

# GPconnect - AC 2015 Daily

June 12, 2015

Welcome to Wichita, Kansas, and the 2015 Great Plains United Methodist Conference Session!

The weather will be on the warm side, and there may be some thunderstorms. We hope you enjoy the city and its amenities, while taking in the grand worship, productive business and timely learning of this conference session.

Each day there will be a special edition of "GPconnect." You can expect to receive GPconnect Daily today through Saturday. Below you can find information on what attendees can expect during AC 2015, along with announcements and featured stories.

Watch the live streaming of the session at [www.greatplainsumc.org/livestream](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/livestream). See the [official schedule](#) to help make your viewing plans. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to view additional photos and stay current with everything AC 2015. Don't forget to use hashtag #GPUMC and #GPAC15. Have a great week.

## Great Plains celebrates 7 new elders at ordination service



The Great Plains Annual Conference ordained seven elders and commissioned 12 provisional elders, one provisional deacon and one associate member during its annual ordination service Friday, June 12, during the annual conference session in Wichita.

Bishop Scott J. Jones led the litany in which he posed the traditional questions about whether the ordinands believed they were called into ministry, confessed Jesus as their Lord and Savior, if they were persuaded that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain all things necessary for salvation, that they will be faithful in prayer and if they would pattern their lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

Attendees were treated to the dynamic vocals of the Saint Mark Choir and a dance routine by the Royal Women of Praise, the Dellrose United Methodist Church dance group, both of which are based in Wichita, Kansas.

Bishop Bruce Ough, of the Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area, presented the ordination message that we need to remember a key foundational truth: The lamb of God takes away the sin of the world.

Bishop Ough cited Pope Francis' push for unity. Bishop Ough said he believed the division over same-sex marriage and other issues redirects the emphasis that we should have on that top priority.

"Our spiritual resources become trapped and thwarted by disunity," Bishop Ough said.

He pointed out that genuine unity is difficult, pointing to scripture from Ephesians about gifts. He cautioned that while doctrinal standards should be upheld, we can't rely on doctrine to maintain unity of the church.

“This unity stuff is difficult, in part, because authentic unity is a spirit gift,” Bishop Ough said, continuing to emphasize that Paul understood that we do not create unity because it is a gift. Rather, we should be working to maintain unity.

Authentic unity is born because of Christ’s death on the cross, he said. Gentiles and Jews agreed on two key components were present: A leader or leaders filled with the Holy Spirit spoke of Jesus’ unconditional love and the community of believers agreed that the marginalized would never be forgotten or left behind.

“Is this not at the heart of our Methodist revival as well?” Bishop Ough asked.

The bishop said he is filled with hope for the United Methodist revival because of the candidates who later in the ceremony would be ordained.

“What I’m witnessing is a greater understanding that we do not have a corner on God’s grace,” Bishop Ough said. “The revival lives. We have a future with hope because the revival lives!”

He concluded by providing advice to the ordinands:

- Your identity and mission is the first proclamation.
- Pray daily for the Holy Spirit energy into your everyday ministry.
- Never forget the poor, the outcast, those on the margins who are not like you or me or us.
- Submit to the powerful and unifying gift of the Holy Spirit.

Provisional elders commissioned Friday night were:

- Chad Alan Boling
- Doug Gahn
- Christine Leah Jorgensen
- Molly Just
- Tyler Jack Kaufmann
- Mari Idell King
- Brenda Jane Kostner
- Lucas Frederick McConnell
- Kyle Nelson
- Kyle Edwin Reynolds
- Andrew James Scott
- Kim Serio

Hyemi Lee Jones was commissioned as a provisional deacon.

Kathleen Symes was recognized as an associate member.

Candidates ordained as full elders in the Great Plains Conference were:

- Timothy W Bever
- William Gepford
- Cathryn Jo Love
- Jo Mead
- Emily R Meckley
- Robert M. Walters
- Kathy Lynn Williams

## ‘Don’t be afraid. You will see Jesus.’



Stephanie Hixon, executive director of the JustPeace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation, encouraged annual conference attendees not to be afraid and to trust that they would see Jesus.

