

## **Annual Lay Report for the 2019 Annual Conference**

Presiding Bishop Tracy S. Malone

It is becoming more and more difficult for me to share the business of conference when so much is available online. If you check the Conference website ([eocommunications@eocumc.com](mailto:eocommunications@eocumc.com)) you can find the following: statistics of the event, the budget for 2020, which churches were closed, amount of collections gathered including the Bishop's Offering, the Episcopal Address and all 6 worship addresses, and more. So, for me to merely repeat those events and speeches seems redundant. However, if you'll allow me, I'd like to give you a few impressions from one lay person's point of view (other Lay delegates were Steve Wrobel, Doug Rohde, and Craig Eppler).

The retirement service, Monday night, was sad for our Mentor delegation as we experienced the loss to retirement of our Pastor, Kurt Landerholm. Even though we knew from the start that Kurt would retire after his seventh year with us, it seemed way too soon! The good news is that Quincy Wheeler will stay with us, as will Bev Wrobel, although she will be only half time. We are receiving a great gift from the Bishop as our new Senior Pastor is Sondra Snode who will be "official" on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Many of you already know Sondra as she has been our District Superintendent for the last several years (and Chair of the Bishop's Cabinet).

In the Monday morning session, our dear friend, Pastor Ronald Eppler, was remembered in the Memorial Service. So meaningful for all of us, as Craig and Laurie could be present for that recognition. Twenty-eight clergy were remembered, 15 spouses and 5 lay who had served the conference in special ways. Sadly, I missed this service as Doug and I were returning from my 60<sup>th</sup> college reunion in Middlebury, Vermont, and didn't arrive until just before the first ballot. You see one of the tasks of the Conference every four years is to elect six representatives from both the clergy and the lay members for the next General Conference, plus six more each for the Jurisdictional Conference, and 5 alternates each to cover both conferences. Whew! After the 15<sup>th</sup> ballot Lay completed their task (Clergy were faster this year!).

All of the sermons and remarks were inspiring, but if you listen/watch any of them, please don't miss Bishop Gregory Palmer's address. He will inspire you with his uplifting message, "Increasing our Faithfulness". The theme was from Scripture "we have everything we need". All the sermons and remarks were centered on being in union, strength in community, appreciating our differences but growing stronger through them. Wonderful goals that all applauded but not always seen in the discussions of the petition and resolution voting. Besides the worship services, business meetings and voting, the Bishop presented us with a three-part learning seminar, "Living into our East Ohio Conference Vision" presented by Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Jr. In his three presentations, Dr. Powe stressed being disciples, being God's agents and being bold and courageous leaders. The ministry fair occurred on Wednesday evening, but Doug and I were worn-out by that time!

Another responsibility of the conference delegates is to act on petitions and resolutions that are placed before the body. Petitions are sent to General Conference to be voted on their agenda. Of the four presented only one passed, #2019-3, "Establish Process for Reinstatement of Provisional Membership". Resolutions on the other hand do not need to be world-wide in scope as the General Conference represents all countries with Methodist churches., these resolutions are more particular to our own region. Five resolutions were presented and two of them passed with a 2/3rds majority vote: Resolution 2019-01, "To Rebuild, Reclaim their Christian community: Church"; and Resolution 2019-02," Culture of Call Sunday." A standing vote was necessary for the resolutions that failed, and the house was evenly divided. This is what I take home from the conference: much, much talk of unity and compassion for others' views, but when it came down to doing something that would actually help bring us together as a United Methodist Church, it appears to me that we are very far away from reconciling the issues of human sexuality. A real sadness for me.

Well, the good news is that Lakeside is still beautiful even with all the rain – Monday the dock was awash with waves, but that didn't stop delegates from shopping, going to the Cokesbury bookstore, and eating gelato. It was also a joy for Doug and me to be back at Idlewyld with many of the same delegates in this lovely BandB. Time to renew old friendships! I am grateful that I can attend this Conference, yearly.

Submitted by Sally S. Carr, June 2019

Date of next Annual Conference: June 15-20,2020.

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