



Lay Member Summary

On Mission Together was the theme of the 2019 Florida

Annual Conference, and around 1600 Florida United Methodists gathered at Branscomb Auditorium at Florida Southern College in Lakeland June 5-8 to share and celebrate our stories of being On Mission Together to equip leaders to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of communities across Florida and beyond. This is also an election year, and the members selected eight clergy and eight laity delegates to General Conference, the policy-making body of The United Methodist Church that will meet May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minn. The same number were elected to represent Florida at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in July 2020. An additional six clergy and six lay members were elected to serve as alternate delegates.

Celebration

The celebration began with a worship service Tuesday evening in the Buckner Theatre. A meet and greet for the 2020 General and Jurisdictional nominees was held afterwards outside the theatre, and a second meet and greet was held Wednesday morning. Wednesday afternoon's opening worship focused on being united in declaring our faith that God's grace is available to all, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. The Archives and History Commission held an open house Thursday afternoon, highlighting items that show how we are On Mission Together. Thursday evening included several venues hosting "spirit-led innovation" events, and the Florida United Methodist Foundation held an "Art After Hours" reception at the Polk Museum of Art. Once, again, inspirational, celebratory music was led by Jarvis Wilson of Atlanta.

Program

Annual Conference speakers included Bishop Will Willimon, who was the preacher and celebrant for Wednesday evening's communion service. He is Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke Divinity School. He served eight years as Bishop of the North Alabama Conference. Rev. Dr. Cynthia D. Weems was the guest speaker Thursday morning. She is the Southeast District Superintendent of the Florida Conference, currently Dean of the Cabinet. Prior to this, Cynthia served as pastor of First UMC Miami, a church with an extensive ministry to the diverse homeless population of downtown. Dr. Dana Robert is a leading scholar of mission studies and world Christianity. Author of many books, her latest is *Faithful Friendships: Embracing Diversity in Christian Community* (2019). At the Boston University School of Theology, she directs the Center for Global Christianity and Mission. Rev. Dr. Gary Spencer, Atlantic Central District Superintendent, preached at the service of remembrance Friday morning, and Bishop Ken Carter delivered the sermon for Saturday's ordination service.

Thursday evening included a special "Night of Spirit Led Innovation," with events held at various venues in Lakeland. These included examples of Fresh Expressions: Dinner Church events, Hands-On Church (aka Messy Church), Pints and Parables, Designing Innovation, Tattoo Parlor church and an evening Yoga class.

Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits

The Conference sent out an email announcement to all churches regarding the partnership between Wespath Benefits and Investments and Paychex to provide all United Methodist Churches with a Payroll and Human Resources solution for 2019 and beyond. With this new partnership, Paychex can send the clergy/lay employee's UMPIP payroll contributions to Wespath, saving time and ensuring accuracy. Paychex will also handle the quarterly tax filings and year-end reports. For churches struggling with clergy payroll and taxes, this may be a way to improve their processes. Churches will receive a 35% discount for the duration of the partnership between Paychex and Wespath. Jeff Kohl is the designated Paychex/Wespath representative for

UMC churches. For more information, contact Jeff Kohl at (561) 907-7402, or email wespath@paychex.com. Or you may visit [here](#). The Board increased the health stipend for 2019 by 6% at each level. The health stipend amounts are contained within the charge conference clergy compensation forms. The Board has made available to all clergy serving in an appointment at a church 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, go to <https://www.flumc.org/preachersreliefboard>.

Strategic Leadership Team

Our work over this Annual Conference year (2018-2019) has continued to focus on the development and implementation of our new mission, vision and mindsets. These were presented to the Annual Conference in 2018. Our mission is to "equip leaders to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of communities in Florida and beyond." Our vision is to cultivate courageous leadership, missional engagement and spirit-led innovation. Our mindsets are to be future focused, Wesleyan rooted, passionate about people, strengthened by diversity and adaptive. Some specific projects that help us be "On Mission Together" include our OMT Weekend, OMT Podcast, M-LAB and our new conference website, which will launch this summer.

Bishop's Offering

Conference churches gave over \$36,702 toward the Bishop's offering Wednesday evening. The offerings will be divided evenly between establishing a United Methodist Church inside a state prison and funding for the Florida A&M University Wesley Foundation.

Lowell Correctional Institution

A pastor will be assigned to serve at Lowell Correctional Institution for women in Reddick, Florida. The Conference will partner with Prison Congregations of America, a consulting group that helps denominations establish worshiping congregations in prisons.

Impact at Florida A&M University Wesley Foundation

Part of our vision for IMPACT@FAMU Wesley Foundation is to create a "home away from home" for our students, an office/pastoral care area for the Executive Director, and a place to worship, gather, learn, play, and pray for the FAMU campus at large. The offering will help make that vision a reality.

Treasurer's Report

- The conference treasurer reported that local church membership was 220,600 in 2018, down 8,100 or 3.5% from 2017. Average weekly attendance was down to 114,700 from 118,200 in 2017 or down 3%. Online attendance, however, was up from 21,800 to 31,900 or a 46% increase.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent went from 434 in 2017 to 429 in 2018; the percentage paid was approximately 88% in 2018.
- CF&A's 2020 budget request is 5.399% less than 2019.

Ordination

Ordination, licensing and commissioning of 56 individuals. Ordained: seventeen as elders, five as deacons. Commissioned: thirteen as provisional elders, one as provisional deacon. Licensed as local pastors: 20.

Local Churches

Fifteen churches are celebrating milestone anniversaries: Two marked 175 years; five marked 150 years; three have reached 125 years; three have reached 100; one is celebrating 75 years; one is celebrating 50 years. Conference members approved discontinuation of 3 churches.

Complete coverage of this year's annual conference event is available at www.flumc.org. Full ministry reports are included in the 2019 Annual Conference Workbook at <https://www.flumc.org/annual-conference-2019>.