

DAILY PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL SESSION

OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY

March 16, 2019

Brookdale Community College
Lincroft, NJ

GATHERING

The conference praise band gathered the congregation with praise songs. They ended with a prayer of invocation.

WORSHIP

Worship opened with the reading of John 6:1-13. Bishop Schol introduced the guest preacher, Rev. John Edgar to the congregation explaining that Rev. Edgar started an urban ministry in Columbus, OH, at the Church for All People, which began as a free store.

Rev. Edgar began his sermon by quoting the opening lines of Charles Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities," which says, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." He was convinced that these words describe our church at this time. He also stated that he is convinced that there has never been a better time to be the Church, the time to reach out to all people in all situations. Rev. Edgar went on to explain how The Church for All People began as a free store. He related this to Genesis 1, explaining that God created it all and made it abundantly and that we are supposed to share it all. This is exemplified in the John 6 reading about feeding the five thousand. He went on to explain we live in a time of divine economy. This became the foundation of The Church for All People, and this church has become one of the most diverse church in our denomination. Rev. Edgar told success stories of some of the people and missions of the church. He kept stressing that when you give the best you have, no matter how meager your best may seem, God will do something with it. With all his success stories, Rev. Edgar kept emphasizing that even in the midst of all the challenges facing our church right now, there is still no better time to continue to be the church.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Bishop Schol introduced Lan Wilson as the new director of worship for Greater New Jersey. Lan introduced the conference band members.

Bishop Schol introduced Rev. Dave Wiley as the conference secretary, the District Cape Atlantic Lay Leader, Carolyn Pendleton and Bishop Alfred Johnson. All these people joined Bishop Schol up on the dais.

REOPEN GENERAL AND JURISDICTIONAL DELEGATE NOMINATION PROCESS RESOLUTION

Bishop Schol invited Rev. Tom Lank forward to present the Reopen General and Jurisdictional Delegate Nomination Process for vote.

SET THE BAR

Rev. Dave Wiley made a motion to set the bar of the conference.

RULE OF ORDER

A question was raised about the legality of the suspension of rules. Bishop Schol ruled that to suspend the rules was in order. This decision was challenged.

The challenge quoted from Robert's Rules which states, "policies and procedures not having to do with the meeting procedure during the meeting are not able to be suspended. They can be changed by rescinding them or amending them, but suspending them is all about meeting procedure, not about how the organization operates day to day." The challenge is that the suspension is about changing our rules of order. Bishop Schol explained to the conference body that the suspension was in order because it dealt with something that was happening within the body today.

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VOTE

Bishop Schol called for a vote to allow for the suspension of the rules. The vote passed.

Rev. Lank made a motion for the original resolution.

AMENDMENT

Creed Pogue made a substitution by amendment by changing lines 15 and 16 to state: "Resolve to allow that any late laity nominations received from today until one week before the 2019 Annual Conference have their biographical information distributed at Annual Conference when they arrive." The amendment did not carry.

The original resolution passed.

VIDEO

A video interviewing GNJAC delegates from the 2019 General Conference Special Session was shown.

GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019 DELEGATE REPORT

The 2019 delegation presented their report, explaining all that they had done before and during the special session of General Conference. The body was reminded that we are a global church and the challenges this brings with all our diversity. Also challenging was the ability of any United Methodist being allowed to submit legislation to the General Conference as well as legislation involving the handling of such by both the Central Conference and our General Conference. It was stated that two petitions regarding clergy pensions passed. These would be functional no matter which church plan passed. It was explained that the One Church Plan failed by a margin of 75 votes and the Traditional Plan was approved in a slightly amended form. It was explained that some parts of the Traditional Plan were questioned as to being Constitutional, but the entire plan was voted on, flaws and all, and would be passed on to the Judicial Council to determine what is or is not constitutional. Details of the expectations on Bishops and Boards of Ordained Ministry were outlined as well as penalties that would be invoked on clergy if they did not follow the expectations of the Book of Discipline. Legislation was approved allowing for disaffiliation was also voted on but was questioned about constitutionality. Details as to what would be the local churches' responsibilities and what the Annual Conference's responsibilities would be were explained. The deadline for disaffiliation is 2023. It was explained that in some ways, not much has changed but in other ways many things have changed as is being reflected in our churches and pews. The report ended by confessing that our decisions communicate, whether intended or not, to all people of the LGBTQ+ community that they are still considered second class citizens in our church and that they have to accept this or leave. Our decisions sent a signal to every young person who is struggling with his or her identity that the United Methodist Church is not a safe place for them to work this out. We must acknowledge that we have increased the harm to LGBTQ persons, and we must repent. The delegation ended by saying to the LGBTQ+ community within our church: we see you, we love you, and we are so sorry that we harmed you, you are worth more than that, and ask that you please forgive us. Our work as a delegation is finished; the work as a Greater New Jersey family is just beginning.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CF&A

Jack Sharf and Bob Dietz presented the Policy Recommendations from Council on Finance and Administration report and made a motion for its approval.

MOTION

Heidi Hibbs made a motion to move this back to CF&A. The motion did not pass.

AMENDMENT

A friendly amendment was made to line 44, after 'retirement,' to add "or reassignment or appointment." The amendment was modified to take out the word 'retirement' and add 'any collection a congregation cares to take for clergy.' The friendly amendment was accepted as an editorial change.

