

2018 UNYUMC Annual Conference Daily Notes

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

- Annual Conference began early this year. The day began with a hygiene kit and flood bucket assembly mission project at the Upper New York Mission Central HUB. An open-air service, sponsored by the Syracuse United Methodist Ministries, was held in Columbus Circle in downtown Syracuse.
- The Clergy Session and Laity Session took place Wednesday evening. Several examples of laity boldly living their call were shared during the Laity Session by various speakers.

Thursday, May 31, 2018

- The Rev. Bill Mudge blessed the space along with several clergy and laity across the Conference, praying over the rows of chairs where people will be seated later today through Saturday.
- In Opening Worship, Upper New York Area Resident Bishop Mark J. Webb urged churches and individuals to boldly live their calls and profess Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. He expressed the importance of believers to wade in the waters of their Baptismal call, claiming that wading in the water and inviting others to wade in the water of Jesus is far more important than programs, styles of worship, petitions and resolutions, etc. The offering collected will go to UNY's Mission Central HUB.
- Plenary began with the Organizational Motion. The Rev. Stephen Cady, pastor at the Asbury First UMC in Rochester, made a motion to move the deadline for petitions and resolutions for AC2019 to no sooner than March 15 and to publish them no later than first week of May. Bishop Webb said the motion didn't fit in the Organizational Motion but would be discussed later. The Organizational Motion was voted upon and approved. The Consent Calendar came next. Pastor Matt Slaven, of the Park UMC in Sinclairville, moved to add the budget and nominations report to the Consent Calendar. Bishop Webb said to do that, the rules must be suspended. Pastor Slaven moved to have the rules suspended and a vote was taken. The motion to suspend the rules was not supported. The Consent Calendar was voted upon and approved. Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Connectional Ministries the Rev. Bill Gottschalk-Fielding moved to adopt the agenda, which was voted upon and approved.
- The Commission on the Status and Role of Women's Tom Blake and the Commission on Race and Religion's Blenda Smith explained the monitoring process at the 2018 AC session and asked those speaking at microphones to introduce themselves in four ways: their name, whether they're clergy or laity, local church, and race. "We know you may feel uncomfortable identifying your race, but we feel even more uncomfortable trying to guess," Tom said.
- Rev. Gottschalk-Fielding addressed Rev. Cady's motion, saying the AC19 petitions and resolutions deadlines will be March 15.
- The Conference Leadership Team presented their report, ending with a recommendation that every UNY congregation be required to use the VitalSigns Dashboard starting Sept. 1, 2018. After much discussion, the recommendation was amended to strike "required" and add "strongly encouraged." The recommendation as amended was supported. The report was accepted.
- The Conference Board of Pension & Health Benefits' two recommendations were both supported. The report was accepted.
- The Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation presented five recommendations. The first four recommendations were supported with little discussion. But about 30 minutes of discussion resulted from a proposed amendment to the fifth recommendation – to add to the clergy housing policy, "The presence of any health threat shall be remediated including, but not limited to: lead and uncontained asbestos." Pastor Heidi Chamberlain, of the Malone: Centenary UMC proposed an amendment to add "mold" after the colon. The amendment and recommendation were supported. The report was accepted.
- Bishop Webb recognized Vicki Swanson for 35 years of service to the Conference and gifted her a bouquet of flowers.
- The Upper New York Conference Board of Trustees shared their report. The board's President Rich Barling shared an update about the Conference Center and the transfer of Camp Findley to Fit for Life. The Recommendation for Camp and Retreat Ministries was supported. The board's Vice President Peter Abdella discussed the 2018 insurance program renewal, as well as an update on the risk management program and water sensor program through Church Mutual Insurance Company. Closed churches were honored. The Rev. Alan Kinney, retired, requested a report of the Board of Trustees' funds used and earned in the latter half of 2018, and board agreed to share it. The Board of Trustees Report was supported.
- Dr. Scott Johnson reported on the nine times that the Commission on a Way Forward met and that despite the differing views on LGBTQ, they were able to have prayerful discussion, which resulted in a report to the Council of Bishops. Bishop Webb said that the majority of the Council of Bishops test-voted for the One Church Plan. Dr. Johnson mentioned that a full report from the Commission on a Way Forward will become public on July 8, which outlines the three church plans.
- The Bishop's Taskforce on Eliminating Racism shared personal accounts and videos illuminating statistics related to institutional racism. These reveal why it's vital for UNY to work toward racial justice, which the Imagine No Racism initiative helps with.
- The Episcopacy Committee expressed their condolences to Bishop Webb and his family, as Bishop's mother-in-law passed away. Each year, the Episcopacy Committee presents the Bishop and his family with gifts as an expression of gratitude. This year, the Bishop received flowers to bring to Jodi and gift certificates for the whole family.
- Thursday ended with the Memorial Service with a message from the Rev. Corey Turnpenny, pastor of the Whitney Point UMC.

To see more coverage of the 2017 Annual Conference session, visit <https://tinyurl.com/AC18news>.