



Upper New York Annual Conference 2024
Daily Notes May 30, 2024

Conference Lay Leader Jessica Day opened the day acknowledging the land on which annual conference is held as traditional lands of the Onondaga Nation.

The Rev. Roselynn Kingsbury led a Native American land ceremony.

United Methodists of Upper New York claimed God's future through hope and joy during opening worship with praise, singing, communion, and a message by Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez focused on Philippians 3:13-14. The bishop called the conference to move forward into its God-given potential, naming the outcomes of the 2024 General Conference. Representatives of the conference's 12 districts brought forward 12 stones that became the worship center, as Joshua and the 12 tribes of Israel used 12 stones to build an altar as a symbol of their trust in God.

- [Click here](#) to view the Opening Worship booklet.
- [Click here](#) to watch the 2024 Annual Conference opening video.
- [Click here](#) to watch Opening Worship recording.

The Clergy Session and Laity Session took place after a brief lunch break. Laity heard reports from Conference Lay Leader Jessica White, the Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the Conference Commission on Religion and Race, and Conference Council on Youth Ministries and participated in table discussions on how the conference can better resource the local church.

Afternoon plenary

The Rev. Sue Russell and Dr. Scott Johnson shared how the Conference Commissions on the Status and Role of Women and Religion and Race will monitor the race, gender, and clergy or laity status of all speakers throughout the conference.

All equalization members were unanimously approved.

A motion to remove the Conference Leadership Team report from the consent calendar was not supported.

Conference Secretary Rev. Carolyn Stow removed "Recommendation from Commission on Equitable Compensation" from the consent calendar, as it was included in error.

The organizational motion was approved.

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Nominations: Ian Urriola presented the nominations report, as found in the May 28 report listed on the conference website. After nominations were taken from the floor, the body voted on and approved the report with the added names. The report with editorial updates will be published in the annual conference journal. The paper ballots for trustee nominations, as required by New York State, were distributed and collected, the results of which will be shared at a later plenary.

Advance Specials: The Rev. Bob Long, on behalf of the Rev. Jeff Childs, chair of the Conference Global Ministries team, presented the 2025 Conference Advance Specials, as listed on page 27 of the [2024 Pre-Conference Workbook](#). The body approved the list.

Victor Giso of First United Methodist Church East Greenbush spoke about the importance of including youth in the life and decisions of the church.

- [Click here](#) to watch Victor Giso's presentation.
- [Click here](#) to read Victor's transcript.

Peter Cook, executive director of the New York State Council of Churches, brought greetings.

Trustees: The Rev. Pamela Klotzbach, president of the conference board of trustees, shared updates on churches completing the legal processes for disaffiliation. The Rev. Dr. Sherri Rood, on behalf of the Cabinet, presented resolutions for church closures. Twelve churches were closed. The trustees report can be found on p. 99 of the [Pre-Conference Workbook](#).

Evening plenary

General Conference: Carmen Vianese and the Rev. Bill Mudge presented the Upper New York General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference delegation report. They named and celebrated the delegates and shared an [overview of decisions made](#) during the April 23 to May 3 gathering in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Carmen Vianese shared that bishop elections are unlikely at the upcoming Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference and that the Upper New York delegation will not be endorsing any candidates for the episcopacy. Vianese's motion to close nominations was supported.

Child Victims Act costs: On behalf of the Conference Leadership Team and Child Victims Act Cost Task Force, Dr. Scott Johnson and the Rev. Dr. Stephen Cady presented a recommendation that all past and future costs from judgments, settlements, and legal fees incurred to resolve CVA complaints be allocated first from the unrestricted reserved funds of the Upper New York Board of Pensions and Health Benefits and that the amount of funding from this source be limited to the unrestricted reserves in excess of pension liability.

Johnson spoke about the importance of restorative justice, and Cady shared that three cases are still open. Conference Treasurer Bob Flask reported that the conference is liable for \$8.2 million.

An amendment was proposed that reserve funds be restored via an adjustment to the sale of closed church properties formula, with 50 percent of those funds going to the repayment until repaid.

The amendment was not supported.

The recommendation was supported.

The resolution can be found on p. 28 of the [Pre-Conference Workbook](#).

Pension and health benefits: Karyn McCloskey presented the recommendations of Board of Pension and Health Benefits report. She shared that the United Methodist General Conference passed a [new clergy retirement plan](#) that will go into place January 2026. The board will host information sessions in the leadup to the change.

McCloskey presented three recommendations: One to allow clergy to claim pension, severance, or disability income as a housing exclusion; a second to increase the Pre-82 Past Service Annuity Rate by 3 percent for 2025, increasing it from \$691 to \$712; and the third to adopt the 2025 Comprehensive Funding Plan. The board's recommendations can be found on p. 24 in the Pre-Conference Workbook and the [online updates to the workbook](#). The recommendations were supported.

John Fulton was granted a moment of privilege to speak about the importance of health care and retirement accounts.

Budget: Conference Council on Finance and Administration Chair Holly Roush presented the 2025 ministry budget.

An amendment was made to return the funding to Camp and Retreat ministries to 2022 levels. The amendment was referred to CFA and the budget discussion and vote was postponed to a later plenary session.

[Click here](#) for more information about Annual Conference, including stories, additional videos, and more.