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**Minutes of Uniting Conference**

**10. MINUTES OF GREAT PLAINS UNITING CONFERENCE**

**Minutes of the 2013 Special Uniting Conference Session**

Nebraska Conference, Kansas West Conference, Kansas East Conference

August 22-23, 2013

Bicentennial Center, Salina, Kansas

Bishop Scott J. Jones, Presiding

Conference Secretaries: Darlene Hall, Kim Dickerson-Oard, Karen Robertson

(Editorial note: in these minutes, motions and votes are underlined)

**HISTORY** – In the territorial days of the area, the Methodist Episcopal Church sent pastors to form a conference that included the present states of Kansas and Nebraska west to the Rocky Mountains. The first Kansas/Nebraska Conference session was held in October, 1856. The United Brethren Church held their first conference session the same year, and the Evangelical Association followed two years later. Over the years the conferences were divided into smaller geographic areas before the denominations joined in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church. In 2009 the Jurisdictional College of Bishops voted to combine the Kansas and Nebraska episcopal areas, and in 2012 Bishop Scott Jones was assigned to the new Great Plains Area. In that year also, the conference members in the Nebraska Conference, the Kansas East Conference and the Kansas West Conference all voted overwhelmingly to become one conference, the Great Plains Annual Conference, in January 2014. Thus the churches in Kansas and Nebraska were together again and the Uniting Conference was held to approve the Plan of Organization of the new conference, with the theme of “Coming Home Again.”

**OPENING WORSHIP** – The Uniting Conference began with worship on Thursday afternoon. This service had a theme of “Homecoming” and opened with several symbols of the re-uniting of the conferences in Kansas and Nebraska: an altar cloth woven during the Kansas East Annual Conference; stones with blessings from the Nebraska Conference; a suitcase with signs of faith, hope, and love presented by the Kansas West Conference; and water collected from the churches of all three conferences. Lanterns were carried in from three directions representing the light of Christ’s work in and through the people of the three conferences.

“A Duet for Pentecost,” a dramatic reading written by Judy Gattis Smith, was given by Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell and Pastor Dallas Peterson. Bishop Jones’ sermon challenged the assembly to consider what the people of the Great Plains Annual Conference will do with this opportunity to reinvent themselves. The three crucial issues are being a community instead of a club, replacing drift with focusing on our mission, and understanding the obstacles that face us. Brett Valliant of Wichita First UMC was the organist. An offering of \$5,838.75 was received for the Youth Service Fund and the service closed with Holy Communion.

**PLENARY SESSION** - The first plenary session of the Uniting Conference followed worship and opened with a welcome by Bishop Scott Jones. He was joined at the head table by Kansas West Conference Lay Leader Carolyn May and the conference secretaries - Darlene Hall, Karen Robertson, and Cindy Kelly, assistant to Kim Dickerson-Oard. Bishop Jones pointed out that, in addition to being the Uniting Conference, this session was historically important as the last meeting of the three individual conferences. "Our business here is to praise God, to get acquainted, and to consider the plan of organization that the Transition Team has put before us."

The bishop introduced Maria Campbell (KE clergy) and Kim Dickerson-Oard (KW clergy), the co-chairs of the Uniting Conference Planning Team. Maria acquainted the session with several housekeeping items, including internet access, concessions and displays, and procedure in case of a medical emergency. Bishop Jones called attention to the ball cap he was wearing which included panels with the K-State Wildcat, the KU Jayhawk and the Nebraska Husker.

The bishop then called on Lew Kaye-Skinner (NE clergy) to introduce the organizational rules for the Uniting Conference and explain the voting card procedure. After doing so, Lew moved an amendment to those organization rules, which was to add the phrase – "in order to be projected onscreen for consideration by the body" – to the end of the sentence on page 5 line 4 of the Plan of Organization. Bishop Jones confirmed that Lew had submitted his motion in writing to the tellers and asked any others wanting to speak to move to a microphone. He then explained that his process would be to call for a vote first from the conference to which the maker of the motion belonged. Thus he called for a show of voting cards first from Nebraska, then from Kansas East, then from Kansas West. All three conferences approved the amendment and the organizational rules in the Plan of Organization were amended. The bishop noted that some votes would be taken from the body as a whole. This served as an illustration of the procedure that would be followed throughout the Uniting Conference.

