway bishop – stated by the other person at the mic).”

Rev. Darnell Walker – “I’m Darnell Walker (Bishop Huie says get a little closer to the microphone) I’m Darnell Walker (Bishop says thank you) A retired pastor in this Conference. I came from the Central Jurisdiction…Became United Methodist. And there is a Holy Bible that we believe in. And when we’re ordained, you said do you believe that the Scriptures are sufficient for salvation. And we said yes. I hold that all of us gave our faith our God’s creation, however, to lead this is like saying ordain homosexuals? Ordain liars? Ordain thieves? This, I think that we should hold that we will not ordain them. Let them be what they will. I would say that this discussion could be struck from the church and from the United States Congress. Because both discussions…this is a discussion between a person and God. So I vote and ask you to vote against…(Bishop cut in and ended him)”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. You are done. Thank you. The last one a speech for. This is the final speech for. Were you going to speak for? (man at microphone answered yes Bishop) All right. Again, get closer to the mic so that it picks up well. Thank you.”

Trey Burns – “My name is Trey Burns from the Bellaire United Methodist Church in the Central South District. Though I am a lay member of this conference, I also have the privilege of being a certified candidate for ordained ministry in this Conference and I have the joy of going through this process as a straight male. However, I have seen countless people in my time here in the Conference and in my time up at Perkins School of Theology, who wish to go through this process, who wish to serve the church and who wish to minister to God’s people, but they cannot because our church currently does not let them. I have met these people and I love these people and I know that God has called them and I have felt the Holy Spirit moving in their lives. And so I ask this Conference, ‘why is my calling more real than their calling?’ I ask you to vote in favor of this resolution.

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. Now one more speech against. One more. I’m not seeing anybody walk forward. That means I think you’re ready to vote. All right, we have one more. We are going to finish this out.”

Bill Gay– “Yes, thank you Bishop. I’m Bill Gay and I’m from Dayton, Texas. I’m a laity delegate and I wish to speak against this resolution. I also have several friends that are gay. And I have nothing against my gay friends. My name is gay. I’ve been criticized for that. I’ve been praised for that. That doesn’t matter. That’s not the issue here. What I see is that we have as a church, we must accept all people that are willing to come to Christ. People who are sinners, and we all are. But we don’t have to allow ordination to people who have expressed a sinful act. And in that vein, I would urge that we vote against this. We would not accept a preacher who lived with a concubine in a parsonage. So to me it is no different. I would urge you to vote against it.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. That concludes our speeches for and against. I’m going to move us to a moment of silence starting now and then we’ll vote. Please take a moment of silence and consider what you’ve heard. Amen. Please vote now on your ballot and when you are finished if you will pass them in to these inside aisles. If you will just hold steady. I know I have run you a little late. I will probably cut into your lunch time just a shade. Hold steady with us, if you will. Let’s get these ballots received and then B.T. has a word of instruction so that we can move quickly into our retirement service. And I am going to hope that most of our
retirees could make it here through the high water. O.k. Stay with us till we get these ballots received. These are hard-working tellers. They have been in almost every session that we are working on. Bring those in. We don’t have them all yet because I see them moving. All right. Thank you so much for your patience. Where are there ballots still out? All right. Let’s get these picked up. Stay with me here. Are there any other ballots out? I’m about to move that the ballots be closed. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, I don’t see any ballots still out. I declare the ballot is closed. Friends, we are going to move as quickly as we can to the retirement service. That will take us about 5 minutes and then we’ll be ready to start. Thank you for your conversation and for your patience and care this morning.

Service of Honoring Retirees
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 11:15 a.m.
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Laity Delegate Elections
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 2:00 p.m.
Lanier Grand Ballroom

Rev. B.T. Williamson - reminded people to pick up the hand held voting devices and instructed where to get those devices. Stated that, “if you are not a voting delegate we ask that you seat outside of the bar and not participate in this process.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “We will begin in one minute – please make your way to your seat now.”

Bishop Huie – “Good afternoon. I know that many of you as you are coming in flooding and water, damage to human beings and property throughout the conference…As we open the session I will open with prayers…”

Prior to Bishop Huie’s prayer, the following brief updates were given:

Henderson – minor damage others left this morning to go back
Jacksonville – wind damage, broken trees,
Sugar Land and Houston area – a great deal of flooding,
Turn your TV on and it works.
Memorial Drive – water
Grace – water
Sugar Land – deeper water
Individuals for sure have either water in homes, 3- 4 inches and then there is flooding.

The bishop stated that those are the ones that we are seeing on the news. Loss of life in Texas and still many people missing – related to flooding. She also stated that if we had information to share – put on a card and give to B.T. and we will try to share. There are 100’s and 100’s of UMC trying to help their neighbors, their churches and clean up in their own homes.

Bishop Huie then invited us to prayer and offered a prayer of trust and comfort, wisdom, reminder that we are servants, your love manifest by our words and our deeds.

Bishop stated that what they would like to do is go through the process of voting and stated that B.T. will take us through the process, then we will do a test vote, and finally we will move to the balloting process.

Rev. B.T. Williamson greeted us and gave the instructions and led us on a test drive of the voting process.

There was a suspension of the rules that was approved and two persons were added to the possible folks to choose from; they included:
Add these persons
Matt Edison 4041
Pamela Dountas 4042

The technician was asked to bring up the slides for our voting process.

The tellers were introduced and given a round of applause.

We were told that if we have a problem raise our hand and the tellers will come and assist us. During the voting round there is common to have problems – we will stop the voting process until everyone is back on board.

Rev. B.T. Williamson continued, stating that the bishop will guide us on the voting process. He reminded us of the bar of the conference and asked those that could not vote to move out from the bar of the Conference. He instructed us to not give your voting card to anyone throughout this afternoon. He said that the Bishop will give the ballot # and we will elect for all of the positions in that ballot. Once ballot one is closed we will wait a few moments and the results will be presented on the screens. We were instructed to pay attention to the number to elect.

We were informed that the bishop would read up to 22 names. We will vote for the delegates in the following order: General, Jurisdictional, and 4 alternates.

Last and most important piece – invalid ballot. These were the most common reasons given for an invalid ballot:
1. voted for same candidate twice
2. you did not vote for all the positions
3. the number you entered is not in the system 2001 is space odyssey not a valid ballot #
4. The person voted for was previously elected.

A practice ballot was done. Test question was put up on the screen. The bishop instructed us that once we put in that # please press the green square to send. We were told that Bishop Huie will say 5 4 3 2 1 - voting is now closed. Now they were going to display the results.

Bishop Huie – “Y’all did better than the clergy did. 3 invalid ballots try to let you know what is causing

Are we ready to move forward? We have someone without a machine working. Anyone else having challenges with your handheld device? I will call us for a moment of silence prayer

Election of Lay Delegates to General Conference

Bishop Huie then opened up the first ballot for the election of delegates to General Conference. What follows is a summary of the ballots as provided by Lumi Voting:

Ballot Number: 1
Positions open: 9
Number of Elections: 5
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4007</td>
<td>Reggie Clemons</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4023</td>
<td>Don House</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4017</td>
<td>Gil Hanke</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4012</td>
<td>Eddie Erwin</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4021</td>
<td>Andy Hernandez</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Ballot Number: 2  
Positions open: 4  
Number of Elections: 0  
Information on those elected:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 3  
Positions open: 4  
Number of Elections: 1  
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4039</td>
<td>Tom Wussow</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 4  
Positions open: 3  
Number of Elections: 2  
Information on those elected:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4022</td>
<td>Marquice Hobbs</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4031</td>
<td>Sue Sullivan</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 5  
Positions open: 1  
Number of Elections: 0  
Information on those elected:

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 6  
Positions open: 1  
Number of Elections: 1  
Information on those elected:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4038</td>
<td>Melba Wilson</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concluded the voting for delegates to General Conference.

**Election of Lay Delegates to Jurisdictional Conference**

The Bishop now instructed us that we would be voting for lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference. What follows is a summary as provided by Lumi Voting of the ballots for Jurisdictional Conference:

Ballot Number: 1  
Positions open: 9  
Number of Elections: 8  
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4015</td>
<td>Oscar Garza</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4019</td>
<td>Stacie Hawkins</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4001</td>
<td>Sterling Allen</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4024</td>
<td>Carolyn Huntsman</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4027</td>
<td>Donel King</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ballot Number: 2
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

<table>
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<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Ballot Number: 3
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 0
Information on those elected:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>N/A</td>
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Ballot Number: 4
Positions open: 1
Number of Elections: 1
Information on those elected:

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<tr>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4025</td>
<td>Richard Hyde</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This concluded the election of delegates to go to Jurisdictional Conference.

**Election of Lay Delegate Alternates**

Bishop Huie now directed us to elect 4 Alternates. What follows is a summation of the voting results as provided by Associate Secretary Rebecca Jones (please note that the data that was provided from Lumi Voting was incomplete for these last ballots):

Ballot Number: 1
Positions open: 4
Number of Elections: 2
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4032</td>
<td>Leah Taylor</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4037</td>
<td>Donna West</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballot Number: 2
Positions open: 2
Number of Elections: 1
Information on those elected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4020</td>
<td>Enid Henderson</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sterling Allen made a motion that the body accepts the top vote getter as the 4th alternate. There was a second and a vote that carried. Amid this process an objection came about. There was a calling for the suspension of the Conference Rules. Bishop called for the vote and it carried with the 2/3 needed to suspend the rules. Then a motion for polarity was discussed and voted and once the body had decided, the body had to return to the original format and process to elect the final alternate.
Ballot Number: 3  
Positions open: 1  
Number of Elections: 1  
Information on those elected:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote ID</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of Votes Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4034</td>
<td>Ken Tielke</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This ended the voting process for lay delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences as well as the necessary 4 alternates.

Bishop Huie invited those that were elected to come to the front and the body applauded those delegates. The tellers were also appreciated by applause.

Rev. B.T. Williamson said that it took the clergy 22 ballots to finish and they didn’t get done until about 9. The laity only took 13 ballots and were able to get out by 4.

Bishop Huie reminded us of the ordination service tonight. We were instructed to leave our devices in the chair and the technicians would be around to pick them up. Our cards were to be left in the machines and Bishop Huie said that she would see us this evening.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Jones  
Associate Secretary

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### Clergy Workshop with Gil Rendle  
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 2:00 p.m.  
Ballroom of the Americas

### Service of Commissioning and Ordination  
Tuesday, May 26, 2015, 7:00 p.m.  
Lanier Grand Ballroom

### Last Day of Annual Conference  
Wednesday, May 27, 2015  
Hilton Americas  
Houston, Texas

---

**Worship Service**

Led by Jon Thornsburg

**Business Session VI**

Bishop Huie – “Thank you Jon Thornsburg – it is always a treat to have you here and to remind us through our singing that we are a global church and even people who look like us can sing all kinds of songs. We are grateful for Jon’s leadership and look forward to him leading us in worship later today. I have a couple of announcements and will give us a roadmap for how we will move through the morning and then we will get started. In just a moment Jim Turley is going to offer the opening prayer but I want to just update you on a couple of things. Some of you may know that Mrs. Angela Waddell who comes and is a member at Redlick had a health issue this morning. I think in the elevator and medical folks are with her. I know that as we begin this morning we want to hold her in our prayers. If you had your televisions on you know that once again we are getting rain in Houston on streets that are already overflowing. I think we will see people come in this morning, but not unlike yesterday,
it is a slow drive in. We also want to hold in our hearts and prayers all the various people and places where there has been flooding; not only in this city but in Wimberley, San Marcos, Austin and up around the Dallas area; Texas is pretty wet right now with things overflowing. The best we can tell right now most of the damage to our congregations, parsonages, pastors, and homes has been due to some flooding, some minor flooding; but it’s not minor if you have to rip all the carpet out. I don’t mean to say minor like it is nothing but it is not 10 feet of water either. At least the ones we know about here; but again we want to keep all those persons in our prayers. We do know that about 4000 houses and homes right here in the Houston area have gotten water in them, and our disaster response people are on it; as are our disaster response people in the Rio Texas area; and we will be working through UMCOR and our own TACCOR to respond positively to that. And finally several of you have asked me about our grandson, Zac, and a couple of folks have asked Jan – so a personal word if I may; our grandson Zac, who some of you may remember from last year had just been diagnosed with leukemia 3-4 days before annual conference started. Zac is doing much much better; he is still in treatment of course; and will be in treatment for another couple of years. But if you were to see him today he would look like a happy 4 year old boy, and we are grateful to God. Bob and I as well as his parents Matt and Shambryn, are so grateful for your prayers and your support. We know that many of you have held him in prayer every day for this whole year. I am not saying to stop praying but I will say it just wonders us to say that he is so much better. Jim Turley will you come and offer our prayer this morning.”

