

Lay Member Summary



“Next Generations: Together in the Baptismal Waters” was the theme of the 2015 Florida Annual Conference. About 1,900 Florida United Methodists, including 1,546 clergy and lay voting members, gathered June 10-13 at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach. Highlights included:

Election of a diverse delegation to represent the Florida Conference in 2016 at General Conference and the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. The General Conference delegation includes five young adults, including Molly McEntire, lay delegate leader. The clergy delegation leader is Rev. Sue Hauptert-Johnson, superintendent of the North Central District.

Imagine No Malaria/“Passing the Torch” clergy debt reduction. The Florida campaign for reducing malaria deaths through the United Methodist effort Imagine No Malaria was the focus of prayers and fundraisers during the conference. Efforts so far have saved approximately 46,000 lives. The goal is 250,000 lives saved by the end of the year. Conference efforts also have focused on reducing seminary education debt for clergy. For a new program called “Passing the Torch,” the Florida Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits has committed to providing \$60,000 in debt-reduction grants to clergy each year, and the Florida United Methodist Foundation agreed to match that amount for at least five years, along with other substantial investments in financial and stewardship training and renewal grants for Florida Conference clergy and a \$40,000 scholarship to a seminary student of color. Clergy supporters at the Friday ordination service gave approximately \$5,440 to an offering for Passing the Torch.

Bishop’s offering. Conference churches gave \$85,018 toward the offerings collected during the communion service Wednesday and continuing throughout the conference. Proceeds will be split equally between Imagine No Malaria and the Holy Land Pilgrimage for Ordinands.

Ordination. A total of 47 clergy were celebrated at the Service of Licensing, Commissioning and Ordination on Friday. These included nine elders and two deacons in full connection, 12 provisional elders, one provisional deacon and 23 local pastors.

Treasurer’s report:

- The conference statistician reported that local church membership was 252,500 in 2014, down 9,800, or 3.7 percent, from 2013. Average weekly worship attendance was down 3,000, or 2.2 percent, at 132,000.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent was up from 400 in 2013 to 414 in 2014; the percentage paid was 86 percent in 2014, compared to 85 percent in 2013.
- CF&A’s 2016 budget request for the conference and connectional items is .04 percent less than 2015.

Local churches. Thirty-five churches are celebrating milestone anniversaries: Two marked 175 years, four are celebrating 150 years, seven have reached 125 years and another seven have reached 100. Two churches were founded 75 years ago, while nine are celebrating 50 years and four are celebrating 25 years. Conference members approved discontinuation of six 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 2015 Annual Conference Workbook at www.acflorida.org.

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