After a short video pointing out the strengths each conference brings to the Great Plains Conference, Bishop Jones read a letter of greeting from Daniel Chizuku, who is a District Superintendent in Zimbabwe. "Dear members of the Great Plains Conference, grace and peace to you from God, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm writing on behalf of the Mutari District of the Zimbabwe annual conference to wish you all the best as you gather in Salina. Mutari District is in partnership with the Hutchinson District through the Chabaza covenant partnership. We value this relationship and pray for its continued growth and our thoughts and prayers are with you as you gather to deliberate on the plan of organization for the Great Plains conference. We wish you God's blessings and guidance in all your endeavors."

Tom Watson, Nebraska Conference Lay Leader and chair of the Transition Team, was called upon to present Section 1 of the Plan of Organization. Before doing that, Tom recognized the members of the Transition Team, the Dream Teams, and all of the other groups who had worked on the Plan and they were greeted with applause.

## **SECTION 1**

On behalf of the Kansas/Nebraska Transition Team, Tom then moved adoption of Section 1 of the Plan of Organization beginning on page 6. This section included the Mission, Calling, Vision and Missional Priorities of the GPAC. (All of the sections

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of the Plan came from the Transition Team and as such, needed no second.) As no one moved to the microphones to speak, Bishop Jones called for the vote as a united body and members of all three conferences raised their voting cards in favor. The bishop asked that the minutes show that it was a unanimous vote to adopt Section 1 and the body responded with applause.

### SECTION 2

Jan Todd (KE clergy) was called upon to present Section 2 on pages 8 - 20 of the Plan of Organization and she moved for its approval.

Andy Hargrove (KE clergy) rose to question whether this conference had the authority to vote on district alignment as stated on page 8 lines 12-13. After some thought, Bishop Jones ruled that Andy was technically correct and this conference cannot bind the 2014 and 2015 annual conference sessions. The bishop proposed striking the words "during the 2013-2016 quadrennium" and replacing them with "at the present time." Jan accepted that friendly amendment on behalf of the Transition Team. Kansas East, Nebraska and Kansas West voted in that order and adopted the amendment.

Randall Hodgkinson (KE laity) proposed an amendment to the lay equalization plan on page 18. His amendment would add a new subsection (f) to section 4: "Lay members of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry" and would renumber the remaining sections. The motion was seconded and Randall spoke of the value of having lay members of the Board of Ordained Ministry be a part of the annual conference sessions.

Evelyn Fisher (KE clergy and Director of Congregational Excellence) spoke, warning of the danger of adding a category of laypersons before those that are already listed. David Livingston (KE clergy) moved to amend the amendment to make the new line a (j) so that it would follow the categories already listed. The Livingston amendment was seconded. As there was no further discussion, Bishop Jones called for the total body to vote on the amendment to the amendment and the vote carried. The amended Hodgkinson amendment to add a new category of lay members of the Board of Ordained Ministry as line (j) was then before the body. There was no discussion and the vote of the entire body was to approve the Hodgkinson amendment.

In answer to a question by Deb Harvey (KW clergy), Bishop Jones explained the need for a lay equalization formula. Because of the large number of retired clergy voting at annual conference who are not balanced by a lay member of a church, there must be other categories of laypersons added so that the number of lay and clergy voting members are as equal as possible.

Katherine Bullard (NE clergy) moved to amend the section on page 14 regarding the Mercy & Justice Team. Her amendment would add the bishop to the membership of the Team as the Conference Ecumenical Officer. It would also add a subparagraph after line 41 reading "as the ecumenical and interfaith ministries work is now lodged within the council of bishops, it's crucial that the Bishop be an active part of this team." The amendment was seconded and she spoke of the need for episcopal leadership in interchurch ministries.