Rev. Jim Turley – “Gracious God of all …pray for all the people in the city around us, pray for the loss and grief, and anxiety in the midst of the storm. So thankful that you are among us. Thank God that You will help us … continue personally for the circumstances of our lives. to … pray for a Pentecostal outpouring of Your spirit on us as we pray God that you will walk among us and through us sometime in spite of us through the work that we do this morning, in our conversation- that Your kingdom will be honored here on earth and that your life giving name …our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.”

Retiree Video

This video honored retiree Sara Curley

Bishop Huie – “We have lots of items on the agenda this morning. I am not planning on us taking a 10 o’clock break. I plan to keep us working straight through because it is my assumption that you all would like to be out of here as close to noon as we can. So if you need to take a break just feel free to get up, leave and come back here and I will try to encourage us if you are making a report and when we get to the resolutions I will say this again. If you are making a report come on up here and stand by the secretary’s table so we do not have any dead space in between and we will can keep rolling. Ok so let’s start out with legacy churches I think that’s Jeff Olive is making that, and Kip Gilts and Dr. Stansell are coming up here to help make this report as well. Come on up, come on up and I will work on my microphone over here while we are waiting.”

Legacy Churches

Rev. Kip Gilts – “Bishop, we have had a little bit of change of plans and change of plans again; you saw Dr. Stansell walking up here because I had gotten a text message from Jeff Olive earlier that he was flooded out so just glad that he was able to get a boat in from the Woodlands and made it in here today. Also here to talk a little bit about the legacy church in Manvel, Grace United Methodist Church. Last year at this annual conference a representative, a lay delegate from Manvel was here and heard the great stories about legacy churches and said that’s what we need to do; in a growing area, an area that can be used more strategically for the Kingdom of God and we continued that conversation. In a course of events after a couple of charge conferences Manvel Grace voted to become a legacy church. Do we have any folks that were able to make it in from Grace Manvel – I heard from a couple that they were also prohibited by water from getting here. This is kind of like when my wife doesn’t show up in the middle of a sermon I’m able to tell it however I want so I appreciate that freedom that’s here. So after that they did elect to become a legacy church, and working with new church starts we began to envision what could happen in that growing area with these assets and entered into dialogue with Pearlard First; and I know Keith Whitaker is here. Keith, if you would come forward. And talk about the possibility of First Church Pearlard launching a second campus in Manvel at the property now inhabited by Grace United Methodist
Church. We worked together in getting a Path One Pastor there. Pearland voted to become – launch a second campus and we are moving forward with using these kingdom facilities for kingdom purposes. Dr. Whitaker, do you want to say anything about Pearland First?”

Dr. Keith Whitaker – “Bishop, in the interest of time, I will just say, Pearland First has been talking about this for a couple of years and with the help of our district superintendent, Rev. Gilts, we have been able to vote overwhelmingly to adopt this, not just the property but the mission field of Grace UMC in Manvel and we are looking forward to making second campus of First UMC Pearland.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you very much.”

Dr. Keith Whitaker – “I simply say on Monday we talked about the discernment process for at risk congregations and part of that discernment process is where are we, are we at a place where we can move forward as a church, should we merge, should we close this down and get this over with, what is the best path forward for Grace Manvel as they went forward. The best path forward for them was to become a legacy. So we have congregations in our annual conference that will enter into a time of discernment – what do we do, how do we reach our mission field, and what is our best path forward? We are grateful for them and their decision to become a legacy congregation.”

Rev. Kip Gilts – “Thank you, Bishop, for the opportunity to share this story and I do want to say in wrapping it up I want to commend the courageous folks in Manvel, for being able to envision life beyond what they had initially envisioned. I want to commend the courage of First United Methodist of Pearland for doing something that they never have done before and I want to encourage you as you continue that discernment path as to whether you could be a parent congregation or a legacy congregation, to begin to think creatively of how can we serve the kingdom best. So thank you!”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much, sure, give them a round of applause. The Reverend Gail Ford Smith, the Reverend Michelle Hall, and Reverend Elizabeth Duffin are coming forward – this is our clergy recognition time.

Clergy Excellence Recognition

Rev. Michelle Hall – “In the next few moments the Center for Clergy Excellence would like recognize clergy who are celebrating a milestone at a fifth year increment from the time of their licensing or ordination into ministry into the United Methodist Church. Refresh is a space created by the Texas Annual Conference Center for Clergy Excellence to honor clergy persons and to help them engage in intentional experiences for reflection, resourcing, and rejoicing. This is a gift intended to invite clergy 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. All of us have this gift available to us to use as we feel God’s spirit calls us into this and anticipate God’s future to transform the world for Jesus Christ. We invite you to please stand as your name is called until the completion of your class: Rhett Ansley, Stacy Pell Auld, Patricia Mayer Bergfield, Kristin Watts Bogart, Emily Chapman, Amanda Davis, Carolyn Davis, Laralee Wiggins DeHart, Patrick Evans, Lillie Ferrell, Verronda Flanagan, Gerry Giless, Christina Suzanne Hale, Rebecca Hand, Hazeline Jackson, Will Knuckols, Jr., Romonica Malone-Wardley, Thomas Myrick, Scott Rawlings, Augusto Sarria-Anaya, Stephanie Lind Schlimm, Larry Shows, Ann Ward Spears, John Richard Stephenson, Keith Tilly, David Urban, Deborah Vaughn, Virginia Wall, Kathryn Ware, Meredith Wende. Would you please celebrate with this class a 5 year of service?


We are grateful for your service and hope that you participate in Refresh. We are so very grateful for the efforts of one person who is retiring. We are grateful for all the efforts of those who are retiring but we would like to honor one person who was the very first director for transitional intentional interim ministry and that’s the Reverend Doctor Suzanne Sue Carter. We would like for her to come forward so that you might give the recognition to Sue who has put the Texas Annual Conference on the map because of intentional interim ministry. Sue is recognized around the United States and around the world for this ministry. We love you Sue and are grateful for what you have done.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, we are going to move now to resolutions. And I am going to call on the Reverend Lance Richards to come and give us the report of yesterday’s ballot.”

Rev. Michael Caldwell – “Could I ask a question first Bishop?”

Bishop Huie – “Yes Sir”

Rev. Michael Caldwell – “My name is Michael Caldwell from Lissie. I became an ordained elder in 1985 and I wonder why my name was left off the list”

Bishop Huie: “I cannot answer that question. {Pause} It should have been read it what the Director of Clergy Excellence just said. This is not to say that we are without error so it should have been read. We beg your pardon.”

Dr. Allison Thompson – “I am also at my 20 year mark.”

Bishop Huie – “Yes ma’am?”

Dr. Allison Thompson – “I am Allison Thompson I was ordained an elder in ’95 so I am at my 20 year mark.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so we’ve got another one here. Thank you, thank you, Sorry, we will check our numbers here more carefully. All right I would like to turn to Lance to read the report of the ballots and we will move forward here on these resolutions.”

Rev. Lance Richards – “Thank you, Bishop, and it is my pleasure to read the results of yesterday’s votes on Resolutions 1 through 3. Resolution #1 615 for, 445 against, 17 abstained, and 3 invalid – invalid was if you marked two instead of one and it happened. Resolution #2 331 for, 714 against, 31 abstained, 2 invalid. Resolution #3 – 337 for, 712 against, 28 abstained, 2 invalid.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you very much that is a report of yesterday’s ballot. Now you will remember that yesterday when I was suggesting to you that as a way we would proceed today is that as we move into this next set of resolutions that we would do these with a show of hands and that the presiding officer would call it with the help of, always, the persons here on the stage; and that if someone felt we needed to do things differently than that; we haven’t heard that, I am assuming we can move these along so that you can know the results of the vote at the same time that the vote is taken. So with that word then I would like to invite – I’ll turn to B.T. – if you are going to speak to this issue and we will start with the resolution on page 38. The resolution to work toward the repeal of the death penalty, if you, and this will be true for all of them – if you want to speak to this whether the 1 minute speech or a pre-determined speaker you all come on up so that we can keep moving along. I’m going to call on people in the cue, in the line by the microphones, and I’m rather than waiting for people to come forward.
So let’s keep that in mind as we move forward. B.T. please help us know what the pre, who the pre-determined speakers are here.”

**Resolutions Presentation #2**

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop. With regard to Resolution #4 in regards to the repeal of the death penalty. Speaking for is Susan Buchanan and there is no pre-determined speaker against.”

Bishop Huie – “All right so we will invite Susan to come up here and you will remember that pre-determined speeches are 5 minutes after that is one minute for and against, you have a maximum of three on each side and our wonderful timers are back there with their go and stop signs.”

Rev. Susan Buchanan – “Thank you Bishop, Members of the Annual Conference. First I have a couple of edits to the resolution if you will accept them. Under where is says “Whereas” we are now at 524 persons have been put to death since the state resumed executions in 1982. Down at the bottom the second bullet point at the bottom if we would change the word “for” after “Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty” to before the 2017 legislative session. On page 39 “Call upon the Texas Legislature” that bullet point is listed twice, we don’t really need it listed twice and then where is says “encourage the Bishop” we are going to change the word encourage to invite; to be a little nicer to our new Bishop. And add “or an authorized representative to attend the press event”. And the last one instead of “instruct” we will “call upon” the secretary of the Annual Conference, and delete the words “all candidates for, and” so it will read “immediately to members of the Texas Legislature”. Are those acceptable?”

Bishop Huie – “Those are just editorial so we can accept them as they are.”

Susan Buchanan – “Wonderful. Friends we talk about there’s seismic shifts in our understanding and support of the death penalty across the United States and we, United Methodist, in the Texas Conference live at the epicenter of the use of the death penalty in this country. In Harris County alone if we were our own state we have executed more people since 1982 than all other states combined. We talk about being effective as United Methodists and this resolution calls on us to be more effective and support a statement that has been in our social principles for almost 60 years. What if we mobilized the United Methodist in the Texas Conference in support of this statement in our social principles that we will work to end the death penalty? That’s what this resolution does. The death penalty is unfair; it is arbitrary, it is costly; and we can no longer sustain it in our culture. I invite you to vote yes for this resolution.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, are there persons who wish to speak either for or against? All right. Coming forward right here. If you wish to speak to this come to the microphones now so that we can keep going.”

Rev. Cheryl Smith: Cheryl Smith serving Wesley Huntsville, my church is less than a mile from the place where they execute people on all of our behalf. As your representative I attend a vigil on the corner outside of the death house, not just for myself, but on behalf of all of you, all United Methodists. Because as Susan mentioned we already have the warrant for opposing the death penalty; we have had it for a long time; it’s included in our Discipline, our Social Principles. There are so many reasons; economic, moral, justice, to not go forward with this death penalty sentence. I urge you to step up and lend some support to the statement that we already have in our Discipline. This does not require us to vote on something new. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you very much. Now does anyone else wish to speak to this? Seeing no one I am assuming that the discussion is closed, and that you are ready to vote. If you would vote in favor of this resolution would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Then this resolution carries. It is approved. Thank you. Let’s move to the next resolution.

