

# GPconnect - AC 2015 Daily

June 13, 2015

Today is the last day of the 2015 Great Plains Annual Conference Session, and therefore the last special edition of "GPconnect." We hope you all enjoyed your time in Wichita. Below you can find information on what took place on Saturday.

You can view past issues of "GPconnect" at [greatplainsumc.org/gpconnect](http://greatplainsumc.org/gpconnect). Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to view additional photos of AC 2015. Don't forget to use hashtag #GPUMC and #GPAC15.

## Youth provide spirit-filled morning worship



Bailey Waters and Shayla Jordan, both members of Great Plains youth, shared a message about remaining steadfast in faith despite changes we all encounter in life – changes in schools, the loss of a job, health concern, death of a loved one or even pleasant changes such as new jobs.

The girls used an analogy of water spilling over once it is full to describe how we can share the love of Christ. When we are faithful and maintain our faith, our love for Christ spills over to others we encounter.

Jakin Lefto, another member of the youth, then shared an invitation to the offering for the Youth Service Fund. As a

fun introduction to the offering, Bishop Scott J. Jones was invited to the stage, where other members of the youth bound his hands and escorted him off stage. Lefto explained it was time to give the offering and the bishop would "remain in our custody" until the offering was taken. The offering totaled around \$6,075.

## Book sale raises funds for missions

Receipts for "The Holy Spirit for Children" book totaled \$564.95. The funds will go fully to missions partnerships of the Great Plains Conference.

## Conference discusses, passes finance and administrative matters



The Council on Finance and Administration provided its annual report and submitted several matters for approval by the Great Plains Annual Conference on Saturday, June 13, in Wichita, Kansas:

- The annual conference voted to approve a plan to pay the full amount for clergy moves regardless of the appointment (full-time, three-quarter, half-time, etc.).
- Rev. Gary Beach was reaffirmed as the conference treasurer. He gave a brief report on the conference's audit. Beach reported that auditors matched the conference's books "to the penny."

- Rev. Evelyn Fisher answered questions related to the congregational excellence budget. She reported that campus ministry is paid in part by mission shares but also has carry-over funding from previous years. Five percent of reserves from the sale of campus ministry facilities in Lincoln, Nebraska, will help pay for expansion of campus ministries. She also reported that Nebraska Wesleyan University should see a very small difference in how much income it receives from the annual conference despite a shift in the line items in the conference budget from which funds for the university are allocated.
- Beach answered questions regarding why money is budgeted each year to send the delegation to the General and Jurisdictional conferences. Money in non-conference years are set aside to ease the burden on the budget during General and Jurisdictional conference years.
- Beach explained how reserve funds are being used and how the budget does not really reflect a reduction in conference staff.
- Beach also shared information about the mission shares and how any money that comes in for operating income is used to determine the tithe.
- The Investment Committee has worked to draft a policy statement to serve as a list of principles for operation. The committee has four representatives from CF&A, three people from the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, a member of the Board of Trustees and one member from New Church Development. The committee is drafting a reporting mechanism so it can share how well the funds are doing.
- CF&A shared that the conference retain the 10 percent mission share formula. Beach explained that the mission share formula has been phased in so that every church in the Great Plains will be on the same tithe as of Jan. 1.
- The conference passed the proposed 2016 budget with projected income at \$15,799,134. That represents a decrease of 1.5 percent from the 2015 budget, mostly due to all churches moving to the straight 10 percent tithe.

**Photo:** The Rev. Zach Anderson, Hanscom Park UMC, Omaha, Nebraska, and CF&A member.

## Cabinet thanks the Rev. Mike Chamberlain for service as dean



## Conference deals with controversial issues in 2015 session

The Great Plains Annual Conference voted on petitions to lift up to the General Conference for consideration on the controversial issue of homosexuality, issues involving the election of bishops and where the church's money can be invested.

In each case, petitions passed by the annual conference move now to the General Conference, which is scheduled for May 2016 in Portland, Oregon. The General Conference's delegates from across the United States and around the world will vote on whether to make changes to the Book of Discipline.

### Acknowledgement of Diverse Beliefs Regarding Homosexuality

The annual conference voted 496-363 to approve a petition offered by the Rev. David Livingston, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Lenexa, Kansas, that would strike references of homosexuality as being incompatible with Christian

teachings and would eliminate restrictions against practicing homosexuals being certified as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in the church. It also would lift restrictions on United Methodist pastors conducting same-sex marriages and would lift restrictions on annual conferences and United Methodist agencies from providing funding to homosexual-related caucus groups and similar agencies. The petition would eliminate the performance of same-sex marriages from the list of offenses that would initiate a church trial.

Proponents told stories of homosexual teenagers struggling to find a place of inclusion and of lifelong United Methodists not being able to be married in their own church because of their sexual orientation.

Opponents argued that the United Methodist Church's mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and that allowing same-sex marriage would have the church conforming to society instead of transforming society.

## **Geographic Consideration for Election of Bishops**

The annual conference voted to approve a petition that would add geography and cultural values to the list of traits to be considered by Jurisdictional and Central conference delegates while electing bishops. The petition would make this a consideration and not a mandate.

## **Holy Conferencing for the Election of Bishops**

The conference passed a petition that would require the presiding bishops at Jurisdictional conferences to provide instructions worded as: "In the Wesleyan tradition of Holy Conferencing, please do not intentionally vote for non-candidates for strategic purposes." The petition serves to try to eliminate one strategy during Jurisdictional conferences that elevate some candidates and eliminate others.

## **Limit the Number of Bishops from Individual Annual Conferences**

The annual conference voted 517-217 to pass a petition that no more than two active bishops be elected from any single annual conference serving at any given time.

According to the petition, all 10 active bishops in the South Central Jurisdictional are from Texas annual conferences.

Opponents believed more promotion of episcopal candidates would be a better way to address the issue.

## **Fossil Fuel Investment Screens**

The annual conference voted against a petition that would have required the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits to avoid knowingly investing in any company or entity whose core business activity involves the production of petroleum or natural gas.

## **Avoid Fossil Fuels Investments and No Fossil Fuel Investments**

Without discussion, the annual conference voted against petitions that also dealt with how investments with churches would have been made.

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