

2016 North Alabama Annual Conference

Report to Trussville FUMC

6/8/2016



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The North Alabama Conference gathered at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville from June 5-7, 2016, for a 48-hour worship experience. During the three days together, North Alabama United Methodists heard challenging speakers, received ministry reports from Conference teams, recognized Glory Sightings from mission agencies and celebrated the collection and distribution of more than 70,000 new books as part of the Conference's Bazillion Book Drive. The theme of this year's mission-driven Annual Conference was "Harvest: Sharing Christ." The theme scripture comes from John 15:4-5, "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." A

mass choir of almost 200 people from various congregations throughout North Alabama led music for the Sunday evening Opening Worship.



Rev. Jorge Acevedo, Lead Pastor at Grace Church, a multi-site United Methodist congregation in Southwest Florida, preached and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett led a service of Holy Communion. Throughout the Conference special guest Rev. Jorge Acevedo challenged the Conference on faithfulness and fruitfulness. He began by asking, “Could it be that our lack of fruitfulness in the United Methodist Church is a direct result of our lack of faithfulness?” Addressing the Conference each day, he encouraged local congregations to reach out beyond their walls and shared examples of ministries from Grace Church. He also discussed the importance of discipleship noting, “In creating a culture of discipleship in your church, the systems you create determine the harvest you will get.”



Bishop Young Jin Cho of the Virginia Annual Conference led a Prayer experience each morning. Bishop Cho noted, “You have to pray in order to learn how to pray.” He not only taught about the importance of spiritual disciplines but also led Conference attendees in times of prayer -- both verbal and silent prayer. On Tuesday he underlined the importance of spiritual growth in church leaders and

congregations noting, “Leadership has two important component: servant leadership and spiritual leadership.” He urged each person to spend at least one hour a day practicing the spiritual disciplines. At the conclusion of his Tuesday morning presentation, Bishop Wallace-Padgett asked for a commitment from those gathered to spend an hour in spiritual disciplines. This request was made in the form of a motion, which the Conference unanimously adopted.

Worship

During the Memorial Service on Monday afternoon, the Conference gave thanks for those clergy and clergy spouses who have died in the last year. Those people are listed at the end of this report.

On Monday evening, the Conference held the annual Service of Licensing, Commissioning and Ordination at Trinity UMC. During the Service, 18 new Local Pastors received their licenses, six Provisional Elders and four Provisional Deacons were Commissioned, one Associate Member was Commissioned and one Deacon and eight Elders were Ordained. Two of the new Pastors receiving their licenses may sound familiar.

- Joseph Riddle is the son of Hal (TFUMC Layleader) and Joy Riddle (grandparents: Les and Linda Riddle; Teddy and Imelda Gilmer; and the late Ruth Riddle). Joseph will be serving as the Senior Pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC in the Northwest District.
- Will Etheridge is the son of Bill and Becki Etheridge (our new Senior Pastor). Will has been called to serve Lacey’s Spring UMC in the Northeast District.

The total list is attached to the end of this report.

Business

During times of business, the Conference

- Heard Reports from the four priority areas of North Alabama including Ministry with the Poor, Church Health, Ethnic Ministries and New Church Development.

- During the Ministry with the Poor report, the Conference Celebrated the success of the Conference Mission Project the Bazillion Book Drive through which North Alabama Congregations have collected or purchased more than 70,000 books and distributed them to families and organizations working with under-resourced children 3rd grade and younger. During the Report Rev. Sally Allocca noted that the Conference had collected at least a “half bazillion” books and that the next step is to continue to build relationships with agencies and families in local communities.
- Adopted [a Conference Budget for 2017](#) of \$10,155,717. This is a 0% increase over the current year’s budget.
- Adopted a [new Conference Budget Funding Method](#). Each local church will be asked to give a tithe (10%) of its unrestricted receipts.
- Accepted a report from the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits which established no increase in Healthflex premiums. They remain \$698/mo individual & \$698/mo dependent for a family total of \$1396/month.
- Heard [a report for the United Methodist Women](#) on the organizations 150th Anniversary.
- Heard a report from Executive Director of Sumatanga Camp and Conference Center Rev. Lee Padgett who noted the growth of camp participation and the purchase of additional acres to expand camp programming.
- Heard a report from Conference Director of Campus Ministry Rev. Wade Langer on how North Alabama Wesley Foundations are reaching young people with the Gospel.