Hixon’s teaching time started with the sharing of the scripture from Matthew 28:5-8, about the women finding an angel at the tomb who told them that Jesus was not there.

She then recounted a story of when she boarded a plane. She was ready to rest and was joyful to find the seat next to hers to be empty. But then, flight attendants re-opened the door

to allow in a man who looked unkempt. Hixon said after the man was seated next to her, she stayed focused on her book inside the “bubble” she had created for herself.

As the plane traveled toward its destination, the man ordered wine and whiskey multiple times, and later, as she was reading, Hixon’s new neighbor, with alcohol clearly on his breath, commented on the title of the chapter she was reading and remarked how his wife would have enjoyed that content.

The man’s wife had died at the age of 42 of a heart attack. He asked Hixon if she knew how to organize a funeral.

In that moment, for that man, Hixon was providing Jesus’ presence to a man during a deep time of grief.

“So, we spent the plane ride planning a funeral and making sure someone was meeting him at the plane when he arrived,” Hixon said.

Hixon said United Methodists often are aware of deep circumstances of grief within their communities and that it is important to participate actively in breaking the cycle of grief and conflict.

“What happens is without giving adequate care to those suffering, those who have been harmed become those who harm others,” she said.

Hixon cited conflicts in Eastern Europe and Africa in which people impacted by the violence came together to attempt to sort through the roots of their differences.

“They were face to face, eye to eye, sometimes bullet to bullet,” Hixon said.

Such meetings rehumanize people, Hixon said. It’s a critical step in the reconciliation process.

Hixon said conflict transformation work includes understanding ourselves and being aware of how we engage another. She used the analogy of the iceberg, a circumstance in which you see the surface but there far more of the ice sits below the surface and can’t be seen.

Hixon said even if we have never experienced trauma, we may at some point, and we may encounter people who have endured pain but we don’t know it.

She reiterated the importance of holding to faith in such circumstances.

“Don’t be afraid,” she said. “You will see Jesus.”

## UMCOR thanks conference



*By Stuart Davis, pastor at H.O.P.E. Parish.*

Members of the 2015 Great Plains Annual Conference session spent Friday morning's plenary session voting for delegates, hearing reports, and — for members of the former Kansas East Conference — approving Resolution 15, which creates a committee “to determine the financial impacts of allowing any church to opt out of the group policy covering the churches” of the former conference.

Written and submitted to the body by Steven Kirkeby, lay member of Stillwell (Kansas) UMC, the resolution's intent is simply to see what might happen to the smaller churches covered by the current group policy if larger churches started finding other insurance. Resolution 14, which would have eliminated the group policy and required churches to find their own insurance effective Jan. 1, 2016, was withdrawn from consideration.

Lay members cast three ballots during the session, electing their fourth and fifth delegates to Jurisdictional Conference, Karelle Leeper and Robert Aderholt. Clergy members also cast three ballots, electing their first two Jurisdictional Conference delegates, Junius Dotson and Eduardo Bousson. Voters were encouraged by several speakers to remember that the delegations need to have a diversity of ethnicity, gender, geography and church size.

Tessa Zehring, chair of the nominations committee, presented a streamlined version of the report that featured just the changes to the committees, saving 12 pages per report. After noting the changes, Zehring also noted that the second piece of the committee is to work with other parts of the conference to find ways to offer training for those who serve on committees on the local church level. She also instructed the conference on the method for nominating persons — yourself or others, clergy or laity — on the Great Plains website. She reminded those who had been nominated but were not asked to serve starting July 1 that they might be contacted either later this year or for the next conference year.

Thodleen Dessources presented the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) report, thanking the conference for its giving — \$8,939,720 — over the 75 years that UMCOR has been “walking alongside communities right after disaster and also providing assistance and leadership for long-term recovery.” By the time she had listed the last of several ways of supporting UMCOR, the entire body was standing.

“Thank you for being love, being hope, and being UMCOR,” she said.

