

Upper New York

ADVOCATE

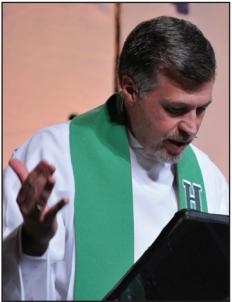


The Daily Advocate is a special publication for the 2015 Annual Conference session. Daily issues will be distributed on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Bishop Webb tells the Church: 'It's our time'

As the "It's Our Time" video began to fade, one voice called out, "It's our time, Church ... It's our time to fully and completely, passionately, and boldly live the purpose for which we have been created and called ... it's our time to partner with Holy Spirit power to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It's our time!" said Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb.

Bishop Webb addressed the crowd on Wednesday, May 27, during Opening Worship at the 2015 Upper New York Annual Conference session, reiterating the Church's call: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

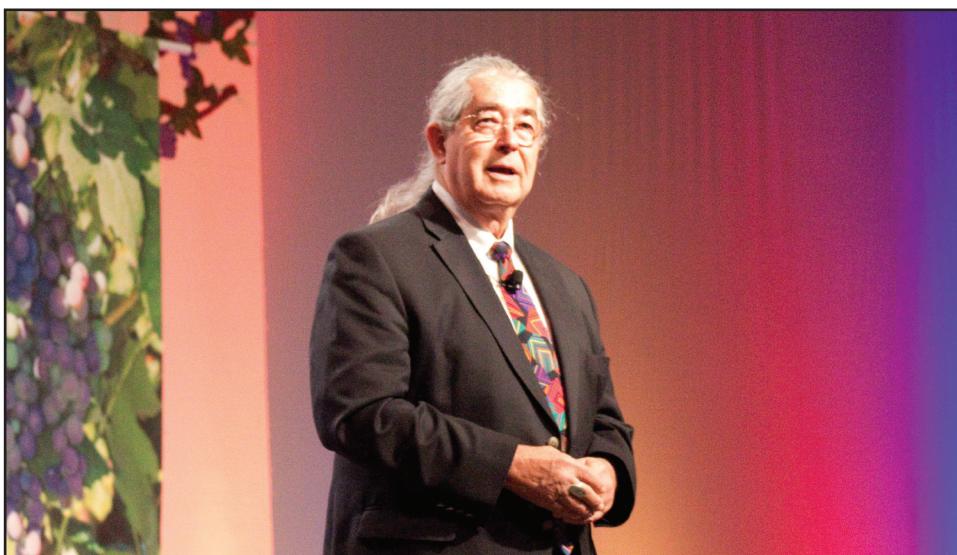


Bishop Webb

"That means we exist to help those who are already part of the body of Christ to fall deeper in love with God to become grace-filled followers of Jesus who put faith into action," he said. "And we exist to do whatever it takes to make certain that at least one more person has a chance to know, trust, and be changed by the amazing, unchanging, unconditional love of God through Jesus Christ."

Bishop Webb noted that God has equipped United Methodists to accomplish their purpose. Throughout the Scriptures, when God called people to mission and ministry – for example, Abraham, Moses, Esther, Naomi, Ruth,

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The Rev. Dr. Thom White Wolf Fassett speaks to members at the 2015 Annual Conference session during the *Act of Repentance & Healing of Relationships with Indigenous Persons* evening service. Photo by Matthew Williams

Conversation Circles on docket for Thursday

Save for an amendment that "strongly urges" participants in the circle conversations to refrain from wearing objects that indicate their preference on the topic of human sexuality, the Organizational Motion was adopted as originally presented by a super majority vote.

The approved motion means that seven resolutions for the 2016 General Conference session and one resolution for this Annual Conference session will be discussed during circle conversations when the bar of the Conference shifts to the dining room (Exhibit Hall B).

Human Sexuality Task Force members outlined the process of the conversation circles; it also appeared in the Pre-Conference Workbook.

The eight resolutions and petitions that refer to human sexuality will be discussed in the conversation circles and then voted on "without further discussion, debate, or provision for amendment, tabling or referral. A single ballot listing all resolutions and petitions referring to human sexuality will be provided for members to indicate whether to 'adopt' or 'not adopt' each individual resolution or petition," according to the Organizational Motion.

Conversation starter questions will be "very open-ended," said task force member the Rev. Bill Allen, to help facilitate a conversation rather than just a monologue.