- Welcomed the new Executive Director of Church Health Rev. Bob Alford.
- Recognized the recipients of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award. The clergy award went to [Rev. Robert Lancaster](#). The laity award went to [Carol Gargus](#), a member of Clearbranch UMC. For the first time, the Conference also awarded a youth Denman award. That went to [Brett Staggs](#), a member of the Gathering Place UMC.
- Rev. Stephen Benefield, the Conference Statistician, presented the Statistician's Report noting that many of the numbers were not good. On a more positive note Rev Benefield reported that 1,964 people were baptized and an average of 64,679 Christ followers gathered weekly in North Alabama churches during 2015 for worship. Benefield stated, "We're the Church! We worship a Savior whose greatest victory started out looking like a sad failure." He further challenged the conference to "Pray about what 131, 229 United Methodists can do!"
- The Board of Ordained Ministry recognized the 20 clergy who are retiring this year. They also shared the Board's new focus of recruiting the best and the brightest clergy to serve in North Alabama. They ended the report encouraging congregations to continue to recognize the gifts and graces of those who show signs of God's call into ministry.
- Rev. Marcus Singleton presented a report from Black Methodists for Church Renewal. He noted, "The theological rationale for BMCR is that God expects us to vigilantly pursue and reestablish justice on earth as it is in heaven."
- Adopted 3 Resolutions through the Consent Calendar including a [Resolution Concerning Climate Change](#), a [Resolution Concerning Closure of DMV Offices in Alabama](#) and a [Resolution Concerning Refugees](#).

- Discussed two additional resolutions.
 - [A Resolution Supporting Economic Interdependence between Israel and the Palestinians](#) was not adopted by a vote of 177 yes to 308 no.
 - [A Resolution to Terminate Federal Funds to Planned Parenthood](#) was tabled until next year by a vote of 248 to 149.

- Received [a creative report from the Ethnic Ministries Team](#) which outlined a myriad of programs the team has to discover, develop and deploy spiritual leaders.

- Recognized the recipient of COSROW's Louise Branscomb Barrier Break Award Rev. RG Wilson-Lyons.

- Heard a report from the United Counseling Board thanking Rev. Sheri Ferguson for serving as Executive Director for the last 11 years. Board chair Rev. Julie Holly also introduced incoming Executive Director Rev. Monica Harbarger.

- Viewed [a video report](#) about North Alabama's Superannuate Homes ministry.

- Gave thanks for the ministry of the 9 churches which are closing this year. They include the following:
 - Central District: Clear Springs UMC
 - Cheaha District: New Bethel UMC
 - Mountain Lakes District: Brooklyn UMC
 - Northwest District: Muscle Shoals UMC, Danville UMC and Priceville UMC
 - South Central District: Central Park UMC

- Southeast District: Pleasant Hill
- Southwest District: Shelton Chapel

- Celebrated [the report from New Church Development](#). Executive Director Dr. Richard Hunter noted that in 2015 the North Alabama Conference started 21 new communities of faith and in 2016 the Conference will start 34 new communities of faith. As the team's report conclude, Bishop Wallace-Padgett led the Conference in praying over 31 new church planters.

- Conference Lay Leader Steve Lyles presented the Laity Address, during which he encouraged each person to pray for and share the message of Jesus with someone they meet.

- At the conclusion of the Laity Address, Lyles made a motion for the North Alabama Conference to endorse Dr. Robin Scott as an Episcopal Nominee. The motion was approved. New Bishops will be elected during the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in mid-July.

- The General Conference delegation provided [an overview of General Conference through a video](#) featuring Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett. Following the video, delegation members were available for questions related to General Conference.