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, the next resolution is with regard to the Economic Community recommending a change in the Discipline paragraph # 163. Speaking in favor of the resolution is Dr. Don House; there is no one speaking in opposition.
Dr. Don House – “The resolution is on page 40 of the pre-conference journal and let me start by saying some things that are a little hard to listen to. Our denomination is facing continued decline, losing 53,232 attendees per year – that pace has been going on for 12 years. This last year, in 2013 we lost over 60,000 in worship attendance. There are significant efforts to turn it around; we have hope, however, there are obstacles in our way. And what I want to do is talk about one of those obstacles. How I got here – I’m an economist by training, I’ve been an economist for 38 years, and it was early in my profession where I came across this language in the Social Principles in the Book of Discipline, and it troubled me, and it troubled me for a long time. I started doing some study and discernment and lots of discussion with lots of leaders and I decided that I wanted to teach this in Sunday school and I did. It went over reasonably well and I did it in two other churches and so far about 450 people have attended these classes and when I get to this section of the Social Principles they are appalled that this is in the Social Principles. I haven’t found consistency in our religious background that what is in the Social Principles. In fact, if you look at the language it basically says this or discusses this – the difference between free markets and socialism, this and monetary policy, private businesses are responsible for all employment, discusses the concentration of our wealth, and it discusses our tax structures. When I present this to people they think this is a platform of a political party and not something that belongs in the church. I have never seen these discussed in scripture, in sermons, or in our hymns but it is there. It’s an obstacle. Of the 450 people that I have presented this to, they do not believe and hope that it is not something that we all agree to. It is something that we discuss and debate and we should. The replacement has positives – it celebrates the economic community which I believe it should. It talks about economic growth. We’ve done studies and we have found that Methodists are very generous. With an increase in income and economic growth of 10% the giving to the church increases by 12%. We are very generous people and generosity is important to our church and our communities and we are generous. We should celebrate that. We also talk about good character this is what the church teaches best. Business is a corrosive environment but when there are people in the business environment that are honest and have integrity it spreads and it changes that environment. It’s a good thing. We should have these discussions about these issues and in our dialogue. My dad was here on May 29th, 1986 and he preached the Sending Forth sermon. I looked it up – the sermon was entitled, “Bottom Line Commitment” and he says this, “Have your arguments in the church but don’t play them out in the public square”. It’s a very good lesson. I just bought this in the bookstore, $2.99 the Book of Social Principles – this is what we give people who we want to become Methodist. But when they come to that point, and I have friends, I don’t have many friends, but I have a few, and some of them are economists I can tell you if they read this paragraph they would not join this church. I know business people that if they read this paragraph they would not join this church. The business community needs this church – they need its teachings, they need its theology. I urge you to pass this resolution. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you – are there persons who wish to speak to this either for it or against it, yes, please if you wish to speak to it come to the microphone. All right I will start over here on my left and if you will identify yourself and I will try to take alternating viewpoints. Here we go.”

Rev. Nathan Bledsoe – “I serve at St. Peters United Methodist Church in Katy and I rise to speak against this resolution because friends I take the Bible seriously and the biblical witness is clear that language in our discipline that speaks to the many being exploited by the few for economic gain is language that we need. When we start in the Hebrew Bible we see again and again agricultural codes that make sure there is room for the poor and the widows to grow their crops on the land of those who have much. We see Paul admonishing those of great financial wealth for speaking over the slaves in their midst in early Christian churches and most importantly over and over again Jesus provides significant challenges to those who have significant financial wealth. In Matthew 19 a rich man is unbelievably conflicted. Friends, if we are talking about Jesus sometimes we are going to be uncomfortable or we are not talking about the gospel. Please vote against this resolution.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, who wishes to speak for this resolution? Right here, all right.”

Lee Jamison – “From Huntsville First. I believe that while we do hold people who have great resources to a high standard for the administration of those resources we existing language in the Discipline places an awful amount of trust in government as opposed to the people generally. Here we are talking about changing the way we address the concentration of resources and it’s not that we are saying in the Discipline to concentrate resources in the hands of many – No we are talking about concentrating resources in the hand of a few, but a specific few.
What makes concentration in the hands of the government better than in private hands? So I think this revision is a good idea because it talks about people being responsible for the administration broadly of resources.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. Now who wishes to speak against the resolution?”

Rev. Scott Moore – “Serving at Conroe First and I rise in opposition. I also chair the conference Social Principles Committee and when this resolution was presented to us it received a vote of non-concurrence and one of the primary reasons in that discussion was the stoking of the original language which says we believe private and public economic enterprises are responsible for the social cost of doing business such as employment and environmental pollution and that they should be held accountable for those costs and I wonder if Dr. House would entertain a friendly amendment to re-include that sentence. Our concern was the striking of any indication of any responsibility of the corporations.”

Bishop Huie – “That would have to be – it can’t be a friendly – so you would have to move it as an amendment to Dr. House’s resolution.”

Rev. Scott Moore – “I so move Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “All right so where do you want to put it – tell us where it would have to go? Ok so tell me so that the body understands.”

Scott Moore – “Ok so where he says replace with the following paragraph: We understand the social benefits from economic growth in eliminating poverty, reducing disease, and improving the economic conditions of people. I would put it after that sentence and retain the original sentence that is stricken from the original paragraph that I read.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so look we have an amendment now on the floor, and amendment to the resolution. So who wishes to speak to the amendment? Oh we need a second sorry – is there a second? Ok so right – it’s my error I am just looking at the room and seeing – all right we have it properly before you, we have the amendment who wishes to speak against the amendment. You’ve heard the maker speak in favor. All right, are you ready to vote on the amendment? If you would support the amendment to re-insert that language would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you. The amendment carries; it’s re-inserted- it’s inserted back in. Now we are here – we have had two against and one for so I would entertain another speech in favor of the resolution.”

Dr. Adrian Early – “From Blue United Methodist Church“

Bishop Huie – “Please get close to the microphone so it will pick up.”

Dr. Adrian Early – “All right, so you can’t hear me. I rise in favor of this resolution. The words have consequences, it is how we plan. Silence has consequences, it is how we ignore. The key sentence in my opinion is the second one in the added paragraph, “We also understand the importance of the generosity of individuals in contributing to the common good.” We had a mild shock when the Bishop informed us that both George Bush and Hillary Clinton sit on a Methodist pew. And I believe this is about a toolkit, a variety of things that we can do which ought to include us.”

Bishop Huie – “Sir”

Dr. Adrian Early – “I think I am finishing my sentence. It includes not only us as well as others. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Now I need a speech opposing the amendment, I mean opposing the resolution. Is there anyone who wishes to speak against? Ok right here. And then I will take one more in favor.”
Rev. David Meeker-Williams – ‘I am still happily retired. Real quickly if everyone in here would imagine that we are rated cross the room from here to here based on income, on wealth – wealthy people there, poor people here there are not that many poor people as they don’t get elected to annual conference and they certainly don’t get elected to general conference. But statistically those people over there are getting way more wealthy and these people over here are staying where they are and there is more and more of them. Now, this resolution would have you believe that because those are the good guys and they deserve that and these are the bad guys and they deserve that. It is a character issue, yes, I see at least something wrong with the system which makes it a justice issue. It’s not just character you can’t just give credit and give blame based on what … - there is something fundamentally wrong with the system. Not all of it but at least some of it. We have to have this discussion I move the resolution defeat. There is not an ounce of Christian faith in it. Thanks.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. And now one speech in favor.”

Dr. Sterling Allen – “Representing the Central North District. I speak in favor of this resolution. Not only am I serving in the local church and the all-star finger cymbal player in the Annual Conference Band but I also serve as a consultant to many of your churches when it comes to worship and music. And in each of those settings there has not been one that passed where I have heard someone say if we only had a big donor, if we only had that big check, if we only had a high income earner that could change the scope of ministry in the local church, help us do more reach further, make a bigger difference for the gospel. With the current language in the current Discipline we alienate those people who are able to do those things; we don’t want to alienate people with wealth, we want to encourage people without wealth to work harder, to find new opportunities, and to seek out God’s continued blessing as we rise up. I am not a high income end earner, finger cymbals don’t pay well my friends, but I’m going keep practicing and playing so that one day hopefully I can do more for the church and for the gospel message. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. All right, so the resolution is before you. You have heard three speeches for and three against. This resolution should you adopt it will be sent to General Conference because of what we are discussing is in the Book of Discipline. BT just reminded me so if you will call us now to a moment of silence and then I will call the vote. Amen. If you are for this resolution will you raise your hand please? All right if you would not support this resolution would you raise your hand please? The resolution carries. It’s probably a 60/40 out there – Yea – All right, so this resolution is approved. We moved to the next resolution, page 42. It is the resolution on parsonage standards.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, speaking in favor of Resolution #6 Jon Thorntonsbury. There is no one speaking in opposition.”

Rev. Jon Thorntonsbury – “Good morning Bishop Huie and the delegates of Texas Annual Conference. This resolution is only for the Texas Annual Conference. It is not a change to the Book of Discipline so it only involves us and I rise in support of the proposed resolution on parsonage standards. This is in addition to structural mechanical inspection and an air quality test to the standards. I would like to call your attention to the proposed resolution and ask for each church to have such an inspection completed on a parsonage at a minimum of nine years once every nine years. The cost of such an inspection may be of a concern to some but I would ask that those who have been given the responsibility to provide safe and appropriate houses in which many call home to please take into consideration the need for such a provision. As a pastor of a county seat church in rural east Texas I understand the financial constraints on churches in our conference. But I would urge that the safety and health of those who have been placed to serve be taken into consideration as well. I believe the results of such inspections and tests far outweigh the financial constraints that such a requirement that this resolution calls for would bring such a resolution in our conference. The cost of an average housing inspection and air quality tests is between $600 - $1000.00 and the minimum timeframe would be nine years the overall costs would be less than $6.00 to $9.00 a month to provide such inspections on the property. I also voice my concern, my support for the resolution as it would provide for the church, and specifically the Board of Trustees, a clear understanding of any issues or concerns. That might come to light during such an inspection. This clear understanding of such issues will setup significant financial resources in long term maintenance for dealing with specific needed repairs. I am personally grateful and thankful for the sacrificial and faithful giving of the churches in the Texas Annual
Conference to provide parsonages for the clergy and many of their family members, children as we have younger and younger clergy coming into our conference. I have experienced tremendous and thoughtful generosity from the church I currently serve through the provision of a parsonage for myself and family. I would ask and urge others to join and support this resolution so that such parsonages would be adequately and professionally inspected not primarily for the individuals and families who reside there but also for faithful servants who responsibility it is to oversee and maintain such properties. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie: “Does anyone wish to speak for – there is not a pre-determined speaker against so who wishes to speak for or against this proposal? All right.”

Oscar Garza – “From Cypress Trails, actually offering an amendment to the proposal.”

Bishop Huie – “All right this is an amendment to the proposal.”

Oscar Garza – “I believe it was up on the screen …”

Bishop Huie – “All right we will get it up on the screen now. It went up a little earlier but this is where it should have gone up.”

The Amended Resolution follows (minus the red for changes):

RESOLUTION ON PARSONAGE STANDARDS

Submitted by Stacy Pever Anzick

Whereas many Churches provide housing for their Pastor/s which are owned by the Church (commonly called parsonages).

Whereas most Pastors living in parsonages have not previously been homeowners.

Whereas Pastors are not trained to identify potential household issues.

Whereas the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University reports that the median number of years that Texans own their homes is 7. (Summer 2010 statistics)

Whereas when homeowners buy and sell their homes, the house has a professional structural/mechanical inspection to identify potential problems with the house.

Whereas preventative home maintenance is less costly than emergency home repairs.

Therefore be it resolved that a requirement be added to the "Housing and Parsonage Standards of the Texas Annual Conference" that Churches have a “Property Inspection Report Form REI 7-4” as promulgated by the Texas Real Estate Commission (or its equivalent) completed by a Texas Real Estate Commission (or its equivalent) licensed Real Estate Inspector or Professional Inspector and have indoor air quality testing done by a certified indoor air consultant listed on the Texas Department of State Health Services (or its equivalent) on all Church owned houses being used as parsonages at the minimum of every 9 years.

Be it further resolved that the reports and testing required above be done by someone who does is not a Church member, Church staff member or immediate relative of anyone serving on the Board of Trustees and/or Finance Committee).

Be it further resolved that the Board of Trustees will review the results and in consultation with the Parsonage Committee, Staff Parish Relations Committee and/or Finance Committee create a
detailed plan to resolve any and all issues in a timely manner that are required to bring the property to the minimum acceptable standard of habitation as defined by the appropriate local, county or state governmental agency.

Be it further resolved that the Board of Trustees include the results of the inspection and air quality tests in their yearly Charge/Church Conference report; along with the detailed plan of action for resolving the issues as defined above that are required to be addressed and progress made since the last Charge/Church Conference.

Be it further resolved that when a change in Pastor occurs that the incoming Pastor be provided with the most recent inspection and air quality report as well as the progress report of issues resolved and the schedule to resolve items left undone.

Be it further resolved that all Churches who fall under this guideline will complete the first inspection and air quality testing no later than January 1, 2017.

