

sions.

After discussing the petitions, Bishop Webb provided answers to many questions that came to him for this live session. He assured attendees that he would review questions that come in and answer all he could. Visit <http://bit.ly/BishopWebbFAQ> to read questions asked and Bishop Webb's answers—this link will be regularly updated as Bishop Webb and Conference Leaders continues to answer the dozens of questions that have come in.

Bishop Webb then reflected on where we are as a denomination and where we might go from here, pointing to the difference between Christian unity and denominational unity.

He said, "Seeking Christian unity is our calling, but it does not preclude us from being a part of a denomination and seeking denominational unity as well."

Bishop Webb explained that part of the crisis of The United Methodist Church is that we do not have unity of doctrine, discipline, and possibly not even mission.

Bishop Webb then spoke about possibilities and changes that may have to take place in order for The United Methodist Church to "seek after the Christian Unity we desire



*Upper New York Area Resident Bishop,  
Mark J. Webb*

and are called to pursue while defining a new unity for The United Methodist Church that will have integrity and end the division that has defined us for all these years."

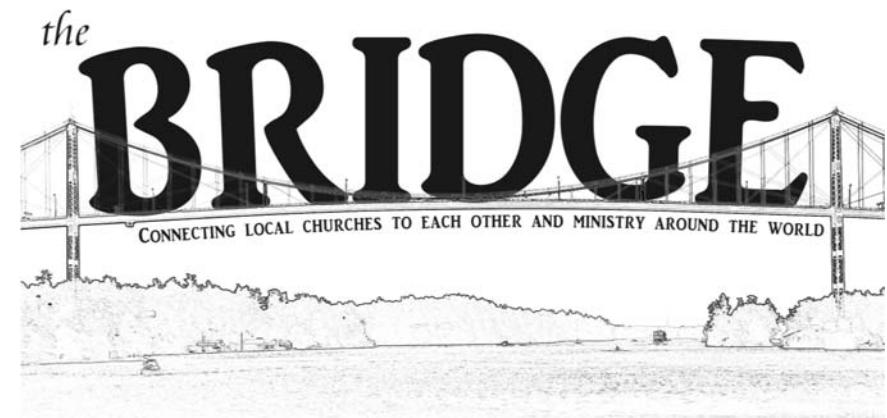
Visit <http://bit.ly/BishopWebbscript> to read Bishop Webb's comments about what changes could possibly work to achieve denominational unity as well as his entire script used at the Post Special Session of General Conference Recap and Reflection gathering.

At the end of the event, Bishop Webb blessed the elements of communion that were offered at all of the Hubs.

In closing, Bishop Webb reminded attendees of the importance of continuing to be the hands and feet of Jesus in Upper New York.

Visit <http://bit.ly/UNYPostSpecialSessionGathering> to watch the video recording of the livestreamed event.

Watch the full video of the March 17 recap and reflection following Annual Conference at <http://bit.ly/UNYPostSpecialSessionGathering>



The Upper New York Conference's vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

## A look inside!

UNY Recap and Reflections of Special Session 2019 gathering

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*The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:*

**[www.unyumc.org](http://www.unyumc.org)**

# UNY Recap and Reflections of Special Session 2019 gathering

By Shannon Hodson, writer/editor

On March 17, 2019, hundreds of members of the Upper New York Conference gathered together across 12 District Communication Hubs for a livestreamed Recap and Reflection after the Special Session of General Conference. District Superintendents presided at their District's Hub—they played the livestream and led communion at the end.

Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Mark J. Webb, introduced the gathering by expressing how he wished that everyone could be together under one roof, but also felt grateful that we have the technology to be able to be connect in the livestream format.

Bishop Webb acknowledged the pain felt among the LGBTQIA community after Special Session and also recognized how the division, political maneuvering, and ugly rhetoric that filled the arena in St. Louis has continued to the point where there is a lot of distrust in one another throughout The United Methodist Church.

This gathering included worship throughout led by Wayne Clemens, pastor at CenterPoint Christian Fellowship; he sang both contemporary songs and traditional hymns with passion as he strummed his acoustic guitar.

Conference Lay Leader Susan Hardy led a shared litany that recognized a range of feelings that people are having after Special Session. While some are feeling peaceful, many are feeling: sadness, numbness, suspiciousness, and



*Erinn Norris, Conference Leadership Team*

many arrays of emotions.

Susan Hardy reminded those gathered that "Our feelings cannot bind, hinder, or block the presence of God."

Significant time was devoted to prayer and reflection.

This time began with a prayer by Erinn Norris, who is a member of the Conference Leadership Team. She asked God "to help us be aware of your Holy Spirit in us and through us as we walk through this difficult time."

Videos of Cabinet members; the Rev. Dr. Sherri Rood, the Rev. Vonda Fossitt, the Rev. Debbie Earthrowl, and the Rev. Carlos Rosa-Laguer included their reflections of what God is calling the UNY Conference to do in this difficult time.

Rev. Sherri Rood referred to Romans 12:9-10, stating, "Let your love be genuine. Hate what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection. Outdo one another with showing honor."

Rev. Rood explained that these words from Paul call us to be respectful of one another with sincerity. She also referred to the social principles of being United

Methodist—stating that it is important not to label one another. Visit <http://bit.ly/RevRood> to watch Rev. Rood's reflection.

Rev. Fossitt referred to Romans 12:11-13, stating, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fever serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality."

Rev. Fossitt explained that in this letter, Paul is telling the Romans not to give up, to keep their enthusiasm for serving the Lord and that it is important to keep praying and to continue welcoming others with radical hospitality. Visit <http://bit.ly/RevFossitt> to watch Rev. Fossitt's reflection.

In her reflection, Rev. Earthrowl referred to something she learned in her college psychology class that combined psychology with Newton's Law of Physics, where when two sides are in conflict, it keeps the momentum going, but when one side becomes like a pillow, it drops the momentum.

Rev. Earthrowl said that we are called to even a deeper sense than becoming like a pillow that we need to draw closer to God and learn how to live peacefully with one another. Visit <http://bit.ly/RevEarthrowl> to hear Rev. Earthrowl's reflection.

Finally, attendees watched Rev. Rosa-Laguer's reflection on Romans 12:14-15, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."



*The Rev. Vonda Fossitt, Genesee Valley District Superintendent*

He explained that the Upper New York Conference has been entrusted to live out God's will. He went on to say, "Let us keep modeling what God is doing in us." Visit <http://bit.ly/RevRosaLaguer> to watch Rev. Rosa Laguer's reflection.

Between each Cabinet member's reflection, Pastor Clemens sang verses from *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace*.

Introducing 10 minutes of silent prayer, Nancy Dibelius, Assistant Director of Vital Congregations, said, "Faithful people recognize the importance of sitting in uncomfortable wilderness places... Together we will sit in silence...We will respect in this silence. God above all."

There was also time allowed for meaningful prayer in small groups and corporate prayer.

Bishop Webb then discussed the decisions made at the Special Session of General Conference. Visit <http://bit.ly/SpecialSessionDecisionsPP> to review these decisions as well as to download a PowerPoint presentation of these deci-

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