- Throughout Conference, participants heard Glory Sightings from various Conference Advance Specials including:
 - Glen Addie – a mission congregation in Anniston re-launching later this month as New Life UMC.
 - United Methodist Children's Home – which shared about their scholarship homes and higher education experience they provide young men and women

- Upper Sand Mountain Parish – a ministry on Sand Mountain of nine congregations reaching out to the area through a variety of ministries and services
- United Methodist Homes of Alabama and Northwest Florida – which shared about the exciting change Fairhaven in Birmingham is undergoing as it converts to a household model of care.
- The Society of St. Andrew – which shared about how volunteers gleaning fields helps provide food to hungry people.
- Noah’s At Club – told the story of how one Birmingham church, Wilson Chapel UMC, grew its ministry to children through offering evening art classes each week.

During the Sending Forth service, Bishop Wallace-Padgett [fixed the clergy appointments](#) for the next year. It was also announced that the 2017 North Alabama Annual Conference will meet June 4-6, 2017 in Huntsville.

- See more at: <http://www.umcna.org/postdetail/4990982#sthash.xNtFkDe8.dpuf>

Newly Licensed Local Pastors

- Jeremy Auvil
- Krel Buckelew
- Gary Campbell
- Hill Carmichael
- Patricia Copeland
- Lula Dobbs



- Will Etheridge
- Henry Everitt
- Joshua Garmany
- Elliott Gordon
- Nancy Harper
- Christopher Powell
- Scott Railey
- Joshua Rains
- Joseph Riddle
- Wes Savage
- Reid Turner
- Andrew Yarnell

Newly Commissioned Provisional Elders

- Henry N. Gibson
- Benjamin Patrick James
- Glenn R. Mize
- Sarah Wilcox Smoot
- Terry Scott Smyth
- Thomas G. Webster



Newly Commissioned Provisional Deacons

- Adam E. Burns
- Kenneth Thomson Chastain
- Clayton O. Grider
- Michelle Ozier Wallace

Newly Commissioned Associate Member:

- Hunter W. Vardaman III

Newly Ordained Elders:

- Stephen R. Benefield
- Patrick N. Gunn
- Jeffery Scott Hagood
- John Carl Hastings
- Victoria B. Hastings
- Amy L. Howard
- Jaime K. Pangman
- Angela D. Teel



Newly Ordained Deacon:

- Cheryl S. Hinnen

Pastors and Pastors Spouses who passed away this past year...

Mrs. Jeanette B. Andrews

Reverend James D. Bailey

Mrs. Aline Beaird Barnes

Mrs. Caryl Craven Bayne

Reverend George W. Benefield

Reverend Terry D. Bryson, Jr.

Reverend Dr. Robert Bob Leslie Caufield

Mrs. Sandra C. Champion

Mrs. Doris Mills Chesnutt
Mrs. Betty Fleeman Clayton
Mrs. Sandra H. Clotfelter
Reverend Allen R. Copeland
Reverend Dr. William E. Curl
Reverend William Keith Davis
Reverend Ernest Lee Dover
Mrs. Marcella F. Dover
Reverend Willard J. Frederick
Mrs. Betty May Gardner
Mrs. Brenda Lee Gargus
Reverend Lucius C. Guthrie
Mrs. Bernice Hallman
Reverend John W. Hallman, Sr.
Mrs. Maudetta G. Hamby
Reverend William Shelby Hart
Reverend Veria Delane Fox Johnson
Mrs. Nelda Hughes Laney
Reverend Lenox A. Mallory
Mrs. Jeanne Anne Willis Mason
Reverend James Fred Masters
Reverend Roger McCrary
Mrs. Barbara T. Miller
Reverend David Wayne Orange

Mrs. Patricia Jordan Peden

Mrs. Esther Mae Ridgeway

Mrs. Sarah Denman Satcher

Reverend Thomas Edwin Self, Sr.

Mrs. Edith Bush Shores

Mrs. Wylene Shubert

Mrs. Mary Ruth Smith

Reverend Donald E. Smitherman

Reverend David Tucker

Reverend Hillard C. Vance

Reverend Dr. Watt T. Washington

Mrs. Joy Elizabeth White

Reverend Charles Wood