



Upper New York Annual Conference 2024

Daily Notes May 31, 2024

The second day of Annual Conference opened with gathering music, prayer, and encouragement to participate in the prayer tent activity of writing a gift for ministry on a paper hand.

Episcopacy Committee: Carmen Vianese and the Rev. Bill Mudge, chairs of the Episcopacy Committee, thanked Bishop Héctor and his family for their leadership and support and presented them with the book *God's People: Rest, Work, Play* and his first episcopal crozier. The book is an initiative of the Conference's Compelling Preaching Initiative.

Episcopal address: In his episcopal address, Bishop Héctor called United Methodists of Upper New York to prioritize relationships, celebrating the Conference initiatives "Together in Prayer" and "Together in Worship" and the hundreds of stories shared in the past year of the good work of Upper New York churches. He praised members and leaders for adapting to new ways of being in mission and ministry and reminded the Conference of the importance of shared giving for shared mission. He also pledged to create resources for welcoming LGBTQ United Methodists for churches who would like them after the decisions of the 2024 United Methodist General Conference, and he named the importance of investing in young people and offered the stage to Destiny Hoerbelt, a member of [North Tonawanda First United Methodist Church](#). The bishop spoke about the hope and opportunity of this time in the church and world. "We need to witness a countercultural vision of hope in a time when a spirit of individualism and intolerance is destroying the testimony of the church and the fiber of our society. We have been called for such a time as this."

Monitoring report: The Rev. Sue Russell and Georgia Whitney gave the monitoring report from the previous day's session. Ninety percent of speakers were white, and a disproportionate number of speakers were clergy. Russell and Whitney encouraged underrepresented groups to speak up and celebrated the equitable number of laity and women registrants as well as having more youth registrants and speakers than in the past five years.

Memorial service: Clergy and clergy spouses who have died since May of 2023 were honored and celebrated during a Friday morning memorial service. The Upper New York Korean Caucus sang a song of preparation, and Dr. Scott Johnson, pastor at [Pendleton Center United Methodist Church](#), delivered a powerful sermon about weathering storms of grief, knowing that the God who knows what we need is always with us.

Learning session: During the 2024 Annual Conference learning session, Dr. Ashley Boggan encouraged United Methodists of Upper New York to “be more vile,” quoting John Wesley after his experience preaching in a field in Bristol, England, changed his understanding of what it means to be in ministry. She told the story of Thomas Blair, an inmate sentenced to death for the alleged crime of having a relationship with a man. John Wesley worked to “convince any reasonable man of his innocence” and then paid the 20 marks (an equivalent of more than 6,000 pounds today) to free Blair after he was found guilty. “I’m not saying that Wesley was defending the actions of Mr. Blair, but he also was not condemning him for them,” Dr. Boggan said. “But in order to ensure that Mr. Blair felt worthy of God’s love, of the love of a neighbor, and love of himself, Wesley was willing to risk all.” Learning history is necessary for moving forward, she said. “We have before us now, a moment to be hope-filled. To rethink who we want to be in the future. We have a chance to be proactive. To be prophetic. To be vile. The question is: Are we brave enough to do it?”

Afternoon plenary

Trustees elections: The three nominees for trustees were elected.

The Conference Council on Youth Ministries was granted a moment of privilege to present Bishop Tracy Malone Smith and Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez a CCYM sweatshirt.

Beth Broadway with Conference partner Interfaith Works shared about the Central New York nonprofit’s work to end racism and anti-Semitism, engage in food justice and refugee resettlement, and build understanding and community.

Budget: The amendment made on Thursday was withdrawn, and a new amendment presented to establish a special Sunday for an offering for campership advance special with Camp and Retreat Ministries producing materials to be used. Moved for a collaborative study to make UNY camps competitive with other camps in New York State. Bishop Héctor ruled the amendment out of order but tasked the study the Conference Board of Global Ministries, Conference Leadership Team, and Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries to bring to the 2025 Annual Conference.

The bishop presented the budget, and the budget was approved as presented. The budget can be found on page 20 of the Pre-Conference Workbook.

Equitable compensation: The Rev. Rich Weihing Jr. and Teddi Urriola presented the Equitable Compensation Report. Urriola shared that the minimum clergy salary offered by Upper New York Conference falls far below the average salary paid in New York State. The board presented six recommendations: a ~6 percent increase in base minimum salary, year of service increase from 1 percent to 1.5 percent per year, accountable reimbursement plan increase by \$750, pastors continue to receive \$500 for each extra church served, pulpit supply rate increase from \$90 to \$200 for first service

and \$75 to \$100 for each additional service, and no pastor salary decrease if maintaining current appointment. The board also reported that 42 clergy are paid at or below minimum salary.

The bishop asked if it wanted to vote on all 6 recommendations with one vote. A motion was made to instead vote on each recommendation individually. The motion was not supported.

An editorial amendment was made to recommendation 2 to cap the years of service at 25 years.

After questions were asked, an amendment was proposed to add “in a church or multipoint charge on the same day” to the end of recommendation 5. The amendment was supported.

An amendment was made to reduce the years of service increase back to just 1 percent (recommendation 2). The amendment was not supported.

After further questions, an amendment was proposed to recommendation 2 that the yearly service increment be changed to 1.25 in 2025 and 1.5 in 2026.

A motion to suspend the rules to vote on the amendment was not supported.

After questions and further discussion, the amendment was not supported.

The Conference voted on all recommendations as amended was supported.

The recommendations can be found on the [online updates to the 2024 Pre-Conference Workbook](#).

The bishop took a moment to thank the Conference’s communication’s team for their work.

Jurisdictional pool: Upper New York nominees to serve on the boards of general agencies were shared.

Discipleship Ministries: The Rev. David Martinez brought greetings from General Board of Discipleship and shared some of the educational grants they offer.

Resolution unyac2024.6 was withdrawn.

Commissioning service: A service of ordination was held Friday evening. Provisional members Justin Michael Hood, Christine Ann Mitchell, Danyal Mohammadzadeh, and Alicia Margaret Wood were commissioned for the work of an elder. Deaconess Constance Glover was commissioned, and Deaconess Josefina Nicholas-Tacadena transferred her relationship from the Philippines to the Upper New York Conference.

Bishop Tracy Smith Malone joined Bishop Héctor A. Burgos Núñez in the commissioning. Bishop Smith Malone delivered the message “The Joy of Hope,” based on the scripture Ephesians 1:15-23, encouraging the congregation to fan the flame we have already been given, to prayer Paul’s Ephesians prayer for every local church. “Don’t be apologetic for how your prophetic witness and presence will shift the atmosphere,” Bishop Smith Malone said. “You ought to shift the atmosphere, because the light of Christ that is reflected in your life has shown up and brightened up a room. It holds everyone accountable. If we all show up into a room and let the light shine, imagine what can happen in those places.”

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