Oscar Garza – “What’s amended is what’s in red. What the amendment is intended to do is to apply some standard to the testing or to the inspection. You can see what is struck out is a (in the red), we strike out a complete structural mechanical inspection which is what replace with a standard that currently in the state of Texas the Texas Real Estate Commission has a standard on property inspections that anyone who has sold a house or purchased a house has seen one. Also the Texas Department of State and Health Services has a list of indoor air consultants who can do inspections. Again this creates a standard. Further down instead of making a church do all the repairs that are in a report the other standard – if you are able to scroll down on the screen – is that you bring the property up to a minimal acceptable standard of habitation that each county and or city or the state has a minimum acceptable standard of habitation. So this just adds standards to the resolution.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so what we are going to deal with first is the amendment. Is there discussion about the amendment? All right, thank you again reminding me that we need a second. It is now properly before you with a second is there any discussion? All right are you ready to vote on the amendment? No.”

Justin Flynn – “From Christ United Methodist Church in Sugar Land and I am rising to speak against the amendment. I’m a property attorney in Fort Bend County and Harris County and I can tell you that the state law is not adequate for providing reasonable housing for people. I deal with tenancy issues all the time and unless it is essentially an absolute and clear according to the health officials of the county threat to the average safety to the average tenant, nothing needs to be done about it. Air quality is but there is no way to prove that easily according to the law. I think we have a responsibility above what the law requires us to do as a minimum. The law is to protect people from the very basic offenses and we are called to more than that in Christ. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you – do I hear a speech for the amendment?”

Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick – “I am the author of the resolution and the proud pastor of Magnolia United Methodist Church. I speak for the amendment, Oscar and I discussed it and while I appreciate the ‘against’ speech, this takes out the … my language was not as well written as Oscar has prepared it here. And while I appreciate the ‘against’ speech and calling us to a higher standard I feel like we need to have a definable minimum standard.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. Are there any more speeches on the amendment? Are you ready to vote? All right if you would approve the amendment raise your hand please. Thank you. Any opposed to the amendment. Thank you. The amendment carries and what is before us now is the resolution itself. Are there more speeches here? I don’t see anyone at the microphones so I am assuming you are ready to vote. Oops one more.”

Rev. Chuck Huffman – “East District Superintendent. I simply rise on behalf of smaller churches who are going to be impacted the most by this in my opinion. I serve a very rural district and combined with the measures that were passed for equitable compensation and minimum salaries – the impact financially upon local churches is
going to have serious consequences in terms of appointment sustainability and I just express a concern about that while I agree that we need to do something I am just concerned that this may be a step too far. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Ok so we have someone speaking for, yes? Please go right ahead but y’all try to stay at the microphones.”

Carmen Kelly – “I’m a preacher’s kid from another conference in Texas – I have spent numerous years in very small parsonages from very small churches and I can tell you that I have lived in multiple substandard homes throughout the years and I speak for this.”

Bishop Huie – “Ok thank you. I think we are ready here. If you would support. All right one more.”

Frances Heith Henderson – “From St. Paul’s… My concern is, as my DS just mentioned, we are not going to have $1000 to pay this. I was given the impression when I was growing up that we did buy the parsonage and we did take care of it and it belonged to our church, our church, now I’ve been told that we bought the parsonage but it belongs to the Methodist Church, not our church. So if we are going to require these inspections shouldn’t the Methodist Church pay for it?

Bishop Huie – “All right we have heard two speeches for, two speeches against, do we need more? You ready? I’m trying, all right come Dr. Stansell.”

Dr. Elijah Stansell – “I know you are trying and I’m on your side. Let’s put some clarity to this. This is the local Board of Trustees not Annual Conference. I would like that to be inserted as a friendly.”

Bishop Huie – “That’s a word of explanation. All right, is this a speech?”

From the Floor – “It’s only a comment on the affirmative.”

Bishop Huie – “Ok it’s a speech in favor.”

From the Floor – “I lived in a parsonage in the East District; we won’t name the church. And because the house had been let go so long the carpets and stuff had actually rotted underneath – when they pulled it out to repair it, it put so much stuff in the air that both my inner ears became infected, burst both ear drums, on a Saturday night on a Sunday when I had to preach. Thank God I had a good doctor that fixed me up and got me prepared for Sunday. Having habitable living conditions that are up to standard for health is very important.”

Bishop Huie – “Ok that’s a speech in favor. Is there a speech against so I can keep it even? All right I don’t see one so I’m going to go to a vote here. But before first a moment of silence. Amen. If you would support this resolution as it has been amended would you raise your hand please? Thank you. If you are opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you then it is approved, it is supported. Let’s go to the next resolution. B.T.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop, resolution number 7, the proposal on the nominations rule change was withdrawn. We’re on resolution, or proposal that is, item number 8. You will find that on page 45.

Bishop Huie – “All right.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Speaking for the proposal conference session rule is Stacy Pever Anzick. Speaking in opposition is Reggie Clemons.”

Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick – “Good morning Annual Conference. Thank you Bishop. Thank you Rev. Williamson. I don’t even want 5 minutes. I just want to say that 25% is such a large number to pull something off the consent calendar. And, they’ll be an amendment coming forward, and I hope that you will support that because I am for it; to match General Conference which is 20 delegates and it wouldn’t even take Annual Conference session time because as they do at General Conference, whoever wants to pull something off the
consent calendar goes around and gets 20 signatures of 20 delegates and that’s much better than even what I proposed as one lone person. And so, I think it is important for us to be able to pull things off the consent calendar and to have time to discuss it with one another. It is the one time a year that we are all together to worship and pray and gather and do the business of the annual conference. And so there’s times when persons don’t have all the answers and why things end up on the consent calendar…or may have question that is good for the body…and when we amend things and when we talk about things and discuss it together that brings value. And so voices that don’t get to sit on Annual Conference meetings or be in delegations, or things like that, are able to get heard when we all listen and share with one another. And so, I would hope that you would vote for this proposal of a rule change. The 25% was introduced just last year. So this is the first year that we are enacting the 25%. And there was only one thing that was asked to be removed from the consent calendar this year. So we are talking about a few minutes of our time, so that all the voices of our Annual Conference can be heard. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. And then Reggie…Reggie Clemons will speak against the resolution. Proposal…sorry, it is not a resolution it is a proposal.”

Reggie Clemons – “Thank you Bishop and thank you Stacy. I think actually that we have all understood that the purpose of us here is to truly spend more time talking about celebrations and fellowship and learning and to a lesser degree not as much time spent on reporting and listening to representatives of committees and institutions of the church. So this conference does give consideration to matters of finance and policy and rules and structure and strategic decision. Simultaneously it does identify the ongoing reports that can be reviewed and discussed in Pre-conference district meetings, except at Annual Conference are sent to record through the consent calendar. Additionally, persons who author the reports included in the Pre-Conference Journal are available for conversation with interested persons at any point in time. The deviation from a planned agenda with a goal to utilize time to its fullest advantage, should not be entertained without a sense that the body is truly interested in discussion and decision. Having a requirement of an affirmation to remove an item from the consent calendar is consistent with other bodies within our denomination and it respects the time of the Annual Conference which is the real reason that we voted for it. The CLT did review this proposal and affirms that the current rule, that requires a 20% vote of the body to remove an item from the consent calendar, should remain unchanged. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. Is there discussion? Someone speaking for and against? If anyone wishes to speak, if you will line up at the microphones, that would be great. I’ll start over here to my right.”

Laura Young – “Thank you Bishop. Laura Young district delegate north. I am the friendly amendment that Stacy spoke of. I would like to offer, to the body, that we adopt the General Conference Rules for removing items from the consent calendar. And the statement made by the General Conference is very brief, if you would like me to read it.”

Bishop Huie – “Yes, please.”

Laura Young – “Any 20 delegates may have a consent calendar item removed by having such a request on file with the secretary of the General Conference. In our case, we would simply substitute Annual Conference. And as Stacy mentioned, there is a form that General Conference makes available and any delegate takes that form and can go get the 20 signatures required, file it with the secretary, and then that will remove the item from the consent calendar. No floor time is required for that action.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. Thank you. Now that’s an amendment, so it needs a second (second). All right, so now we are on the amendment. So we are in speeches for or against the amendment. You’ve heard a speech in favor of the amendment. Is there someone that wishes to speak against the amendment?”

From the Floor (unidentified) – “I have a question Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “O.k.”
From the Floor (unidentified) – “Could you give me an idea of how many persons there are at General Conference? How many delegates or members are at General Conference?”

Bishop Huie – “Well, the General Conference rules limit it. In the olden days to a thousand, so a thousand or less. This year, it is more in the 600 range. Or 800 range…800 range.”

From the Floor (unidentified) – “How many members do we have in the Annual Conference?”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Registered delegates?”

Bishop Huie – “Registered delegates? Who can tell us the number of registered delegates?”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “2,250 this year.”

From the Floor (unidentified) – “2,250 delegates as opposed to 997 delegates. So 20 delegates, seems like kind of a small number, to me, but, o.k.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, that is a speech against. All right, now, does someone to speak for? Now what you’re on is the amendment. All right, and the amendment is to substitute 20 names. Do you want to speak for?”

Rev. Jon Stouffer – “Jon Stouffer, First United Methodist Church Brenham. 20 delegates from 997 delegates at General Conference is 2%. 2% is much less than 25%.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, that’s a speech in favor. Does someone else wish to speak here? All right. If you are in favor of the amendment, would you raise your hand? If you’re opposed to the amendment raise your hand. The amendment does not carry, we’re back to on to the resolution itself. And let me remind you that when we do get to this, it takes a ¾ vote because this is a conference rule so, just to remember that. Now we have heard from the presenters, the predetermined speakers…one for and one against. So now we are on to the one minute speeches. I see someone at the microphone. You wish to speak for or against the resolution?”

Lee Jamison – “Lee Jamison, Huntsville First. I’m speaking for the resolution.”

Bishop Huie – “For the proposal…”

Lee Jamison – “I’m concerned when we take measures that begin to erode the influence of the laity on policy of the church. I appreciate that we use these meetings as fellowship and as opportunities for worship, but this is also the only opportunity many laity have to see the function of the polity of the denomination and their capacity to influence that process. I think it is very important that we increase the opportunities that the laity have to influence that process.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Someone wish to speak against the proposal? Sorry I keep saying that wrong. Someone wish to speak against the proposal? All right, I don’t see anyone coming to the microphone. Does someone else wish to speak for it? All right.”

Rev. Josh Hale – “Bishop I am Josh Hale I’m at Houston Mission Bend and I rise to speak in favor of this proposal. The consent calendar is a useful tool of parliamentary procedure that assumes the unanimous consent of the body. When people need to discuss an item and they want to pull something off of the consent calendar, subjecting the body to require a 25% to talk about the proposal…to even begin the discussion of it – to remove the item from the calendar…is unfortunately too high a bar when we are talking about the assumption underlying a consent calendar. So, having a minimum threshold of 2% or of 20 is sufficient because we need to make sure the items that are on the consent calendar are approved not just by the majority or plurality, but by the entire body. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. All right, so we have heard two speeches for, one speech against. One more.”
Dr. Dick White – “Dick White, Southeast District Superintendent. As I understand it, we are back to the original proposal (Bishop Huie responds “Yes”) It only requires one person to remove it off of the consent calendar without...(Bishop Huie responds “that is correct”). So one person can essentially stop the whole business of annual conference (Bishop Huie responds “That’s correct”).

Bishop Huie – “All right. So anymore speeches here? All right are you ready to vote? We’ll take a moment of silence here. Amen. Remembering this takes a 3/4 vote because it is your rule. So if you are in favor of this proposal, would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed to this proposal, would you raise your hand please? The proposal does not carry. Let’s move to the next…”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop we’re to the order of the day; the blessing of the delegation.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, we are at an order of the day; the blessing of the delegations. So I would invite all those persons who have been elected to General – lay and clergy – General, Jurisdictional and the alternates to General Conference, if you would come forward and stand on the stage. The liturgy will be on the screen, but as I said in both elections to folks, we wanted to take this opportunity today. Its important that you who elected them, have this time to bless them, encourage them, and support them in the work that they have been authorized to do. We will begin with the singing of God of Love and God of Power. Craig is here to lead us. Let’s get everybody up here on the stage.”

**Blessing The Delegation**

Bishop Huie led the liturgy for the blessing of these delegations.

**Retirement videos**

This video honored Rev. Mark Hardin Young.

Bishop Huie – “All right, so if you are following on your agenda I am moving then to where we are at 10:15 which is the trends in transformation that was our theme for this year. And so I would ask Leah Taylor and Seaborn Nesbett to come and talk here a little bit about what’s going on with laity and then that will be followed by Mark McClanahan. Mark, if you will come on up here. He’s gonna – I have given him a moment of personal privilege – he is the pastor of Van and while we have been so concerned here about all these floods, I mean, he has been cleaning up after major tornadoes so first we go to trends in laity transformation. Leah?”