Southwest College's report was made by senior Lindsey Graber, who talked about how important the school's impact on her has been to her spiritual growth.

“I am thankful for the mentoring I've received at Southwest,” said Graber. “The support of both my home church and my college church, all those who have been there for me, and will be for me in my future seminary journey.”

Bishop Scott J. Jones commented that it seemed like just yesterday Graber was on Conference Council of Youth Ministries, “and now you are about to graduate from college.”

# Hispanic ministry celebrates call to minister to all cultures



"An expression of love and support" spread over the Hispanic Ministry Luncheon in Wichita First UMC Friday, June 12.

Corey Daniel Godbey, coordinator of Hispanic ministry for the Great Plains Conference, welcomed attendees with the sentiment to "love and support."

This was another opportunity for the Hispanic/Latino ministry to show and go above and beyond the call to faithfulness for the United Methodist Church. For all the brothers and sisters visiting Wichita for the 2015 Great Plains Annual Conference Session hosted in Wichita, Kansas, the luncheon was a refreshing moment to share and learn more about Hispanic ministry.

"Today's gathering was an expression of the love and support that our conference has for our ministry and with our Hispanic and Latino brothers and sisters" said Godbey.

"It is encouraging to look around the room at the persons that represent a movement of risk-taking missions. Together, as 'Partners for Hispanic Ministry,' we can accomplish great things in the name of Jesus," Godbey added in a heartfelt statement.

Throughout the years, Hispanic ministry has focused its attention to have all join God's action in the creation and development of a new reality and cultural unification in the United States before Jesus Christ. Through leadership, congregational development, immigration ministry and covering various critical social concerns, their ministry has reached many who needed it most throughout the years.

Friday's occasion was an occasion to celebrate the grace they've been blessed with in their ministry and a time to rejoice the lives they continue to touch with their efforts and hard work every day.

Hector and Sherri Sanchez from the Holton Evangel UMC and Tim Jepsen from Él Pueblo de Dios Pleasant Valley UMC Wichita, sponsored the luncheon and were pleased to have engaged "Though Many, One" under one roof and under the leadership of the Hispanic and Latino ministry on Friday.

Fed abundantly at the luncheon with a variety of Latin American dishes and entertained and lifted by spiritual songs provided by "Praise Band Nueva Evangelica" from the United Methodist Mission in Garden City, Kansas, attendees were delighted and shared a united mission while non-Spanish speakers learned one or two new Spanish words to add into their new vocabulary.

Attendees enjoyed one or two dances after the meal before they had to return to continue conducting business at the 2015 Great Plains General Session held a few blocks away from Wichita First UMC at the Century II convention center.

The Hispanic and Latino ministry mission is to bring together peoples of various cultures and traditions in the United States in a new generational spectrum reality. It is within this context that The United Methodist Church began to consider this ministry as more than an attempt to serve the rising Hispanic and Latino population.

The vision of the National Plan for Ministry is based on the experience of the Holy Spirit's power on the day of Pentecost, of a "Church for all the Nations, where all can hear the mighty works of God in their own tongue" (Acts 2:8).

For more information: [www.greatplainsumc.org/hispanicministry](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/hispanicministry)

# Empowering tomorrow's leaders today through campus ministry



The Campus Ministry lunch held Friday at the Hyatt Regency hotel attracted nearly 200 people. All 14 Great Plains campus ministers introduced themselves and were covered in prayer by the attendees. Students from Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas, led worship at the beginning and end. Videos were shown of students sharing their stories of the difference campus ministry has made for them and deepened their lives of faith. A panel of five campus ministers discussed their witness on across the Great Plains Conference which has four United Methodist colleges in addition to the ten campus ministries at other schools.

Great Plains coordinator of young leadership, the Rev. Nicole Conard shared an overview of activities over the past year.

“As the Great Plains Campus Ministry, we have lived into a new reality of learning and working together,” said Conard.

