

## 2023 Upper New York Annual Conference Daily Notes June 2

- The day opened with gathering music. Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Héctor A. Burgos Núñez, said, “Gathering music is not just meant to be background music—we are welcoming the presence of God among us.” He requested the band to replay the refrain of one of their songs multiple times and had the audience sing with them.
- Carmen Vianese and the Rev. Bill Mudge, chairs of the Episcopacy Committee, presented Bishop Héctor with wooden flowers, made at Letchworth State Park, for his wife Jazelis, and gifted him with a trip to the Corning Glass Museum for him to enjoy with his family.
- During his Episcopal Address, Bishop Héctor explained four shifts we need to prioritize: silos to connections, competition to collaboration, culture of growth to a culture of impact, and institutions to people. He also presented the new logo, United Methodists of Upper New York, and explained that this is how we will reference our Conference going forward.
- Peter Cook from the New York State Council of Churches (NYSCC) thanked United Methodists of Upper New York for their involvement in the ecumenical organization and welcomed the Rev. Bill Gottschalk-Fielding as the United Methodist representative. Peter explained how NYSCC can advise churches how to use their buildings for the community. He explained the need for congregations to welcome asylum seekers and the need for more chaplains in prison ministries and more.
- Krystal Cole presented monitoring report’s pie charts illustrating 59.6 percent of speakers on the floor were white, 7 percent were Hispanic, 5.3 percent were Black and the rest were unidentified. 26.3 percent of the speakers were laity and 40.4 percent were clergy and the rest were unidentified. 40.4 percent of the speakers were female, 28.3 percent were male, and the rest were unidentified.
- The Rev. Scott Johnson, the Rev. Angela Stewart, and the Rev. Raquel Alston presented an update on the Buffalo 10 Scholarship. They announced Xavier Mann as the primary winner of the scholarship; he will receive \$1,000 a year for all four years of college so long as he stays enrolled. One other soon-to be college student will receive \$1,000 and two others will each receive \$500. The hope of the scholarship is to being voices to these residents who reside in East Buffalo—that through helping them obtain a college education that they can advocate for their community that has suffered from institutional racism for decades.
- Clergy and clergy spouses who have died since May of 2022 were honored and celebrated during the Memorial Service on Friday morning at the 2023 Upper New York Annual Conference. The Rev. Nola Anderson, Finger Lakes and Crossroads District Superintendent, delivered a powerful message on the fact that death is not the end of the story; the end of the story is the victory we have through Jesus Christ.
- Pastor Trey Wince with Ministry Architects led an afternoon learning session focusing on building discipleship and the importance of making clear what it means to be a part of your church. He offered the following as crucial steps to grow disciples and being an effective church: Define discipleship, break down the definition into its key components, list your activities, connect the dots by matching each priority with each activity, check for alignment, craft a clear and simple message that tells your story. “Tell the story over and over again,” he said. “I think you’ll find it’s the most fun you’ve had in ministry in a long time.”

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- Beth Jordan and Pamela Klotzbach were elected by paper ballot to serve on the Conference Board of Trustees. Chair of Nominations, Ian Urriola, moved for the adoption of the full report. The full report was adopted.
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- Kae Wilbert, chair of CONAM, presented Bishop Hector with a beaded cross that was made by Jackie, a Native American member of Four Corners Church.
- The United Methodists of Upper New York (UNY) Leadership Report was presented during the afternoon plenary at the 2023 UNY Annual Conference. Jessica White, Conference Lay Leader, presented the laity portion and the Rev. Mike Weeden, Northern Flow District Superintendent and Dean of the Cabinet, presented the Superintendency portion. Both of their reports zeroed in on the importance of collaboration.
- The Rev. Rich Weihing Jr., and Teddi Urriola presented the Equitable Compensation Report. They presented a recommendation to increase the minimum base compensation by 3.5 percent. You can see how the salaries would increase on page 22 in the *Pre-Conference Workbook*. Many came to the floor, speaking against the recommendation, claiming that the raise is not enough, especially considering inflation. Some spoke for the recommendation, claiming that “something is better than nothing.” In the end, this recommendation was approved, with an editorial change that this increase in compensation is not for the 2023-2024 appointment year, rather, it begins January 1, 2024. This resulted in the Rev. Abigail Browka withdrawing her petition (UNYAC2023.7 - Toward Equitable Compensation)—she has been working with the equitable comp. team to readdress it next year. Marthaly Sweet presented a motion for next year’s Equitable Compensation Report to include the percentage of clergy at Minimum Base Salary and a percentage breakdown based on race, gender, and age/ This motion passed. The Clergy Housing Policy and the Accountable Reimbursement Plan did not change.
- The Rev. Sara Baron presented the Board of Pension & Health Benefits report She spoke of the increasing cost of healthcare. As for Retiree Health Reimbursement Accounts, there is no change and no proposed changes for the future. She reviewed pension and protection for the UNY clergy, including Wespeth’s Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP), the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP), and the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP). She spoke of implications related to disaffiliation. She presented two recommendations One allows retired and disabled clergy to claim their church pension, severance, or disability income as a housing exclusion. The second is for an 5 percent increase to the Pre-82 Past Service Annuity Rate, which would move it from \$658 to \$691. The Past Service Rate can only go up, it can never go down, and it applies only to service to the church before 1982. Both recommendations carried.
- Conference Council on Finance and Administration Chair Holly Roush presented the 2024 ministry budget Friday afternoon. The proposed budget was supported as presented. Roush also presented the recommendation “Request to Allocate the Cost of the Child Victims Act Legal Fees and Settlement Costs.” A proposed substitution was ruled out of order, and an amendment to disallow Camp and Retreat Ministry assets from being used for CVA payments was not supported. Questions and speeches for and against pushed the conference past the dinner hour. Bishop Héctor suspended further discussion and vote to the Saturday morning plenary.

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- A service of ordination was held Friday evening. Provisional members Deokryeol Bak, Daniel Joseph Bradley, Ann-Marie Brown, Cori Joan Loudon, and Michael George Whitcomb-Tavey were commissioned for the work of an elder. Full members Deborah M. Coatsworth, Patrick James Dupont, and Theresa L. Eggleston were ordained for the work of a deacon. Full members Andy McClaren Anderson, Casey Edward Bradley, Brett William Johnson, Jennifer K. Piatt, Olga Elsie Gonzalez Santiago, Alison Elaine Schmied, and Jee Hae Song were ordained for the work of the elder. The orders of Raquel Alston, Lal Fak Mawia, Jefferson Calvin Niles, and Tanya Renate Spencer were also recognized in The United Methodist Church. Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi joined Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez in the commissioning, ordaining, and recognizing. Bishop Moore-Koikoi delivered the message “The Power of One” based on the scripture John 17:17-24. “The scripture points to the fact that diversity in the body makes the body stronger. Our spiritual body needs some diversity in order for it to be healthy,” she said. “Beloved, the world is looking at us to see how we treat one another. They’re looking at us to see what our actions say about who God is.”