**Trends in Transformation**

Leah Taylor - “Four years ago in the strategic assessment of our annual conference we identified a need to equip laity for leadership in their vocations in the world outside of the church. So forming transforming lay leaders for the church and for the world was adopted by our annual conference as one of our areas of focus for this quadrennium. In January of 2012 we began working with the leadership education group at Duke to design a process to understand what laity yearn for in their life beyond the church. We did more than 60 interviews of clergy and laity throughout the annual conference, conducted by a group of 7 clergy and lay people and we received incredible responses. The number one response we received was nobody has ever asked me that before. In February of 2012 a group of committed lay and clergy met and began dreaming out what it might look like to equip laity to be in leadership in the world. We have been meeting ever since and out of those meetings has come Laity Unleashed. Frederick Buechner described vocation as the place God calls you to, is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet. Laity Unleashed is the experience where people are feeling God’s call on their lives to explore that call and to find out where it meets with faith. Our first class began in January of 2014 and was graciously hosted by Christ Church in the Woodlands. Our second class took place in January of 2015. The journey has two components; the first is a spiritual component where we as lay people learn how to go deeper into our faith to hear God calling us into ministry. The second part of our journey explores how God’s call on our life can be turned into practice. We look at each participant’s vision and mission, spending time looking on what resources they have and what they will need. 22 lay people have already completed this first part
of their journey and several people have moved on doing something beyond laity unleashed. One person from our first class is actually enrolled at Asbury Seminary not to be ordained, not to become a minister for the United Methodist Church but to further explore God’s call on his life as a lay person. Another graduate is attending Harris Spiritual Director training to become a spiritual director for her community. Another is studying ways to provide services to the homeless outside of the central Houston area. The Laity Unleashed team has put together a three person mentoring group to meet with her regularly to help her understand and help her move forward in putting her dream into reality. One member of our very first class has gone from looking at how to work at the food pantry in his own church to directing all of the food pantries in his entire community - a bigger vision in how to feed those who are having trouble feeding themselves. The next opportunity to participate in Laity Unleashed will be a new model a 3 retreat model where we will meet in August, September, and October from noon on Saturday to early afternoon on Sunday at Camp Allen. We’re doing this in a way to look at taking Laity Unleashed far beyond the Houston area out into the other Conference areas where traveling distances are so great that coming together once a week is just not a realistic possibility. So if you are interested; I would love to talk with you. We have a booth on the third floor but you can also find us on the conference web site and we have our very own Facebook page. “Thank you”.

Seaborn Nesbett – “Good morning. I bring you greetings from Pollard UMC in Tyler Texas, a church that is in transformation. Transforming from a church that has always been active and doing good works; has always recognized God’s mission for making disciple for Jesus Christ, but hasn’t had a plan in place to make it happen. We now do. We now have a vision. We have a vision that addresses outside our walls and enables the laity and clergy to reach outside to those that need God’s grace. This change process was brought about by the Vibrant Church Initiative. We began the process over 12 months ago. We began with prayer and study. At that time seeds were planted in our hearts. Seeds that led to growth much like the illustration that’s in our conference material. A young plant is bursting forth from the soil. We have a desire at our church now to reach out to recognize God’s will and to act upon it. During this process we had to learn that churches have a life cycle. Much like, maybe I should say not much like, different than us a life cycle that can be regenerated. All churches began with a vision but some place along the way vision can get replaced by other things. If that happens and left unattended the church will die. For a new vision we need to have 4 things for the life cycle; a fresh vision inspired by God, relationships with new people, missions and programs that reach out in our community and structures and doctrine that hold us accountable. Are we through? Nope. Are we a work in process? You bet. We are ever changing to meet God’s demand and what we need to do in our community. This process has inspired me to become a VCI team member. Along with others I join them in helping you as churches to discover God’s vision for your church, your community. By providing one on one coaching, training and frankly encouragement we hope to help you reach God’s will and complete God’s mission. Last night Bishop Huie addressed the pastors here and said it takes courage to do God’s will and to do God’s work in community. She assured us that God is always with us. Vision is much the same; vision takes courage, but we have confidence that we are doing His will. As laity we are many as clergy we are few. This morning I challenge you laity and me as you go back to your churches, show others in your congregation support for your pastors, stand along beside them help them - together with God’s grace we will achieve great things. If anything I have said today has touched you, has made you think of your church or has made you think that maybe God’s vision for our church has been put on the backseat. I encourage you to look at the resources available to you from the Center of Congregational Excellence. We are here for you. My prayer this morning is one of thanksgiving for my vision that God has given me, and I ask that He place a vision on your hearts so that together, we can join together in leading His mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. Thank you. All right, Mark. He’s going to use that microphone right there on the floor. Thank you, Rev. Mark Mcclanahan.”

Rev. Mark McClanahan – “Mark McClanahan, pastor of Van United Methodist Church. On behalf of Van and the communities north and south of our town and Van Zandt and Smith counties, I just want to offer a word of thanks to the Annual Conference for all the support. As the pastor I’ve been blessed to see the best of the churches in our community, district, conference, conferences beyond our conference; the expressions of love are just overwhelming. I would also just add a word of thanks from our congregation for the tributes paid to Brenda
and David Tapley here at the Conference today. All praise, honor, glory to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Thank you Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, thank you. I hope you saw the slide on the screen, they are offering radical hospitality to the Catholic Church these days there at Van. Just in such keeping with who we are in the Wesleyan tradition to offer that. So thank you. We are going back to the resolutions and we’re going to work till 11:00 o’clock and then we’ll have another order of the day. So if you’ll turn to page 46 and B.T. is going to help us here. That’s the Equitable Comp rewording on parsonage.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop that was a withdrawn item because the issue had already been resolved and the maker of that proposal/resolution withdrew that. We are coming to resolution number 10 found on page 47. And it is a resolution regarding the limitation of resolutions at General Conference. Tom Wussow. Yes, Tom I have to tell you at all the district meetings that statement did get a chuckle. Tom Wussow will be speaking in support and there is no one speaking in opposition.”

Tom Wussow – “This will be quick. Let me do the rationale first. The current Book of Resolutions is almost 1100 pages and has become too large and redundant to be an effective ministry tool. It is no longer a useful reference because of its size, the length of many resolutions, and the duplication that exists among many of the resolutions. This petition is an attempt to impose some standards that will restore the books’ usefulness. Let me read the petition quickly. Be it resolved that all future resolutions being considered for adoption to be included in the Book of Resolutions, be limited to 650 words or 2 pages, whichever is less. And that any existing, previously approved resolutions that are being considered for re-adoption or renewal, be condensed as necessary to conform to the same standard. Be it further resolved that the theological statements dealing with the sacraments, *By Water and the Spirit* and *This Holy Mystery* be removed from *The Book of Resolutions* and be published in a separate book devoted exclusively to the understanding of the theological importance and significance of those sacraments. And in fact, that will be an improvement because those two studies are so significant, they really ought to be a separate publication. Now a bit of housekeeping. The initial version of this petition, which is in the Pre-Conference Journal, does not contain the provision allowing those two studies to be separately published. And it is my understanding that we need an amendment from the floor to bring these two into compliance.”

Bishop Huie – “You can make the amendment, but the house would have to adopt it. So if you want to make it and we get a second, or if you want somebody else to make it. Come on Chris.”

Rev. Chris Harrison – “Hi, Chris Harrison from Kingwood United Methodist Church and I just so move that we make that friendly amendment that Tom just read to the resolution that is printed in the Pre-Conference Journal.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, and we need a copy of that up here. All right and we’ve got it. All right so look we have to vote on the amendment, because when you have a resolution like this it belongs to the house. Do we need any discussion on the amendment? All right, so we have the maker is in agreement and we have a speech here. Are you ready to vote? If you would approve...Question?”

Rev. Jenny Veres-Schrecengost – “May I speak against the amendment?”

Bishop Huie – “Oh, yes. You can speak against the amendment.”

Rev. Jenny Veres-Schrecengost – “My name is Jenny Veres-Schrecengost and I am the associate pastor at St. Johns in Richmond. I want to speak against the amendment because I do not think that we should separate our theological statements with our *Book of Resolutions*. I think they should be together.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. That’s a speech against the amendment.”

Tom Wussow – “Can I say a word to that?”

Bishop Huie – “Yes, I’ll take this from the maker as a speech against and we will count it that way.”
Tom Wussow – “There are really two reasons for pulling those two studies out of the Book of Resolutions. One is that I think they will be given more importance by being in a stand alone publication, which is the way they were originally when they were completed. The second thing is that they are rather lengthy and they take up a lot of space in the book and it would help us accomplish this effort for the reducing the size of the Book of Resolutions.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. So we are on the amendment. You ready to vote? All right, if you would approve the amendment made by Chris Harrison which was seconded or in tandem with the maker of the motion, would you raise your hand please? Thank you. Any opposed? Thank you, then the amendment carries. So we are on the resolution itself.”

Tom Wussow – “Just a quick summary, the application of this standard in the action that was just taken will reduce the Book of Resolutions by about 400 pages. Which is a start in the right direction. And I would conclude by saying this is simply an effort to restore the usefulness of the Book of Resolutions and I would urge your support of the petition. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. So now we are open to speeches for or against the resolutions. I’ll start over here on my left.”

Dr. Vincent Harris – “Vincent Harris, Journey of Faith, Humble. I rise in favor of the resolution. The Book of Resolutions states the official policy of the United Methodist Church. In order to properly communicate these policies, a succinct presentation of the Book of Resolutions must provide an inviting, appealing document for current United Methodists and future generations to understand part of the Wesleyan message of social holiness and social responsibility. The church’s stance on issues relevant to making disciples of Jesus Christ such as violence, racism, health care, genetic science, and hunger are just a few of the issues presented in the Book of Resolutions. These policies assist us in standing united in our faith and our work and in building the kingdom of God on earth. This editorial resolution limiting verbiage is significant as it suggests, refines or eliminates the inclusion of unrelated reports or frivolous language. Whether in print version or in digital format, the Book of Resolutions will profit from limitation of content and it will be more ecologically friendly and save storage space in the cloud or on individual devices. I support the motion to create a standard of content by limiting verbiage in future resolutions and the removal of the current theological statements to other appropriate locations.”

Bishop Huie – “O.k., thank you. Thank you. So you got it in. That was a speech for. Do we have anyone that wishes to speak against? You all please come to the microphone if you wish to speak. All right.”

Rev. Preston Morgan - “My name is Preston Morgan and I serve at Christ United Methodist Church in Sugar Land and I rise to speak against the resolution. The Book of Resolutions is an encyclopedia. The encyclopedia is also a very large document. I don’t read it as a novel, but as a pastor, when someone has an issue that is found or is discussed in the Book of Resolutions, sometimes having that extra verbiage and those extra words and those extra sentences allows me to have the opportunity to have a greater conversation of pastoral care. And personally I just find that the Book of Resolutions is a fantastic document because it combines our theology and our practice. And if being verbose is a bad thing, then I will be out of a job soon, so…Thank you.” Bishop Huie – “Thank you. He said that just as the stop sign went up. O.k. All right, so now we’ve had one speech for and one speech against, are you ready to vote? I don’t see anybody else at the microphone. O.k. so what is before us is the resolution on resolution limitations and let’s take a moment of silence. Amen. If you would support this resolution, you want to vote in favor of it, raise your hand please. All right, thank you. If you’re opposed would you raise your hand? Thank you, then the resolution is approved. All right, going on to the next one. This is educational requirements for elders. B.T. this is page 48.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you bishop. Speaking in favor of the resolution to amend paragraph 335.3.b will be Jonathan Bynum and speaking in opposition to this resolution will be Erin Muckleroy.”

