

## Lay Member Summary

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**Remembering Who We Are** was the theme of the 2018 Florida Annual Conference, and around 1600 Florida United Methodists gathered at Branscomb Auditorium at Florida Southern College in Lakeland June 7-9 to share our stories and learn about our Wesleyan heritage and the rich history of the Florida Conference.

### Remembrance and Celebration

The remembrance began with a Love Feast Wednesday evening focused on the theme. It was a night of conversation around tables, scripture reading, testimony and worship. Participants took time to remember who we are, report on how God is at work in our present and look forward with trust and hope to our future together. A reception was held after the event. The Annual Conference gathering began Thursday afternoon with opening worship focused on remembering and celebrating Florida churches' journey through Hurricane's Irma destruction, response and recovery. The Archives and History Commission held a reception Thursday afternoon, showcasing items to help us remember who we are. The Conference's Disaster Recovery team provided a multi-media experience showing the storm damage, the hard-working, inspired recovery volunteers and a reminder that the multi-year recovery efforts continue to need prayers, volunteers and financial support. Inspirational, celebratory music was led by Jeremy Hearn of First UMC Lakeland.

### Program

Annual Conference speakers included Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, who was the preacher and celebrant for Thursday evening's communion service. Dr. Paul Chilcote, Professor of Theology at the Dunnam Campus of Asbury Theological Seminary in Orlando, spoke Friday morning. He is an author of many books that underscore the need to remember who we are: *John & Charles Wesley, Making Disciples in a World Parish, Praying in the Wesleyan Spirit, Early Methodist Spirituality and Recapturing the Wesleys' Vision*. Bishop Gregory Palmer of the West Ohio Conference was the Friday evening speaker. He is a "child of the church," the son of Rev. and Mrs. Herbert and Charlotte Sue Hewitt Palmer. He served as the president of the Council of Bishops from 2008-2010. Rev. Dr. Geraldine McClellan, senior pastor at Mt. Pleasant, Gainesville, preached at the service of remembrance, and Bishop Ken Carter delivered the sermon for Saturday's ordination service.

### Pre-Conference Workshops

Pre-conference workshops were held on Wednesday, June 6, at First UMC Lakeland. They included presentations on Board of Ordained Ministry preparation, the ZOE project (how to design a mission with sustainable results), stewardship and faith (Spanish and English), lay members for the Now in Church, first time local pastor session, Our Kids ministry training, disaster response, Fresh Expressions/church vitality and justice conversations about hearing the female story and racial reconciliation.

### Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

The conference implemented the health care supplement (i.e., 2017 Health Initiative) on 1/1/17 as adopted by the annual conference. Here are the 2017 Health Initiative details <http://www.flumc.org/freedomtochoose>. The Conference partnered with Member Benefits at no cost to the conference or our members to make it easier to choose healthcare plans and ancillary products. The Board of Pension continues to evaluate the marketplaces and the impact this has had on clergy. The board meets in August to set the stipend levels for 2019 or to respond to any major legislative changes. The Board also stressed the option of the Preacher's Relief Board in assisting clergy facing unexpected medical financial hardships. To access the 'Preachers Relief Board Application for Financial Assistance': <https://www.flumc.org/preachersreliefboard>. New IRS tax laws now make

moving expenses taxable income; they are no longer tax deductible, regardless of who pays for the move. Clergy will now have taxes imputed on the cost of the move. The moving costs paid on behalf of the clergy are also factored into pension calculations, so clergy will need to adapt their 1% matching UMPIP contribution accordingly.

### **Strategic Leadership Team Report**

The purpose of the Strategic Leadership Team is to “clarify the vision of the Annual Conference, ensure this vision is accomplished, and ensure the alignment of all Annual Conference resources and ministries with the vision.” The future vision for the Annual Conference includes 500 Fresh Expressions and 500 local churches, while doubling the number of vital congregations. Progress has been made toward this. This year the team began to work on an alignment plan around our Conference Vision and Priorities, partnering with the Committee on Finance and Administration to look at the future sustainability of the Conference and utilizing data visualization tools to help create outcome-based measurements. The Strategic Leadership Team seeks the ongoing feedback from leaders around the Annual Conference as we look to the future with great hope for what is yet to come.

### **Bishop’s Offering**

Conference churches gave over \$42,967 toward the Bishop’s offering Thursday evening. The offerings will be divided evenly between ZOE Ministries and funding for training laity and clergy in innovative forms of evangelism.

#### ZOE Ministries

The debilitating results are disease, hunger, exploitation, abuse, illiteracy, and hopelessness. ZOE’s approach has proven that children living in poverty also hold the greatest capacity to create lasting solutions for themselves, their families, and their communities.

#### Training Laity and Clergy

Churches across the conference engage with their communities in new and exciting forms of evangelism. The conference is committed to training our laity and clergy in creative and contextual ways of reaching out in order to create sustaining, vital churches in the future and in reaching new people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Treasurer’s Report**

- The conference treasurer reported that local church membership was 228,700 in 2017, down 10,300 or 4.3% from 2016. Average weekly worship attendance appears to have stayed flat in 2017 after adjusting for changes in how the information was collected in 2017.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent went from 417 in 2016 to 434 in 2017; the percentage paid was approximately 88% in 2017.
- CF&A’s 2019 budget request is 1.16% less than 2018.

### **Ordination**

Ordination, licensing and commissioning of 62 individuals. Ordained: sixteen as elders, two as deacons. Commissioned: nineteen as provisional elders, one as provisional deacon. Licensed as local pastors: 24.

### **Local Churches**

Twenty churches are celebrating milestone anniversaries: One marked 175 years; eight marked 150 years; six have reached 125 years; three have reached 100; one is celebrating 75 years; one is celebrating 50 years. Conference members approved discontinuation of 12 churches.

*Complete coverage of this year’s annual conference event is available at [www.flumc.org](http://www.flumc.org). Full ministry reports are included in the 2018 Annual Conference Workbook at [www.flumc.org/annual-conference-2018](http://www.flumc.org/annual-conference-2018).*