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Bishop Jones offered an amendment to add "(without vote)" to "Bishop as Ecumenical Officer" as the Judicial Council has ruled that bishops may not be voting members of any conference committees. Kathryn agreed to that as an editorial change.

Neil Gately (KE clergy) spoke against amendment, citing the ruling made earlier about binding future conferences. He asked members to remember that they were not passing a permanent plan for the Great Plains Annual Conference, just a plan to get started that can be changed and adapted with time and experience.

There were no further comments and the bishop called for a vote from Nebraska first. The vote did not pass and the Bullard amendment failed.

Deanna Holland (NE laity), a member of the Nebraska Board of Ordained Ministry, asked how lay folks would know when the lay equalization formula includes their category and they get a vote at annual conference. Bishop Jones explained that in January, the Conference Secretary will calculate the current number of clergy members and determine how far down the list to go and notify those laypersons who will have a vote.

Joey Hensler (KE laity), representing Wesley KU campus ministry, moved to change lines 25 and 26 on page 18 by switching them so that line (h) would become "An additional young adult (ages 18-30) from each district: and line (l) would become "17 additional youth as determined by the Conference Council on Youth Ministries." The motion was seconded and Joey and several others spoke both for and against the motion before Scott Evans (NE clergy) moved to call the question, which would close debate on the amendment. The entire body voted in favor of closing the debate and the bishop moved to a vote on the Hensler amendment. Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska voted in that order to approve the Hensler amendment.

Steve Burnett (KE laity) questioned the listing of the Peace & Justice Coordinator on the Mercy and Justice Team on page 14 line 34 since the staffing plan has no Peace & Justice Coordinator. Evelyn Fisher answered, saying that the position is a volunteer one, not a paid staff position.

Nancy Tomlinson (NE clergy) questioned the 17 new youth on line h in the lay equalization plan. It was explained that they would actually add youth in the number of openings that were available, up to 17, with the thought that 17 equals the number of districts so an effort would be made to add one youth per district.

Lyle Schoen (NE clergy) moved to delete the words "without vote" after "Conference Secretary of Global Ministries" on page 14, line 34. The motion was seconded and Lyle spoke to it, quoting the Book of Discipline.

Kay Scarbrough (KE clergy) pointed out that this would make 16 voting members and asked if it was Lyle's intention to have an even number. After some discussion, Lyle changed his motion to include striking "without vote" after "Peace with Justice Coordinator" and to change line 36 to read, "Membership: 17 members, no more than 7 clergy." There being no further discussion, the bishop called for a vote by conference and Nebraska, Kansas West, and Kansas East in that order voted to support the Schoen amendment and it carried.

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Larry Moffet (NE clergy) offered an amendment to “change the name of the Mercy and Justice Team to the Mercy, Justice and Peacemaking Team on page 14 line 25 and all applicable places.” The motion was seconded and Larry and several others spoke both for and against it. When the assembly was ready to vote, the Moffet amendment was not approved by the Nebraska Conference and therefore died.

Dorothy Welch (KE laity) moved to change the membership of the Connecting Council by making a new line (h) which would read “Small church representatives (2)” and making the current line (h) become line (l) “at-large members for expertise and inclusiveness.” The motion was seconded and Dorothy spoke to the necessity of making certain that small membership churches are represented. David Livingston (KE clergy) answered for the Transition Team, saying that there was no need to state every group we need to be inclusive of and small membership churches are a large majority in the conference so will definitely be heard. The vote on the Welch amendment was put to the Kansas East Conference first and did not carry.

Oliver Green, Kansas East Conference Lay Leader, pointed out an editorial correction on page 10 lines 28-29. Instead of reading “Lay leader and associate lay leaders (4)” it should read “Lay leader (1) and associate lay leaders (4)” for clarity since the Plan of Organization calls for 4 associate lay leaders.