Rev. Jonathan Bynum – “I want to be real clear as you look at this proposal and that is that we are not changing or adding something that is not there, we’re just simply wanting to shift who the deciders are in this situation. The
resolution gives to conference Boards of Ordained Ministry the flexibility that is already entrusted to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, accepting those candidates who don’t hold a degree from an accredited educational institution approved by the university senate. Now that happens when someone grows up in another denomination, they finally see the light of Jesus and decide they become United Methodists. It might be that they are coming to us internationally educated. The reality is that by shifting the decision making that’s concentrated now in the General Board, we can do that as a Board of Ordained Ministry. And instead of simply seeing the paperwork of this individual, we get to deal with the individual, because we have interaction and we have relationship. We can recognize their particular needs and what they need to supplement. Obviously, those United Methodist classes that we are all so familiar with and it is becoming increasingly more significant as we look for pastors in order to minister to our growing Hispanic population in our area. In fact, I have one pastor whom I’m working with right now. And one of the really exciting things is he says that America brought the gospel to us, but now we can bring the gospel to America and it is exciting to be caught up in that and so this proposal is simply investing in our conference board of ordained ministry those opportunities to raise up people with those gifts and graces and hold huge potential to minister effectively in the United Methodist Church.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. All right, and speaking against, Erin Muckleroy.”

Rev. Erin Muckleroy – “Good morning bishop, B.T. and Annual Conference. My name is Erin Lindsey Muckleroy and I’m speaking against. I’m intrigued by the notion that conference boards of ministry could determine its own list of seminaries from which to accept a master of divinity degree plan. Such a change would closely reflect global church legislation that allows churches outside of the United States to adopt rules that make more sense for a given local. However, I see 2 reasons why this is not a good idea for the United Methodist Church at this time. First there are practical benefits to requiring that a general board make such determinations. Conference boards are already overworked and expecting them to find the time and information needed to properly vet a seminary education seems impossible. One board, representing all conferences offers greater clarity, consistency and allows both the general and conference boards to focus on the most important rules in this process. The second reason is simple. Conferences already do not trust each other and this motion gives one more reason to doubt one another. Conferences are already suspicious of others’ disciplinary proceedings, theological convictions, commitment to the Discipline, and more. Not having the same general board to select approved educational institutions is asking for too much trust to be given to the public nature of pastoral ministry that is needed for United Methodism to reunite, not further differentiate each region. This motion would create a further divide and weaken a connection that we are so proud of. I invite you to vote against the motion titled: Education Requirements for Elders. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. So you’ve heard the 2 predetermined speeches; the one by the maker and one in opposition. So the floor is open now for the for and against; these one minute speeches. And I’ll start over here. Yes, if you are going to speak to it, please get in line. I will start on my right. Right over here.”

Dr. Todd Jordan – “Good morning, I’m Todd Jordan from Strawbridge in Kingwood and I would speak against the resolution. I certainly agree with the spirit of it. I think that trying to find some flexibility in our changing culture and society is important, but this is not the way to do it. I serve on the Board of Ordained Ministry. I couldn’t imagine having to vet every school, anyone that came before the board that wanted to seek an alternative school. We would have to look into, we would have to argue, we’d have to debate, we’d have to vet, we’d have to figure it out. Plus we can’t control what other conferences are going to allow for. We don’t know how well or not well they’re going to vet their process. There is a lot of bad theology out there. And we don’t have the resources nor the time to gauge all of that. So I would simply encourage you to vote against this resolution while still exploring those opportunities and possibilities for greater flexibility in the future.”

Bishop Huie – ‘All right, thank you. Now do we have someone speaking in favor of the resolution? All right, my left.”

Rev. Cabe Matthews – “My name is Cabe Matthews, I serve as an associate pastor at Montgomery United Methodist Church in Montgomery. I’m a licensed local pastor, but I actually have a master of divinity degree from a school that is not approved by the university senate. And yet my church has not collapsed…yet. We still
baptize babies and we don’t even let tulips in the building, because they are a Calvinist flower. And those things are true because of and not in spite of my education – my fully accredited education, but the GBHM has essentially refused to even look at my degree. I grew up in this conference and I have only ever tried to be faithful to God and to his calling on my life. I was called to that school and only then was I called home. So I urge you to vote against denominational bureaucracy. Vote for discernment and the Holy Spirit. Vote for this resolution. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Another speech on this side. We are looking for a speech against the resolution. Yes? No? (respondent replies, ‘I’m speaking for’). All right do we have someone against? All right.”

Dr. Randy Smith – “Bishop, B.T., Annual Conference. I have the distinction and the pleasure to be a graduate of two seminaries. One, Perkins School of Theology at SMU and the other at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin. I’m proud of both of my degrees and I’m proud of both of my seminaries. But about 3 years ago, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary lost its accreditation with the University Senate. And it lost its accreditation not because it is Presbyterian and we know they’re Calvinist and they’re a little strange, but they lost it because they had 40% of their student population were Methodists preparing for the Methodist ministry and they had no Methodists on the faculty. They also didn’t have a balanced of ethnicity and female male on their boards or their faculty. When the University Senate said to them, ‘you know (Bishop Huie cut in to stop him by calling his name Randy)…Let the University Senate do its job.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. All right, the end. Thank you. All right, go to the right.”

T.J. Gabelman– “My name is T. J. Gabelman, I’m from Hallsville First, and I’m speaking for. I’m one of those that saw the light and became a Methodist. I did earn a Master of Divinity Degree from Regent University in Virginia Beach, which I am very proud of. However, I have taken almost a full year of talking with GBHM and others to try to figure out what classes I need to take to do an equivalency for the United Methodist Church. I just found out I will have to go back to school for 2 years, which will be another 40 thousand dollars. I also have to take New Testament, Old Testament, Church History, and Theology classes, which I already have 2-3 plus classes in each. I also have to take missions classes, which I also have a Bachelor of Science in Missions. And so, while I do look forward to taking United Methodist History, Polity and Doctrine, I do feel it is redundant for me to have to waste time and money to redo a degree. Also if I might entertain to include an amendment? Of including in the amendment to include the Association of Theological Schools.

Bishop Huie – “All right, the end. Are we there for…we’re timed. Thank you.”

T.J. Gabelman – “Point of Order”

Bishop Huie – “I’m coming, just hold steady here.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “We need to know where you would insert your amendment. And do you have written copies please?”

Bishop Huie – “O.k.”

T.J. Gabelman– “I would say: ‘and to include a school of theology listed by the University Senate or by the Association of Theological Studies.”

Bishop Huie – “And that would come after University Senate, right?”

T.J. Gabelman– “Correct.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, so what we have on the floor is an amendment. Is there a second? All right there’s a second. All right. I will let you finish speaking in favor of your amendment. And then I’ll entertain speeches for and against the amendment.”
T.J. Gabelman—“The reason that I would include ATS is because it is one of the biggest theological boards that comprises of the seminaries which includes Perkins, Candler, Duke, and my school Regent University. This way ATS is a reputable, a credible institution. And that would help in the vetting process to know that this is not just any type of degree, but that this is the same type of degree that would be approved by Perkins, by Duke or by any of the University Senate.”

Bishop Huie—“All right, thank you. Someone wish to speak against the amendment? Yes sir.”

Rev. Cabe Matthews—“This is a speech against, again Cabe Matthews, Montgomery UMC. I would like to speak against. I think that the ATS accreditation – I went to an ATS accredited school as well – but I think the ATS accreditation is a little too broad and we probably want to have a little more narrowness and take some care in that. That’s all. I think that is just a little too broad. We want to be careful about our Methodist standards. That’s all.”

Bishop Huie—“All right, thank you. That’s a speech against, do we have someone else that wishes to speak for the amendment? All right, are you ready to vote on the amendment? The amendment is to insert the words…I’m sorry?...Oh, coming up. O.k.”

Rev. Tom Teekell—“I’m Tom Teekell, the campus minister at SFA Wesley center in Nacogdoches. In regards to the university senate, doing its job, I would say that the University Senate is doing a very poor job in some of their…um…we mentioned Austin Presbyterian Church, I mean Seminary, about no United Methodist on their faculty and that sort of thing. When Claremont is hiring non-Christians specifically trained non-Christians at their seminary, and yet the University Senate reviewed that and decided that was o.k.”

Matt Edison—“Bishop, just for a point of clarification, my name is Matt Edison and I am a current student at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, which is Senate approved. And at this point they have 7 Methodists on staff and they have just hired a Hispanic Professor from Perkins. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie—“All right, we’re getting a little far afield here. I mean I appreciate that, so what I need here – We are on the amendment to add the words ATS – we’ve heard a speech for, a speech against, is there more discussion on the amendment itself?"?

Trey Burns—“Yes bishop.”

Bishop Huie—“All right.”

Trey Burns—“My name is Trey Burns, I’m a lay delegate from the Central South District, and I rise to speak against the amendment. While ATS is a fantastic body, they are not a United Methodist body. When we are looking at groups that should be accrediting seminaries that provide Masters of Divinity that are acceptable to our conference or to the General Board on Higher Education and Ministry, I believe that we should look at our denominations needs and our denominations doctrine and theology and not farm that out to another organization. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie—“All right, now do we have a speech in favor of the amendment? Are you ready to vote? All right, if you would support the amendment, would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed to the amendment, would you raise your hand please? The amendment does not carry. We’re back on the main…”

Rev. B.T. Williamson “we’ve had two each.”

Bishop Huie—“…and we’ve had two speeches for the resolution and we’ve had two speeches against the resolution, so I’ll entertain one more for and one more against. All right, so let me take right at the microphone and I see you and if you are on opposite sides, this will work great.”
Rev. Carol Bruse – “We are. I’m Carol Bruse, West University, I do currently chair the Board of Ordained Ministry, but I’m not speaking for the board, I’m speaking personally. We did not bring this resolution before the board, because it would put the board in a difficult place. It would be more work for the board, however, currently – and I am Methodist theologically trained and I cherish my Perkins degree. I wouldn’t give it up for anything and I always recommend that students receive a Methodist education if they have that opportunity - however, the current University Senate is a small group of people, many of the people on that wonderful group, who I greatly respect, represent seminaries. So they do have a vested interest to keep the number of seminaries we can accept small. And we are having to turn away gifted, young people who could be leading our church, because we don’t have this flexibility.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. And then here.”

Andy Bouse – “Andy Bouse, First Methodist in Angleton. And if the system needs some fixing, let’s don’t totally wreck the system in order to fix it. And I vote against the resolution because we need to make sure that anyone that is going to be speaking from the pulpit is scripturally sound and we need to be the best judge of that. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. We have had 3 for and 3 against. I think you are ready to vote here. Let us take a moment of silence and then I will take a vote on the resolution. Let us pray. Amen. If you would support the resolution, would you raise your hand please? If you’re opposed to the resolution, would you raise your hand please? This is tough. All right, let’s try this differently, let’s do a standing vote. If you’re in favor of the resolution, would you…O.k. let’s get the bar of the conference straight. If you are not in the bar, you are not counted, so come on in. If you want to vote on this you need to get in here. All right. All right, quickly. Yeah, Russell help me out here so we can be sure here, that was a pretty close vote. All right, now we have all these people moving. No, no, no, no, no. O.k. quickly find a place and sit down so we can. We got lots of chairs up front. Okie dokie. Find a place. All right, let’s try this again. Except I’ve got to get everybody down or I still won’t be able to tell. All right. If you are in favor of this resolution would you stand up please? All right, if you are opposed to the resolution would you stand up please?”

(Bishop Huie conferred with Rev. Russell Hall, the Conference Secretary and with the assistant to the Bishop, Rev. B.T. Williamson)

Bishop Huie – “O.k. we agree we have to have the tellers count. It’s really a little close to call here. So we need the tellers, Lance, one more time – your great team – can you get them out here. And what we will do is a standing count. That is the fastest way for them to do it and it is the most accurate way. So, if the teller team could get into place quickly and thank you for already moving to be in the bar of the Conference. The tellers are ready to count in the bar. All right, Lance, give me a heads up when you are ready to go. Yes. All right, you ready? All right, if you are in favor of the resolution would you stand up please? Are you ready for me to have them sit down? All right, you may be seated. All right, can I go to the next count? So, if you are opposed to the resolution, would you stand up please? All right, just stay standing and let these folks count please. Thanks for your patience. Everybody is just holding really steady here. I appreciate you doing that. All right, they are tallying up here, so you may be seated. While he’s tallying up, let me say that we are at an order of the day. So we’ll go directly from hearing the vote count to the retirement video and straight into the worship service. Following the worship service, Conference is not over, but we will return back here for a concluding business session in which we will hear the Lakeview report, which was removed from the consent calendar, and then finish up with the remainder of the resolutions. So that will be our process for the rest of the day. So give us just a moment, we will announce this and then go quickly into the retirement video and while that is happening we will also be setting up for the closing worship service. Tell you what, maybe we will announce the vote after the closing worship service. Then we can just keep going here and ya’ll could roll the retirement video and we will set up for the closing worship service. So if you could help us with this transition. Again, stay steady here and we’ll keep going. Craig it is all yours.
This retirement video honored Bill Newcomb.