Highlights include participation by nine campus ministers in Imagine Next, a General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) student leadership development event held in Denver. Four campus ministers, three college students and Conard formed the bulk of a Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team that went to Haiti to envision the next steps of the conference partnership there. Six types of internships were launched for students to spend a summer exploring ministry.

“What matters most is the multitude of students who gather together in Christian fellowship to worship, have small groups, serve and form a community,” said Conard. “They grow in their faith and in leadership.”

The mission of all Great Plains campus ministries is to [invite, equip and send](#) students so that they may be transformed leaders who can change the world.

All attendees were encouraged to support campus ministry through prayer for the students and the ministers. Conard suggested lifting up a prayer whenever you see a sign, logo, T-shirt or game for a campus where we have a presence. Another way to help is to connect youth with the campus minister at their school, even before they start college. [Share student information online](#) or [download this flier](#) with more information.

“We want these students to return to your churches to be your next generation of leaders,” said the Rev. Jacob Cloud. “We want them to infuse your churches with their energy and excitement, with the kind of fire that comes from infinite ideas of the collegiate years.”

If you would like more information on the [Great Plains Campus Ministry](#), contact the Rev. Nicole Conard at [nconard@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:nconard@greatplainsumc.org).

View more photos from the [Campus Ministry lunch](#) on the [Great Plains Conference Facebook page](#).

## Friday plenary session involves debate on wide range of topics

The annual conference worked through resolutions on a wide variety of subjects, from health care coverage to laity equalization plans to fighting poverty to jurisdictional boundaries,

## Archives and History

Lona Dearthmont celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversaries for five churches:

- First United Methodist Church in Eureka, Kansas
- First United Methodist Church in Fort Scott, Kansas
- Monticello United Methodist Church in Monticello, Kansas
- Palmyra United Methodist Church in Palmyra, Nebraska
- Westmoreland United Methodist Church in Westmoreland, Kansas

## Foundations Report

Anita Crisp, executive director of the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation, shared how assets of the foundation have grown over the past year. The foundation now has more than \$33 million in assets. It distributed funds for ministries, grants, scholarships, life income payments to donors and operations.

Alan Herndon, president and CEO of the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, also talked about growth of assets. The Kansas area foundation has more than \$47.6 million in assets. It distributed funds for church, conference and other managed funds, split interest trusts, gift annuities, charitable trusts and unrestricted funds. Herndon touted the “certificate of participation” program that has helped churches expand and make renovations.

## Reinstating Group Health Insurance

The conference voted to refer a proposal to reinstate group health insurance to the Board of Pensions due to the complexity of the issue.

Opponents of reinstating group health insurance said group health plans do not provide uniform coverage across Nebraska and Kansas and that a provision to reinstate the group plan by Jan. 1 likely was not possible because of the timing of procedures to be completed.

Proponents of reinstating the group plan argued they have not been able to find adequate coverage at a reasonable cost.

The Rev. Gary Beach, conference treasurer, said the cost to restore group health insurance would require every person to fill out a five-year health history and would then go to bid. He estimated the need for a one-day session of conference to deal with the bids. Debate would be necessary to determine how much of the premium would be paid by the pastor and how much would be paid by the local church.

Another question dealt with whether the reinstatement would satisfy conference requirements to be budget-neutral.

## Local Church Health Care Allowance

The motion seeks for the conference to assist with helping set costs to local churches from 2017 and beyond. It calls for a committee to be formed to examine the issue of expenses.

## Lay Equalization Plan Refinements

- General and Jurisdictional Delegates – The conference voted to approve a language change to include “provided they remain laypersons in good standing in a church or campus ministry in the Great Plains Conference.” The change would eliminate the possibility of a person being elected while a member of the conference and then leaving for another role in another conference or denomination.

- Campus Ministries – The conference voted to approve a language change to include “For each lay campus minister, chaplain, and Wesley Foundation director, there shall be a lay board member or student elected from the ministry.” The change brings campus ministries into line like local churches in providing representation for both the pastor of a church and a member of the laity.
- Board of Ordained Ministry – The conference voted to add that five lay members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to be selected by the lay members of the board.

