

## Upper New York Annual Conference Report

By Stephen J. Hustedt, Director of Communications

Due to lingering COVID-19 concerns, the Upper New York Annual Conference gathered remotely for the second year in a row June 17- 19. The gathering took place through Zoom with meeting support and voting provided by GNTV. Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Mark J. Webb, presided.

The time began with Opening Worship, acknowledging that this has been a very challenging time to be the Church.

In her invocation of this Opening Worship service, the Rev. Rachel Dupont, said, “We have been challenged...we have been changed...Through it all, we pray and work for the new thing that God is doing. We are reaching new people, finding new ways to worship...though we are apart, we are together in prayer—courageously sharing God’s story.”

The full Opening worship service is available [here](#) and an article about the service is available [here](#).

Those gathered for Opening Worship then went their separate ways into the Laity and Clergy Sessions. While the Clergy Session is always closed, this year’s Laity Session was open to all laity across the Upper New York Conference through an open Zoom webinar. The full Laity Session is available [here](#) and individual videos shown during the session are available on the Conference website [here](#), along with many other tools for reporting on this year’s Upper New York Annual Conference.

Those gathered came back together following lunch on Thursday afternoon for the first full plenary. Following a practice vote, the Equalization Members list, Organizational Motion, and Consent Calendar all passed very quickly. The Leadership Report followed where it was again acknowledged that this has been a very challenging year and there are more challenges ahead, but there is also hope. Full coverage of the leadership report is available [here](#).

The body then heard from the Commission on Equitable Compensation and the Board of Pensions, passing the recommendations and resolutions brought through these reports. Full coverage of significant actions including these is available on the Conference website in the news archives available [here](#).

The body then began its work on Petitions and Resolutions. This work would occupy the rest of the body’s afternoon and evening, and it would continue again the following day. A full report on Petitions and Resolutions, including supported/unsupported and amendments is available [here](#). Recordings of all Upper New York plenary sessions are available [here](#).

The following morning began with devotions from the Hispanic/Latino Team, in Spanish. The full time of devotion is available [here](#).

Following the devotions and being called to order, the body continued its work on Petitions and Resolutions. This work paused for a time with UNYAC2021.7: Proposal to Form a Study Commission on the Readiness of UNY for Implementation of the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through

Separation, as it had been amended four times and there was some confusion about what the precise language was before a final vote.

As the language was clarified and made available to voting members of the Annual Conference, the body's work continued with the Trustees Report. Included in the report was the closing of churches and an update on New York State's Child Victims Act. A full report on the work of the Trustees is available [here](#).

As the body reconvened for its afternoon session, the correct language for UNYAC2021.7 had been distributed, and the first order of business was a vote.

Following the vote, the body was informed that the final resolution remaining, UNYAC2021.8: Transparency and Greater Participation of Annual Conference in Mission Planning, would be taken up after the rest of the afternoon's work was complete.

Work continued with the Nominations Report. Full coverage of the report and debate around nominations is available [here](#).

The work then shifted to the Conference Council on Finance and Administration Report and the 2022 Conference Budget. Full coverage on this work is available [here](#).

When the rest of the afternoon's work was complete, the body finished their work on their final resolution. Then they adjourned to take part in the Memorial Service. Full coverage of the Memorial Service is available [here](#) and the service can be viewed in its entirety [here](#).

The final day of the Upper New York Annual Conference began with a time of worship and celebration for the Juneteenth holiday. The full Juneteenth Service is available [here](#), and an article recapping the service is available [here](#).

In fact, with nearly all the voting complete, the final day of Annual Conference consisted mostly of celebrations. The body celebrated newly licensed Local Pastors, those completing Course of Study, Certified Lay Ministers, and Retirees. The recognition videos for those celebrated are available [here](#), and an article about the 80 Retirees (since 2019) is available [here](#).