**Service of Sending Forth**  
**Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 11:00 a.m.**  
**Lanier Grand Ballroom**

**Business Session VII**  
**Wednesday, May 27, 2015 12:00 p.m.**  
**Lanier Grand Ballroom**

Bishop Huie – “While they are doing that moving, B.T. is going to make a few announcements and then we will go directly to Lakeview. Not to Lakeview physically. Not yet. All right, here we go.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Thank you Bishop. On our mission project this year that all of you have been very generously supporting, we raised $7,240. Give yourself a big hand for serving around in God’s world. The list of appointments this year will be online. You may go to the TXCUMC website and find the announcements of where your brothers and sisters have been deployed out as a part of the ‘cat nation’. We ask prayers today for the Rev. Roy James. Roy has not been with us this week. He had a very untimely fall in a stairwell and he has a spiral break on his arm and he is undergoing one of I believe I have been told, two surgeries. Please remember him today as he begins that process.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, Matt Idom for Lakeview.”

**Lakeview Report**

Rev. Matt Idom – “Thank you Bishop, Annual Conference. Our report is on page 154 of the Pre-Conference Journal and the request to lift our report from the consent calendar was simply to have the opportunity to say thank you. Last year you voted to give Lakeview Conference Center to conduct, to launch, a 15 million dollar capital campaign. I come back to tell you we are just under 8 million dollars in one year. To thank you for your support and service in 10 days we will cut the ribbon on Camp Hearn and Bagley Hall. And if the good Lord will give us some sunshine, we’ll actually plant some grass around it the next two weeks before the kids get there. You’re invited to come be a part of that ribbon cutting and this purpose was simply to say thank you for your support and to be accountable to you for how those dollars are being spent. I submit our report to you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you Matt, thank you very much. We appreciate it. O.k. friends, we are back on resolutions here. We are going to go to page 49. Oh, I’m sorry. Let me announce the ballot on the previous resolution – the one on page 48, the educational requirements for elders – the resolution prevailed. The vote was 361 for and 330 against. And so, thank you for your patience on that. That was just pretty hard to call from here on the stage. So it does prevail. So we are going to move to the next resolution. It’s on page 49. Again Jonathan Bynum – we have one predetermined speech for and we have a predetermined speech against? (B.T. responds in background, ‘correct bishop’) All right, here we go.”

Rev. Jonathan Bynum – “And that was the easy one before. This next one I have to start by saying there is probably not a bigger nerd in this room than me. If I could figure out a way to stay in school for life I would be there even now. My wife, when I finally got my doctorate, she said that’s it. So, I want to say that up front and we come from a tradition that has always promoted education and pushed it. John Wesley always wanted his preachers engaged in development, in growth, and growing in knowledge, as well as in spirit. It was with that Holy Spirit passion that the preachers were sent out and made such an impact as Methodism was a movement. And we keep talking about wanting to renew that flame of Methodism, within our denomination. This resolution is just simply a way of saying there are more options out there. At its very best, at its absolute best, a theological degree sets you on a trajectory of learning for a life time. At its best. Because there is absolutely no way you will get sufficient education for what we do. We have to constantly be in a mode of learning. We are constantly
expanding our knowledge base and hopefully our depth. And I don’t want to compromise that, but we need to constantly be cultivating those skills and talents. My resolution makes room for candidates to complete a graduate theological degree, but not necessarily a masters of divinity. And the intent is to allow for some flexibility, I keep using that word, and empower the boards of ordained ministry to shape the candidates for ministry. And for those of you who don’t know, a masters of divinity takes anywhere…typically they’ve been about 85 hours. Give or take a few either way. Recently Perkins has decreased the requirements down to 71 hours for a masters of divinity, which to me is even a recognition on their part, that things are changing and things need to change. Now what’s really interesting in the education…if you want to go into academia, you get a masters of theology or one of the shorter masters degrees that are available. If you want to be a pastor, you get this massive, expensive degree. And the reality is a masters of divinity doesn’t credential you at all. It’s just one step along the way and it really doesn’t guarantee that much. We assign, on the board of ordained ministry, we regularly assign mentors to people to work on their theology. One time I was assigned to an individual who had already graduated from a university approved seminary that the majority of this conference loves, I’m sure. And I was talking to her about some theological issues and we got onto the issue of grace and based on her responses when I was describing a Wesleyan understanding of prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace, it was new material to her. She thought it was really good, but it was new to her. So we on the Board of Ordained ministry, the reality is, we are the ones who ultimately decide is this individual adequately prepared? Do they show evidence that they are going to be effective pastors? Do they seem to have the qualities that we are looking for? And we do that through conversation and we do that through a process after seminary through a residency program. So clearly there is work that has to be done beyond the degree itself. And as we push for younger clergy this becomes a huge issue because, for one, it relieves the burden of excessive educational expenses. MDiv’s are not cheap degrees to get. It gives the opportunity to get into full time ministry quicker, so that they are in the place of their calling. And it…I have watched as there are young people that I thought have had huge potential…that when they look at the requirements as they stand, they get bleary eyed and we have lost some hugely impactful individuals because of that.”

Rev. Erin Muckleroy – “Once again, my name is Erin Lindsey Muckleroy and I’m speaking against. I am completely in favor finding ways to reform theological education for the benefit of the United Methodist Church. I believe that it goes without saying that helpful changes might include: limiting the cost of pastoral education so as to not start pastors in mountains of debt, insuring that practical leadership training is included somewhere in the process, and finding greater clarity of what the core elements of education need to be for pastors. Reform could indeed benefit the church. But this motion is not the way to accomplish the needed reform for several reasons. First, the United Methodist Church has always been on the forefront of the educational development. Clergy are often among the most educated in their communities to see to the continuing needs of their churches, the larger community and the world. By lowering the educational standards we are not preparing clergy for the work that they are called to do. A Masters of Divinity is specifically shaped to prepare pastors for this work. Other theological degrees do not have the same requirements. Some of the courses that are absent from those other degrees include: preaching, pastoral care, spiritual formation, all of which I have found useful in my own ministry. This motion opens the door too broadly and makes it more difficult to insure a baseline educational experience for all pastors. Seminaries have also begun to offer more diversified masters of divinity plans. Several years ago, Duke began to offer a dual MDiv and Masters of Social Work degree. It is fair to ask what makes an MDiv an MDiv if course requirements, even within a seminary, can vary dramatically to allow for a dual masters degree. And as my colleague stated, this year Perkins did announce plans to shorten the number of hours needed for a Masters of Divinity. The church needs to be more clear about what education is really needed, not less. Finally, there is already an education pathway for those who want to engage in more specialized forms of ministry; ordination as a deacon. The deacon elder split was devised in large part to recognize that some are called to broad church ministry and some are called to specialized intersections of the church and the world. Eliminating one of the only practical distinctions between the two orders further confuses the meaning and purpose of each. So I again encourage you, to push for reform but I don’t believe this motion is the right way to do it. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. You have heard the two predetermined speeches for and against the resolution. So the floor is open for the 1 minute speeches. Please come and get in line if you wish to speak so
that we can move this along. I’ll start over here at the microphone on my right. And then move to the microphone on my left. Here we go.”

Rev. Vicki Campbell – “Hi, my name is Vicki Campbell and I am at St. Peters United Methodist Church and I would just like to clarify that we already have articulated specific courses that must be taken, even if you’re getting a masters of theology degree. So it requires in those hours you take, you must have 6 hours of preaching. You must have the UM Discipline and Polity and there’s other required classes so I don’t think we have to be concerned that a person with a masters would not have the required courses. The board of ministry will upfront say, ‘if you get the masters of theology degree, these are classes that must be in your core.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, that’s a speech in favor of the motion. All right, now let me go to my left. Is it a speech for or against the resolution?”

Trevor Warren – “Against Bishop.”

Bishop Huie – “All right.”

Trevor Warren – “My name is Trevor Warren and I am from the North District and I am a certified candidate for ministry, so obviously I have not been to seminary yet. However, I’m going. It is my understanding, however, that the MDiv degree is designed in some way to combine a broad theological understanding for people in positions such as pastor, so they are not too concentrated in one field. Specific degrees, such as a Masters in Theological Studies are very concentrated in certain areas of theology. The MDiv is meant to provide a framework that they can build on and not be too concentrated in one field. So that is why I am against it and why I believe the MDiv provides a foundation for what the ideas of you can’t have theology alone. I am looking at more programs on how to apply that. I am looking at Church of the Resurrection’s program combining the seminary with church to create a sort of internship hands on. So, that is my statement.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, that was a speech against. Now let’s go back to a speech in favor of the resolution. Is there anybody that wants to speak in favor of it? All right, one here.”

Rev. Steve Woody – “Steve Woody, First United Methodist Church Livingston. There is a part of me that says, gosh I had all this education and they should too. I guess it was probably about 18 years ago I graduated from seminary. I’m still paying my student loan. You know there are many qualified candidates for ministry today who can’t serve because of the educational requirements. And this is the time when we need pastors more than ever before. I vote in favor.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. Now against. Someone speaking...yes, right here.”

Rev. Susan Buchanan – “Susan Buchanan, Houston Methodist Hospital in Galena Park. Until a month ago, I finished 7 years as director of the Houston/Galveston program of Perkins School of Theology. I’m speaking against the resolution, because what we are talking about different degrees for different purposes. The MDiv is designed for pastors in the church and it includes what my friend Corky Fowler calls the trade school classes. So we have theological classes, we have academic classes, but we also have the classes in preaching, in evangelism, in administration, and pastoral care that go with being an effective pastor. If we are talking about a degree is not designed or intended for leadership in that way. So I would urge you to vote against the resolution.”

Bishop Huie – “All right. I don’t see any other people at the microphone, so I’m thinking you’re ready to vote. All right, let’s take a moment of silence and then I will call for the vote. Let us pray. Amen. If you are in favor of this resolution, would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed to the resolution, would you raise your hand please? The resolution is defeated. So let’s go to the next resolution. B.T.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Bishop the next resolution relates to a Jurisdictional realignment and name change. Speaking in favor is Chap Temple. There is no one speaking in opposition.”
Rev. Chap Temple – “Thank you. Good afternoon. It has been said jurisdictions are the third rail in Methodist polity. They are so charged and untouchable, that anyone who dares to broach the subject will get burned. Maybe that is the case, but before we say anything else about them today, we should begin by remembering that the regional jurisdictions in this country are one of the last vestiges of a racist past. 75 years ago, when they were created as the Methodist Church was being formed, it was primarily for one reason only, to keep northern bishops out of the south and southern bishops out of the north. That’s why there was a sixth one as well; the Central Jurisdiction in which we could corral all of the African American churches and all of the African American clergy. We abolished that central grouping several years ago, but the other five still remain as administrative bodies. But unfortunately, the lines between those five have not been changed or adjusted in 75 years either. So now there is an enormous disparity in sizes.

If you look on the listing on page 51 of the Pre-Conference Journal, what you will see the Southeast currently holds 2.8 million members. We hold about 1.7 million here in the South Central. Both the Northeast and North Central have 1.2 million. The Western Jurisdiction with 5 episcopal areas, has 333,000 members. That is smaller than the North Georgia Conference. It is not a whole lot bigger than just our Annual Conference. In turn, the Western region is unable to support itself financially. It requires a subsidy from other parts of the church to even pay their own bishops’ salaries. It is the weakest part of the church when it comes to growth and new members and new churches. It has lost 45% of its membership in the last 4 decades. 6 out of the 8 annual conferences in the West, are among the 10 worst in the UMC in terms of loss. Now I would suggest that part of the problem is that, although things have changed dramatically in 75 years in this country, this part of our church’s structure has not. So to refocus our mission and to utilize our resources better, all across the country, annual conferences – including this one – have been shrinking their structures, reducing the number of districts. At the last General Conference even most of our boards and agencies slimmed down. It is time therefore, it is really passed time, that we do the same with all of the Jurisdictions.

