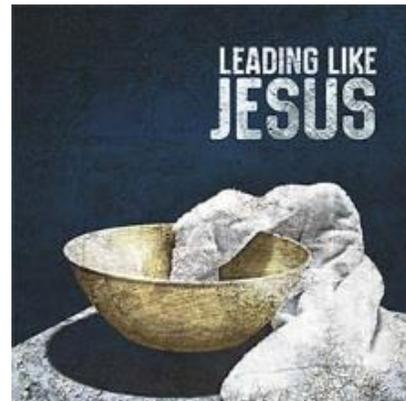


Lay Member Summary



Leading Like Jesus was the theme of the 2016 Florida Annual Conference, and around 1700 Florida United Methodists gathered at the Buena Vista Palace Hotel in Orlando June 16-18 to learn and share about changing the world through Leading Like Jesus.

Support for the June 12 Mass Shootings in Orlando

The gathering commenced five days after the June 12 mass shooting in Orlando that left 49 dead. On Thursday, Bishop Ken Carter called for a moment of silence for those killed in the June 12 mass shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando. He read a statement from the Florida Conference Cabinet and him about the tragedy, classified as a hate crime, calling it a “blatant act of mass murder that happened literally in our neighborhood. We are grateful for our connection and the witness of our churches in the greater Orlando area, around the Conference, and in the larger Connection, in providing a loving response through prayer, counseling, and a variety of practical means. The members showed an overwhelming support for the statement. The full statement is at <http://www.flumc.org/bishop-cabinet-statement-on-orlando-shooting>.

Leading Like Jesus

Annual Conference speakers included Rev. Bill Hybels, the founding and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, who is known worldwide as an expert on equipping and training Christian leaders to transform individuals and their communities through the local church. Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, Texas Annual Conference, called for Methodists to recognize that instead of leading change, we are now leading in the midst of change. She called for Methodists to re-imagine our church as an ecosystem rather than as a corporation in order to lead successfully. Lucille O’Neal, much more than a basketball star’s mother, shared her inspirational testimony about leadership. Disney’s Jeff James spoke about business insights in the areas of leadership, service and culture. Bishop Adam Richardson of the African Methodist Episcopal Church served as the communion celebrant along with Bishop Ken Carter and shared insights about leadership and the aftermath of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C. in 2015. Rev. David Dodge preached at the service of remembrance, and Bishop Carter delivered the sermon for Saturday’s ordination service.

Leadership Gatherings

Pre-conference leadership gatherings launched the Leading Like Jesus theme and included tracks tailored for laity and clergy. All sessions were held on Wednesday, June 15, at the Buena Vista Palace Hotel. The laity track included presentations on spiritual gifts, multiculturalism/inclusivity, Flamebuilders and Spiritual Leadership, Inc. The clergy track included workshops on the Institute of Preaching and the Marcy Preaching Fellowship, Simpkins Wesley Study Retreat, Reynolds Leadership Program and Courage to Lead.

Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

More changes in Conference health benefits are on the horizon after members voted to approve The Freedom to Choose plan recommended by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The details of the Freedom to Choose plan are on the website at www.flumc.org/freedomtochoose.

Strategic Leadership Team Report

The Strategic Leadership Team continues to focus on a few initiatives intended to clarify and extend the vision of the Annual Conference. With over 30 Fresh Expressions in process through the state, we are reaching new people, in new places, in new ways. The Nehemiah Project has created a unified process for walking with churches toward closure and regeneration. With streamlining of property management and investment, the work of New Church Development and Missional Engagement continues to flourish, allowing the District Superintendents to focus on the missional strategy for the districts. Future work includes more closely connecting the work of the Strategic Leadership Team with the Cabinet and Conference Staff. The Bishop and Strategic Leadership Team will seek ongoing feedback from leaders around the Annual Conference in September through Town Hall Gatherings as we look to the future with great hope for what is yet to come.

Bishop's Offering

Conference churches gave over \$69,982 toward the Bishop's offering. It will support the clergy and laity of our annual conference with resources for leadership development in three areas:

1. Grants for innovative forms of "church beyond the walls" through the Fresh Expressions network.
2. Inspiring and equipping our congregations to see, identify with and reach the neighborhoods around them in evangelistic, prophetic, apostolic, and missional ways.
3. Training a core group of spiritual guides and mentors to encourage and sustain this work that has already begun. Our fundamental goal in the stewardship of these resources – both people, our laity and clergy, and money – is that we follow Jesus into the world that he loves and join him in his mission to love, heal, and save the people of Florida. We are discovering that we need new skills and capacities to fulfill this calling. And, if we are honest, we may need a new heart and a new spirit!

The ordination offering will support ministerial education.

Treasurer's Report

- The conference treasurer reported that local church membership was 245,000 in 2015, down 8,000 or 3.2% from 2014. Average weekly worship attendance was down 2,000 or 1.5% at 130,000.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent was up from 414 in 2014 to 418 in 2015; the percentage paid was 87 percent in 2015 compared to 86 percent in 2014.
- CF&A's 2017 budget request is 1.73% less than 2016.

Ordination

Ordination, licensing and commissioning of over 50 individuals. Ordained: ten as elders, three as deacons. Commissioned: eight as provisional elders, four as provisional deacons. Licensed as local pastors: 33.

Local Churches

Twenty-three churches are celebrating milestone anniversaries: Six marked 150 years, five have reached 125 years and another three have reached 100. One church was founded 75 years ago, while five are celebrating 50 years and three are celebrating 25 years. Conference members approved discontinuation of seven churches.

Complete coverage of this year's annual conference event is available at www.flumc.org and www.acflorida.org. Full ministry reports are included in the 2016 Annual Conference Workbook at www.acflorida.org.