## **District Superintendent Representation**

- On Conference Board of Trustees – The conference voted to allow the cabinet to select one member to serve as an ex-officio non-voting member on the conference board of trustees.
- On the Conference New Church Development Committee – The conference voted to allow the cabinet to select one member as an ex-officio non-voting member on the New Church Development Committee.

## **Christians in the Holy Land**

- The conference chose to create a task force to review and research actions that can be taken to respond to requests by United Methodist missionaries and Palestinian Christians. The vote does not mean the conference is taking any firm position but rather to study the issue in a more complete manner.

## **Circles Poverty Initiative**

- The conference voted against directing the Mercy and Justice team to report on the progress on the team’s Circles Poverty Initiative and to make appropriate requests for the 2017 conference budget. A vote using the electronic voting machines then was allowed by Bishop Scott J. Jones, and the motion failed by more than 100 votes.

## **Committee on Disability Ministries**

- The motion was withdrawn because the Mercy and Justice team can take on the issue without a vote by the annual conference.

## **Exploring a Change in Jurisdictional Boundaries**

- The conference approved a resolution that directs the Great Plains’ General and Jurisdictional delegations to start a dialogue with delegates from other conferences about a possible change in jurisdictional boundaries. The debate included multiple amendments striking language that some attendees believed could be seen as divisive.

## **Human Trafficking**

- The conference approved a resolution asking the Mercy and Justice team to study the subject of human trafficking and report back on potential strategies to address the issue in Kansas and Nebraska.

## **General, Jurisdictional delegations decided**

The Great Plains Annual Conference finished electing alternates for the 2016 General and Jurisdictional conferences Friday afternoon.

Clergy members elected to the General Conference were:

- Rev. Adam Hamilton, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas
- Rev. Amy Lippoldt, Trinity Heights United Methodist Church, Newton, Kansas
- Rev. Mark Holland, Trinity Community Church , Kansas City, Kansas
- Rev. Zach Anderson, Hanscom Park United Methodist Church, Omaha, Nebraska
- Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas
- Rev. David Livingston, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Lenexa, Kansas

Clergy members elected to the Jurisdictional Conference were:

- Junius Dotson, Saint Mark United Methodist Church, Wichita, Kansas
- Eduardo Boussan, Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Stephanie Alschwede, South Gate United Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Nathan Stanton, Great Plains New Church Development coordinator, Wichita, Kansas
- Ashley Prescott Barlow-Thompson, First United Methodist Church, Wichita, Kansas
- Kibum Kim, Parsons District Superintendent

Clergy delegates voted to serve as alternates were:

- Rebecca Hjelle, First United Methodist Church, Blair, Nebraska
- Anne Gatobu, Lincoln New Hope, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Rick Just, Wichita East District Superintendent

The lay delegates elected to the General Conference were:

- Courtney Fowler, College Avenue United Methodist Church, Manhattan, Kansas
- Oliver Green, Asbury Mt. Olive United Methodist Church, Topeka, Kansas
- Shayla Jordan, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Wichita, Kansas
- Dixie Brewster, Milton United Methodist Church, Milton, Kansas
- Lisa Maupin, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Wesley Gately, First United Methodist Church, Wamego, Kansas

Lay delegates elected to the Jurisdictional Conference were:

- Keith Olsen, of Grant United Methodist Church in Grant, Nebraska
- Randall Hodgskinson, First United Methodist, Topeka, Kansas
- Esther Hay, First United Methodist Church, Waverly, Nebraska.
- Karelle Leeper, Clair Memorial United Methodist Church, Omaha, Nebraska
- Bob Aderholt, Kenesaw United Methodist Church, Kenesaw, Nebraska
- Sandy Simmons, First United Methodist Church, Leavenworth, Kansas

Lay delegates voted to serve as alternates were:

- Carl Nord, Mulvane United Methodist Church, Mulvane, Kansas
- Steve Baccus, First United Methodist Church, Minneapolis, Kansas
- Shane Hinderliter, At the Well United Methodist Church, Wichita, Kansas

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