



*Nov. 18, 2019 - Special Report from First Church Lay
Members to the Annual Conference*

November 18, 2019

SPECIAL REPORT ON ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPECIAL SESSION

Submitted by: Martha Rudy and Nancy Pendergrass, Lay Members to Annual Conference, on behalf of your other representatives present: Elaine Moy-Johnson, S.E. Brick, Kathy Cheney-Egan, and Phil Crihfield (Lay Members to AC from First Church), and Jack Hinz, Tom Butler, and Dennis Moore (Lay Members to AC representing the Chicago-Northwestern District)

The basketball gym at Kishwaukee College was the site for the Special Session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference held Saturday, Nov. 16. in Malta, Illinois. The session opened with prayer, followed by remarks from our bishop. With her voice thick with emotion, Bishop Sally Dyck acknowledged the harm the UMC is doing to LGBTQ clergy and colleagues. "We see you, we love you, and our hearts break at the damage that the church is doing in forcing shame, isolation, silence, and fear in your lives right now," she said in her opening Episcopal Address. "I will not facilitate or move on trial complaints against LGBTQ clergy or clergy who perform same-gender weddings." Applause filled the gym.

Given that the "Traditional Plan" approved at the Special Session of the General Conference in St. Louis in February, 2019 is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2020 and will bring with it harsher penalties for clergy deemed to have violated The Book of Discipline, we think it is important to know that our Bishop Sally will not be pursuing any trial complaints against LGBTQ clergy and/or those clergy performing same-gender weddings, and we support her fully in this decision (not to mention that a church trial costs anywhere between \$100-150,000!).

The main purpose of this Special Session of our Annual Conference was to discuss and approve the 2020 Northern Illinois Conference budget and the formula used to calculate each church's apportionments. These two items were presented by members of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, and your Lay Members to Annual Conference will report on them at a separate time.

The other agenda item that we want to share with you was hearing a report from the Exploration Team that was created by action of the Annual Conference in

June 2019. The 27-member team of laity and clergy is led by Rev. Chris Winkler. The team has drafted the following statement:

Introduction: The 2019 Special Session of General Conference passed the Traditional Plan that becomes effective on January 1, 2020. In anticipation of the 2020 General Conference, we seek to provide an identity and covenant statement that defines us as a Conference. This statement will help guide us as we make decisions on our future, and as we assess potential partners in ministry.

Vision Statement/Motto: "Opening Hearts, Opening Minds, Opening Doors"

Mission Statement: The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Identity Statement: Following the witness of Jesus, we, the Northern Illinois Conference, are committed to becoming entirely inclusive and welcoming. We foster and celebrate the dignity and sacred worth of all of God's creation. By the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ's love, we commit ourselves to grow in love and understanding for one another, and commit to breaking down the walls that divide us. We hold the fullness of Wesleyan theology as a cornerstone of our faith, including the receiving and testing of Holy Scriptures through the lens of reason, tradition, and experience. We seek to do no harm, to do good, and to stay in love with God.

Covenant Statement: Therefore, we covenant to the following:

- ❖ To live into our baptismal vows to resist evil and injustice and oppression in all forms, including racism, sexism, and every abuse of power and privilege.
- ❖ To affirm the full participation of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities.
- ❖ To affirm the sacred worth of LGBTQIA+ persons, and commit to being in ministry together.
- ❖ To eliminate discriminatory language and the restrictions and penalties of marriage and ordination in the Book of Discipline regarding LGBTQIA+ persons, and stand united in resisting trials and punishments.
- ❖ To affirm the right and responsibility of clergy to discern, counsel, and officiate for marriages.
- ❖ To engage in acts of justice, grace, mercy, kindness, compassion, and reconciliation.
- ❖ To affirm that God works in and through community and acknowledge that Jesus welcomes all people as beloved children of God.
- ❖ To embody and exemplify the best practices of our historic Methodist faith, including John Wesley's emphasis on grace, and to continue the practice of an open table.

Feedback on the draft may be sent to explorationteam@umcnic.org. The Exploration Team will also be hosting conversations about the statement in February. Register to participate at umcnic.org/calendar. We hope you will send feedback regarding this statement to the exploration team, even if it is a short

message, and that you will keep Bishop Sally in your prayers as we head into 2020.

After passage of the 2020 budget and apportionment formula, the Special Session adjourned. If you have any questions or would like to know more about the session, the conference budget, or the apportionment formula, there will be a Lunch and Learn session in early 2020 where you can learn more about these topics, including where our apportionment dollars go and what good works they do (and they do a lot!).

Peace.

Please contact [Nancy Pendergrass](#) or [Martha Rudy](#) with any questions or comments.

Contact

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