This resolution before you is a start in that process. It calls us to redraw the lines a little so that we create 4 balanced equitable regions in the country. The Southeast will still be larger than everybody else. It is difficult to find logical separations of that grouping. Let me be clear, this is not about punishing anybody. It is about refocusing our efforts to bring the resources and the positive growth models of the South Central Jurisdiction to other regions of the church; to a part of our connection that needs them all the most. It is about being strategic in the deployment of our resources that already face serious strains in the years ahead. It is about saving money. And yes it is about bringing a greater sense of accountability to all segments of the church. Both those voices that are prophetic in their call and those that are just more about pragmatics. Let me tell you that your vote in favor of this resolution will not change anything over night. It won’t change anything for at least 3, or 4, or 5 years. This will require an amendment of the constitution of our church. That is a long, difficult process. But if you vote for it today, what you will be saying is that you want our General Conference to take a good, hard, and long overdue look at this part of our structure; to eliminate any last vestiges or legacies of a racist past, to change the names of Jurisdictions to regions so that we more carefully reflect the ongoing sense of church globally, to be realistic about our finances, to downsize to a more helpful size, and to put ourselves in a position to see the Methodist Church start to grow again – not just here in Texas, but in California and in Colorado, in Oregon, in Washington and Alaska, and Arizona, in Utah, in Nevada and Hawaii. This will change some of our comfortable regional patterns we’ve fallen into. We like our jurisdictions. We like the people who we like. We don’t even know those people on the west coast. And if the movie that opens on Friday is correct, it is all going to fall into the ocean anyway. The western jurisdiction require more than collapsing under their own weight. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Sorry, I was trying not to be rude, but I didn’t think you were seeing the little sign over there. All right. There is no predetermined speech against, so the floor is open for conversation. Who wishes to speak for or against, if you will come on up to the microphones and we’ll start right over here on my right and then we’ll go forward. Please.”

Rev. Christie Hale – “Christie Hale, Houston Mission Bend. I rise to speak against this resolution. I grew up in southern California, I am from the western jurisdiction. I went to school at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia and I have now been in Texas for 9 years. There is a huge difference in culture and context between the west, the southcentral and the southeastern jurisdictions. California is not going to fall into the ocean, however, we have to
set us up so that we understand the cultural differences between the two. Ask my husband, I’m the cheapest person around. I want to address the economic issues, however, this is not the best way to do it.”

Bishop Huie – “Someone speaking in favor of the resolution? I don’t see anyone. Yep, you wish to speak in favor? All right, we’ll move to then another speech in opposition. And I’ll call again.”

Rev. Greg Rogers – “Greg Rogers, First Vidor. I want to speak against the resolution, because it appears to me, and I’ve talked to Chap about it, that it’s simply punishment for the Western Jurisdiction. What he neglected to say though is that when they decide jurisdictions, they decide not only on population, but on area. And if you look at the West it is a huge area to cover. And so that is how they determine the jurisdictions. Also, when our churches need help paying their pastors, we don’t say, no we aren’t going to help you because you’re too small, we go and help and that is what we have to do for the Western Jurisdiction. They are a wonderful part of the church and they need to be there also. And if you’re serious about it, then we need to start with the Southeast district and change that behemoth over there and make all of them realigned.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. You have heard two speeches against, does anyone wish to speak for? Are you ready to vote? All right, somebody’s wants to speak for? Come quickly. All right, here we go.”

Rev. Guy Williams – “Guy Williams, First United Methodist Church Atlanta, Texas. I rise to speak for the resolution, not because I’m completely convinced that we should adopt it as a general church, but because I think it is worthy of conversation at the general church level. It is an important matter to consider and I think this would be a gift to the church to be invited to consider it all together.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. That is a speech in favor. Do you wish to speak to this? All right, come forward.”

Rev. Jeff Powers - “Jeff Powers, Westminster United Methodist Church, speaking in favor of this proposal. The mission field has changed. All of these conversations about education and resources reflect a new reality that is different than where we were decades ago. Having 5 episcopal offices to care for and shepherd 340,000 United Methodists is inequitable and illogical. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. It is time for this conversation. We need to let it go forward and the General Conference needs to hear that the Texas Annual Conference is ready to change.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. We have had 2 for and 2 against. I don’t see anyone at the microphones, so I’m think you’re ready to vote? All right, let’s take a moment of silent prayer and then I’ll call for the vote. Amen. If you are in favor of the resolution, would you raise your hand please? If you are opposed to the resolution, would you raise your hand? I think I know this, but let’s do this one more time. If you’re in favor of the resolution would you raise your hand please? All right, thank you. If you’re opposed, would you raise your hand please? The motion is supported. So the resolution carries and is supported. O.k. B.T.”

Rev. B.T. Williamson – “Yes ma’am. The resolution number 14 to lengthen the option on the years of service has been withdrawn by the author, so we turn to our last resolution found on page 53. A pathway to peace in Israel and Palestine. Chap Temple will be speaking in favor of this resolution and there is no one in opposition.”

Rev. Chap Temple – “Thank you. I’m going to watch that closer this time. Everybody is ready to be done and go home. I understand. Before you check out completely, give just a few more minutes here. This is fittingly the last one in our list. It deals with the seemingly volatile issue between Israel and Palestine. You wonder why is that a concern for us? People have been arguing about this territory since the days of Joshua and the Philistines. Let me be patently plain. I am under no illusion that we can solve the issues there. I likewise know it’s just ego to suppose that when the church speaks out on this question, or on any question perhaps, that anyone east of Boston or even Beaumont is actually listening. I am certain that the president of the Palestinian territories and the prime minister of Israel will not get up in the morning and check the paper to see what the Texas Annual Conference said about them. Here is why this is worth a few minutes of our time. It is not because Israel is innocent or that the occupation of the West Bank is in any way a good or positive arrangement. It is not. It is a
horrible harsh understanding. I’ve seen it with my own eyes, as many of you have. But something is important, not because no one else has been clever enough to suggest a two state solution. It is because when the General Conference gathers in Portland next spring, there is already in place a very well-funded, highly orchestrated, globally focused and powerfully promoted marketing campaign, to get our church to essentially blame Israel for everything that’s wrong in the Middle East. At least one Annual Conference already, and the General Board of Church and Society are also working on this and are preparing to call for a boycott of companies that do business with Israel and asking our pension board to disinvest in that nation. They have bought into the notion that wants to suggest that only Israel has overreacted, only Israel is an aggressor, only Israel is a violator of all of the human rights in that region. None of which, none of which is true. There is plenty of blame to go around on all sides. And so this resolution is simply about balance. Based upon what has happened the last two General Conferences, this would go up against mighty forces indeed. A bit like a little Israeli kid named David against a mighty goliath of secular coalitions that would very much like to add the UMC to their list of groups, pushing for boycotts, disinvestments, and sanctions against Israel. What they are saying, my dear friends, is only part of the truth. And ultimately that makes it a lie. This proposal calls for our church to remain an honest broker in any peace process. It suggests that rather than disinvesting in Israel and even in American companies like Caterpillar and HP that do business with Israel, that the better strategy is to encourage positive investment in Palestine, as well as joint economic projects, some of which are co-sponsored by our very own UMCOR. Palestinian Israeli cooperative programs going on there. If you vote for this, you are not voting to turn a blind eye to any Israeli injustices. You’re simply asking that we as a church refuse to buy into the idea that everything that is wrong there, is Israel’s fault. This may seem like a little thing - what it really is about is restorative justice on an international scale. Like the Psalmist, I urge you to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, but I also ask you to pass this proposal. Keep our church’s position where it has been all along in this question. And the advocacy of the lasting pathway to peace will require both sides – both sides - to genuinely seek Salaam and Shalom. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you very much. All right, there is not a predetermined speaker against, so the floor is open here for conversation. I see someone on my left, so we will start there. If others of you wish to speak, please come on up to the microphones. Thank you.”

Andy Bouse – “Andy Bouse, South District, First Methodist in Angleton. The Palestinians in their constitution say death to the Jews. There is no reason for our body to support, in any form or to any degree, a people that seek to kill God’s people. We should not support this amendment. You don’t start down a slippery slope and expect to wind up anywhere but the bottom. Thank you.”

Bishop Huie – “All right this is a speech against the resolution. All right, who else wishes to speak. I don’t see…Yes.”

Dr. Beverly Rodgers – “Beverly Rodgers, Van United Methodist Church. In our first presentation of the 4 ideas for being Methodists, the first we learned is opposable. And this, because both sides will argue for thousands more years, and the world will be blown up, I have to believe that we go to silence. Something impossible for me, but stand still and know that I am. And before you vote, go to a moment of silence and listen to God, and where is the thin line so that God wins on this one.”

Bishop Huie – “Beverly is that a speech in favor? Sorry, but I am just trying to be clear with the body.”

Dr. Beverly Rodgers “That’s my point, there are times in our 46 years of marriage that sometimes he’s here and I’m here. There is a time to go to the whole. I am not speaking in favor nor against, I’m saying this is a thin line where the world is at stake. God is the one with the answer.”

Bishop Huie – “Thank you. All right, so we’ve had a speech against the resolution, here we go.”

Rev. Lee Jamison – “Lee Jamison, Huntsville First. I’ll speak in favor of the resolution. I believe what Chap has offered us is something that allows individuals to continue to act on what they know at the most local level instead of making all of our decisions institutional grand decisions where we act on what may just be prejudice masquerading as knowledge. So I do support the resolution.”

E - 84
Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. I see someone else. Are you going to speak for or against? Against, all right.”

Unidentified Female from floor – “I didn’t plan on speaking today. But as long as God has affected me the way that he has, and it asks us in Scripture to bless Israel, I cannot vote for this. He has healed me, I’ve turned 100% to him, and all I can do is pray that the people in Israel turn 100% to him also. And that’s where I will pray and that’s where I will stand.”

Bishop Huie – “All right, thank you. A speech against. Does someone wish to speak for? I don’t see anyone else coming to the microphones, so I think you are ready to vote. We are going to take a moment of silence right now and then I will call for the vote on the resolution. Amen. So if you are…let me get where I can see…if you’re in favor of this resolution would you raise your hand please? If you’re opposed, would you raise your hand please? O.k. I think I know this but let me do it once more. If you’re in favor of this resolution would you raise your hand please? All right, thank you. If you’re opposed, would you raise your hand please? Resolution carries. The resolution carries. All right, thank you very much. A couple of quick announcements and we will try to move to get you out of here. First let me ask Dr. Stansell if he would go to the microphone and tell us what the offerings have been and then I want to some thank you’s. I know you are ready to go, but there is always time to say thank you and we’ve had some great people here working with us. Dr. Stansell.”

Dr. Elijah Stansell – “Thank you Bishop. Of the few things that I try to do, one of them that I enjoy the most, is the extravagant generosity of the people of the Texas Annual Conference. So I’m glad to report that for the Ambassadors Grant we received $21,866.50. Now the goal was a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, so I need you to know that you are to go home and send us another $62,000 Amen? The Annual Conference offering raised $5,081.55, the Restorative Justice offering raised $5,108.55, for a total offerings this week of $32,056.60. Let the church say Amen.”

Bishop Huie – “Amen. Thank you, thank you. All right, so two other pieces and then a survey and evaluation/assessment survey…how did Annual Conference do? What are your suggestions for next time? Just your feedback to us…that will be sent out to you online, this week. Kind of a Survey Monkey sort of thing, so you can get back with us. And then please leave your name tags on your chairs as you depart today, because we will recycle and reuse these things…these name tags. Now let me just take a moment to say thank you to some terrific people who have made this Annual Conference possible. First, I want to start out with two wonderful folks that would be you Nancy and you Jan. You all stand up here. Yay Nancy and Jan, who’ve just done a great job. Thank you. And they’ve had great help. Look up here at secretaries. They’ve been up here working all week long. Thank you to the secretaries. Craig Gilbert and the worship folks, I don’t know if you’re still back there, but if you are thank you, thank you, thank you. And Lance Richards and your entire teller team who needs skateboards, skates and everything else, thank you, thank you, thank you. And let me say the person that puts in the most hours, 12 months out of the year, because we will start planning the next Annual Conference in the month of June, is the Rev. B.T. Williamson and he is the one that deserves everything. And friends let me just say, I know I have pushed you really hard this Annual Conference in terms of keeping the timelines and just trying to keep us moving, moving, moving. It’s because we had so much here, and so for those of you that I cut off and that I hurried up and that I stepped on, I apologize for that. I’m also celebrating that it is only 12:20 and we are getting out of here. Anyway, my apologies for that. I try not to do that too much, but this time we really needed to because of just the volume and to keep going here. So friends, if you’ll stand and I’ll offer a word of blessing. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon each of you and all of you together. Amen.”

This ended Annual Conference 2015.