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MOTION

Rev. Bob Costello made a motion to separate the original motion into nine separate motions to discuss each policy separately. The motion was too close to call.

MOTION

A motion was made to move all that is before the body to the May Annual Conference. The motion passed.

REVISED BUDGET REPORT

Judy Colorado presented the revised budget report and made a motion for its adoption.

MOTION

Rev. Bob Costello made a motion to delete the \$110,000 dollars on the last line of the budget.

MOTION

Creed Pogue made a motion to have a paper ballot vote for Rev. Costello's motion. The motion did not carry.

VOTE

Rev. Costello's motion did not carry.

The original motion passed.

GNJ WAY FORWARD TEAM RESOLUTION

Bishop Schol introduced Rev. Sang Won Doh who presented the GNJ Way Forward Team Resolution. Rev. Doh made a motion for its approval.

AMENDMENT

Robin Mitchell moved an amendment by addition, starting at line seven, adding, "Whereas we continue to be a part of the global United Methodist Church, and not just a United States denomination; and whereas a significant minority of delegates were deprived of their right to participate in the proceedings of the special session of the General Conference. Be it resolved that this team includes in its work a search for ways to insure the participation of our global delegates." The amendment did not pass.

AMENDMENT

Tom O'Hearn moved for an amendment by addition to add at line 25, "members of the delegation from our GNJAC to the 2020 NE Jurisdictional Conference not already listed above." The amendment did not pass.

AMENDMENT

Rev. Jessica Brendler Naulty made a motion for a friendly amendment by deletion to line 13 to strike 'per paragraph 161.G of the Book of Discipline.' The amendment passed.

AMENDMENT

Shawn Grant made a motion for an amendment to line 16 to read, "share our hopes and concern with United Methodist's around the world." The amendment passed.

AMENDMENT

Rev. David Werhle made a motion for an amendment to line 17 to add a fourth point to read, "abide by the Book of Discipline." The amendment did not pass.

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AMENDMENT

Creed Pogue made a motion to make an amendment by addition to line 25 adding, “with full respect to paragraph 603.2 of the BOD, the GNJAC respectfully request the presiding Bishop give the strongest possible consideration to moving the 2020 Annual Conference to a date in June to provide some time for reflection and discernment after General Conference.” The amendment did not pass.

The original resolution passed.

BISHOP SCHOL PRESENTATION

Bishop Schol opened with prayer. He then reminded the congregation of the tension and dissention that was part of the early Methodist history and how through tension and dissention we have grown into the church we are today. Bishop emphasized that it is our faith in Jesus Christ that will lead us into the future. He stated that no matter what votes happen at conferences, it does not mean that hearts change or that transformation happen. We need to continue to work for change and remember that votes are not the destination. He mentioned the gift of diversity we have in GNJAC. Bishop gave a brief summary of what happened at the special session of General Conference, stating that the Simple Plan had 40% approval, the One Church Plan was defeated by only a narrow margin, the Traditionalist Plan did pass, which created for some, a sense of victory but for others a deep pain. He believes that no one came away from General Conference feeling like a winner. Bishop went on to share with the body about the tension that the church in Africa is now experiencing. He talked about the challenges of being a ‘big tent’ global church and how, often, culture is stronger than policy. He reminded the body that a great challenge before us is to recognize just because we put policies in place does not change hearts or transform minds. He went on to say that if people don’t feel valued or if their beliefs are not taken seriously, this creates a counter culture.

A scripted conversation was presented over the issue of homosexuality, representing two sides of beliefs of the topic, showing how these types of conversation do not change minds or hearts.

Bishop then encouraged that people share stories with one another of their experiences on the issue of homosexuality. Several people shared their stories with the body. Bishop Schol challenged the body to discuss with each other what, if anything, has changed since the General Conference. Several people shared their answers. Bishop encouraged people to share answers of all perspectives.

Bishop directed the body to discuss with one another what is it that your congregation needs to keep moving forward to transform the world, to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations. Several people shared their responses.

Bishop Schol shared how concerned he is about young people who are exploring their sexuality, recognizing that this group has one of the highest suicide rates and how this is where the church can be of help. He spoke of the resources available on the conference website. Bishop asked the congregation to have their churches not make any rash decisions or disengage. This is the time to engage and get involved and be present.

Bishop stated that he would not lead GNJ in going after LGBTQ people who are serving in our congregations, faithfully and well. That would only do more harm in the midst of our tension and dissention. He will be asking how we, in different contexts, honor different theological understandings and congregations. He wants our pastors to be pastoral in the context in which they find themselves. He wants the body to let any laity who are serving in your church who are of the LGBTQ they matter to him, to God and that they are wonderfully made. He wants them to know he welcomes them and together, with God, we will tackle all issues.

Bishop Schol spoke about how he is the Bishop of the whole church and wants gatherings like today to be a safe place for all. He called all to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to create a safe space around ourselves for all people to feel safe.

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CLOSING

Bishop Schol invited the people who would be anointing to come forward. He blessed the oil for anointing and offered it to any who needed healing. The conference praise band offered songs while people anointed one another.

BENEDICTION

Bishop Alfred Johnson led the congregation in 'Happy Birthday' to Bishop Schol. Bishop Johnson then offered the benediction.