Lay member Jami Breedlove added that the goal "is not to educate someone to the point to change their mind. Our goal is to have every single person at every single table to have the opportunity to be heard. Period."

Voting 101: UNY members use handheld keypads for delegate elections

Practice makes perfect.

Members at the 2015 Upper New York Annual Conference session on Wednesday took their first ballot in the early afternoon, voting separately for laity and clergy delegates for the General and Northeastern Jurisdictional conferences in 2016.

And on the first ballot, the laity had a successful election, casting 479 ballots of which Dr. Scott Johnson garnered 269 votes; 239 were needed to elect.

The full session had two practice ballots in the early afternoon; the clergy had an election with the keypads during the morning's clergy session. The first practice ballot was a "yes" or "no" response to whether a member was attending a session for the first time. The second ballot asked voters which hymns they liked best:



"How great thou art," "I love to hear the story," "Amazing Grace," and "Standing on the Promises." (In case you are keeping score, "Amazing Grace," was the top choice with 383 votes; "I love to hear the story" came in last with 105 votes.)

Since all clergy that wanted to be eligible for voting were catalogued in a sheet prior to the

session, they were given a four-digit number to enable their peers to vote for them. Laity were handled the same way, however, eligible laity could also be added to that list by write-in, explained by a representative from Option Technologies, the company providing the electronic balloting devices.

Following the announcement of Johnson's election, Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb gave the results of the clergy vote,

to much less fanfare. There were 314 valid ballots cast from among 379 total voters.

"Some tried to stuff the ballot box and the system catches that," Bishop Webb said. "You can't vote for one person more than once."

Bishop Webb then called for the next round of election and announced that the preparatory prayer would be given by a pre-recorded video from Baltimore-Washington's Resident Area Bishop Marcus Matthews, Upper New York's immediate prior resident bishop.

"Thanks to you, loving God, for all the persons assembled in this assembly hall. Thanks to you for the way you have blessed the Upper New York Annual Conference, a Conference living out your gospel, not only in your congregations but in the communities in which we are part," he said. "As we prepare to elect delegates for the General and Jurisdictional conferences, we simply ask that You bless these persons who have offered themselves to be elected."

Bishop Webb –

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Mary, Peter, and Paul – God always promised a harvest.

"As I travel around our beloved Conference, I am overwhelmed by the signs of God's people living out the mission," Bishop Webb said. "We are offering our lives to God, we are sharing the love of Jesus in creative, practical, bold, and risky ways, and we are experiencing the promise of harvest."

Some people feel the Church is irrelevant, that its future is uncertain, but Bishop Webb believes the Church

is alive and well, with the best days for The United Methodist Church ahead.

"I believe the Spirit of God is renewing and reviving the Church," he said. "God's promise of harvest is real! Who we are and who we are called to be is greater than how we sometimes act, behave, and live."

In discussing the promise of the harvest, Bishop Web said there are two important steps to take. The first is to strategically lean into the promise of the harvest. The second is to spiritually embrace the promise of the harvest.

"God has called the right people

to serve as clergy and lay leaders in Upper New York," he said. "We may not believe that, but it's true! God has given all the necessary gifts. We may not trust that, but it's a promise! We need to journey with one another, teach one another, encourage one another, and challenge one another to allow the Spirit of God to increase our capacity as leaders."

To spiritually embrace the harvest, the UNY Conference must see with the eyes of Jesus and feel with the heart of Jesus, Bishop Webb said. To spiritually embrace the harvest, Bishop Webb said people must also pray. He referenced E.M. Bounds, who says in his book *Power through Prayer*, "What the Church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or more novel methods. The Church needs men and women whom the Holy Spirit can use – persons of prayer, persons mighty in prayer."

Bishop Webb called for everyone to begin AC '15 with a time of prayer, after which Opening Worship concluded with these few words, "It's our time, Church!" Bishop Webb said. "It's our time."

College Ministry Team has resources available for you



The Upper New York College Ministry Team has a questionnaire for churches that are seeking resources to help them reach college students. This questionnaire was distributed (on pink paper) along with this

issue of the Daily Advocate and can be deposited in College Ministry baskets at the rear of the Exhibit Hall. If you did not receive the questionnaire, please visit the Higher Education booth in the display area on the lower level.