Randall Hodgkinson (KE laity) moved to amend the lay equalization plan on pages 17 and 18: “Add the following to section 1(f): to be selected by the District Council on Youth Ministry (or equivalent structure); add the following to section 1(g): to be selected by the District Council on Ministry (or equivalent structure); add the following to section 4(a): to be selected by the District Council on Youth Ministry (or equivalent structure); add the following to section 4(d): Council on Ministry (or equivalent structure); add the following to section 4(h): to be selected by the District Council on Ministry (or equivalent structure)”

The amendment was seconded and Randall spoke to it, saying that as an attorney he was interested in details such as specifying who should select these representatives. There were no other comments and the bishop called for the vote by the Kansas East Conference. That vote carried, as did the vote from Nebraska and Kansas West in that order and the second Hodgkinson amendment was approved.

There being no further motions made concerning Section 2, Bishop Jones called for the entire body to vote on Section 2 as it had been amended and Section 2 was adopted as amended.

### SECTION 3

After a brief break, Gary Brooks (KW clergy) moved for the adoption of Section 3 of the Plan of Organization on behalf of the Transition Team.

Freda Dobbins (KE laity) called attention to page 30 and asked whether line 12 and line 16 meant that Kansas East churches would be billed twice for workers comp insurance. Gary Beach (KE clergy and KE & KW treasurer), answered that there will be only one workers comp policy for each church, regardless of which former conference they were a part of.

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James Brackett (KW clergy) moved that item (j) (vi) on page 24 be deleted and a section (b) be inserted on page 23 between lines 9 and 10 which reads, "Outlets for electricity that are ground fault interrupters (GFI) are recommended for outlets close to sinks." The motion was seconded and James spoke to it, noting that GFIs are designed to be used only where water is present and to install them all over the house is an expensive wiring nightmare.

Discussion followed, with several persons with experience in the electrical field commenting that it should be sufficient to say that the wiring should meet current national and local electrical codes

Lew Kaye-Skinner moved to table the Brackett amendment until the wording could be perfected. By a vote of the body as a whole, the motion to table the amendment was passed.

Another question was asked about the parsonage standards and the recommended bedroom size and Gary Beach answered that the parsonage standards are guidelines for future purchases, and there is no requirement that all existing homes must be immediately transformed to meet these standards.

Mark Conard (KW clergy) moved to correct the spelling of "lightening" to "lightning" on page 24. The motion was seconded and Mark commented that it was hard to make this motion as it had been his favorite line in the parsonage standards for decades. Bishop Jones ruled that the change could be an editorial correction and would be made by the conference secretaries.

Mark Crist (NE clergy) moved that an addition be made on page 24 lines 15-16. He would add "as recommended by the federal government" following "appropriate insulation." The motion was seconded and he spoke to it, saying that he had lived in parsonages which were grossly under-insulated. No one else spoke to the amendment and the Crist amendment was approved by vote of the Nebraska, Kansas West and Kansas East Conferences, in that order.

Andy Hargrove (KE clergy) questioned the statement on page 21 beginning on line 36 - "It is expected that churches or charges will bring their parsonage into compliance with the requirements set forth below if they are not yet in compliance," which seemed to contradict what Gary Beach had said earlier. Gary called it a "good catch," commenting that the Plan had been changed in one place with regard to parsonage standards but not this place. Gina Gile (KE clergy) asked if it was necessary to grandfather in existing parsonages and the bishop's reply was that the parsonage standards were a strong recommendation but there was no enforcement mechanism, and the decisions rest with the local churches. Steve Flader (NE clergy) echoed the bishop's comments, stating that these recommendations come from one or more of the conferences' current policies.

Craig Collins (NE clergy) pointed out that the Crist amendment passed earlier had apparently recommended federally-approved insulation in window coverings, not housing insulation, since window coverings were the subject of section (k) (i). After some discussion, Mark Crist stated that his intent had been to add another line after

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(k) (i) stating that the insulation in parsonages should meet the recommendations of the federal government and the bishop ruled that was what had been approved.