Throughout the Upper New York Annual Conference, those attending had also been given the opportunity to donate to five funds. Descriptions and totals follow:

- Clergy Care Fund assists clergy who need financial support. Total: \$1,825.77
- Helping Hands Fund raises money to be used by the Upper New York Cabinet to assist congregants in need of financial support. Total: \$1,361.30
- Mission of Peace (MOP) is an annual journey of discovery and shalom to nations in our global community. It is sponsored by the Northeastern Jurisdiction Council on Youth Ministries. Total: \$1,716.77
- New Faith Communities work to create safe places for un-churched or de-churched people to explore their faith, consider what it means to follow Jesus Christ, and then practice discipleship together with new friends. Total: \$1,497.58
- UNY Mission Central HUB is a place for local churches to actively engage in outreach and disaster response ministries. Located inside the UNY Methodist Center, the HUB offers trainings for the Conference's Volunteer in Mission and Disaster Response teams and is also a place

where volunteers collect and assemble flood buckets, hygiene kits, school kits, and more. Total: \$6,014.01

Anyone can still donate to the funds by going [here](#).

The celebrations continued with the Setting of Appointments. The 2021 Clergy Appointments List is available [here](#) and will be updated as need.

Because COVID-19 prevented the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Upper New York Conference, those gathered online celebrated the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Upper New York Conference with stories and a video. The celebration video is available [here](#).

Before adjourning, there was a time of thanks for all those who made Annual Conference. While many were recognized, the time culminated in thanking the Rev. Jeff Hodge who would be moving on from serving as the Upper New York Annual Conference Secretary. Rev. Hodge is the only individual who has served this role since the founding of the Conference.

Although the Upper New York Annual Conference adjourned, the time of Celebration was not over because the final activity of the day was the Service of Commissioning and Ordination. During the service:

- The Rev. Heather Williams, UNY Co-Chair of the Order of Elders presented the three individuals who had been elected provisional members to be commissioned for the work of an elder: Olga E. Gonzalez, Santiago Sherry Lynn Mahar, and Jennifer K. Piatt.
- The Rev. Carrie Wolfe, UNY Co-Chair of the Order of Deacons presented the person who has been elected provisional members to be commissioned for the work of deacon, Deborah M. Coatsworth.
- Rev. Wolfe also presented the two individuals to be ordained for the work of a deacon and who have been elected full members, Brian P. Lothridge and Jessica Faye Glaser.
- Rev. Williams also presented four individuals to be ordained for the work of an elder and who have been elected full members, Cheryl Ann Brown, Jongdeok Park, Cindy L. Schulte, and Rachel Erin Stuart.

Full coverage of the Service of Commissioning and Ordination is available [here](#) and the service can be watched in its entirety [here](#).

Membership stands at 134,627, decrease of 5,917 members from 2019.

Worship attendance stands at 91,167, increase of 52,040, due to significant improvements and launches of online worship in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Church school attendance stands at 7,082, down 3,165 from 2019.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2020 412, down 794 from 2019.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2020 12,805 down 3,190 from 2019.

Worshippers engaged in mission for 2020 12,329, down 1,910 from 2019.

(following are the full links in order if needed)

<https://vimeo.com/548985473>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/2021-annual-conference-opening-worship-now-is-the-time-to-courageously-shar>

<https://vimeo.com/564294564>

<https://www.unyumc.org/events/annual-conference-2021>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/2021-leadership-report-working-toward-a-vital-future-in-uny>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/stories>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/petition-and-resolution-results-at-the-2021-upper-new-york-annual-conferenc>

<https://www.unyumc.org/events/annual-conference-2021>

<https://vimeo.com/564822903>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/board-of-trustees-offers-updates-at-annual-conference>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/new-leaders-approved-for-2022>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/proposed-2022-budget-approved-at-annual-conference>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/uny-memorial-service-2021-reminds-mourners-of-the-comfort-of-jesus>

<https://youtu.be/u5pWgcyoCXg>

<https://vimeo.com/565022450>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/uny-conference-celebrates-juneteenth-virtually>

<https://www.unyumc.org/events/annual-conference-2021>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/retirees-honored-at-annual-conference>

[https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted\\_button\\_id=DCCESQUFC7FU](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=DCCESQUFC7FU)

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/appointments>

<https://vimeo.com/538771839>

<https://www.unyumc.org/news/article/commissioners-and-ordinands-inspired-to-chase-god>

<https://youtu.be/yg2rZku0t3o>