Lois Johnson (KE clergy) pointed out Item (4) (c) on page 22 which states that "A long-range program be adopted to either bring the parsonage up to, or maintain, Conference and Disciplinary requirements" and asked if that didn't cover the earlier concerns about parsonage standards.

James Bracket returned with a substitute motion to replace the one that had been tabled earlier concerning electrical outlets. The body voted as a whole to lift the motion from the table and James read his substitute motion, which read "it is recommended that all outlets be brought up to meet national and local electrical code statements with regard to GFI outlets." The motion was seconded.

Lew Kaye-Skinner (NE clergy) moved a substitute amendment to delete, on Page 23, Line 15, which deals with the same issue, and on Page 24, Line 13, and then on line 9, substitute the following wording: "All wiring and electrical devices (including GFI protected outlets, where specified) to meet national code." This substitute amendment was seconded and by vote of the entire body, was substituted for the Brackett amendment.

The Kaye-Skinner amendment was then the main amendment and was approved by vote of the body as a whole.

Scott Evans (NE clergy) moved to call the question on the entire Section 3. The body voted as a whole to approve the Evans motion, closing debate on Section 3. Bishop Jones then called for the Kansas East vote on Section 3 and it carried. Nebraska and Kansas West also voted to adopt Section 3 and it was adopted as amended.

Kim Dickerson-Oard (KW clergy) then spoke to the group about where to find things in the Bicentennial Center and the process to be followed for meals. She also announced that the YSF offering from the opening worship service totaled \$5837.76. After singing the Wesleyan Grace, the group was dismissed for dinner.

**PLENARY SESSION** - Kansas East Conference Lay Leader Oliver Green opened the session with prayer and then Charlotte Abram (NE clergy) came to the podium to move for the adoption of Section 4 of the Plan of Organization on behalf of the Transition Team.

### **SECTION 4**

Bishop Jones asked the body to first consider the items on pages 64 and 65 concerning mission shares and mission agency support, as those two are interrelated. As he spoke, the tellers were distributing a related handout.

Roy Nelson (KW clergy) expressed concern with what was happening in Syria and the rest of the Middle East to Christians. He asked the bishop to lead the body in prayer for peace in that area and the bishop did so.

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Abigail Eltzroth (NE clergy) moved to delete the paragraph on page 64 that begins with “As we move to a tithing . . .” and replace it with “to support the basic budget in the Great Plains United Methodist Church, the mission shares will be assessed at the following rates: As of January 1st, 2014 - 11.50%; 2015 - 10.75%; 2016 - 10%.” Her motion also included deleting the two sentences that begin “this phase protects churches” and add the following sentence: “Individual churches which face a severe financial difficulty meeting their mission share payments may request the finance and administrative councils to approve a reduction of their mission shares.”

The motion was seconded and she spoke to it, citing the different mission share formulae that the three conferences are accustomed to.

Gary Beach showed a slide that he had prepared showing the effect if this proposal were adopted. It would result in a significant increase in apportionments for two of the conferences and a decrease for the third. The bottom line is that adopting this proposal would overfund the budget by \$1.3 million. Abigail replied that she would be glad to revise the figures in her motion to more closely match the budget and she was given time to do that while the discussion continued.

Carl Nord (KW clergy) and member of the KW CF&A, and Brent Messick (KE laity) and chair of the KE CF&A, both spoke in support of the 10% formula and the transition to it as laid out in the Plan.

Abigail returned to the microphone with revised figures of 10.6% in 2014, 10.3% in 2015 and 10% in 2016. Gary Beach confirmed that these figures would achieve the budget in the Plan.

There being no further discussion, Bishop Jones called for the vote from the Nebraska conference and the amendment did not carry.

Deann Smith (KW clergy) moved to amend page 64 line 22 to read “The GPUMC will use an 11% mission share formula for the base budget” and deleting the phrase “and 1% for Mission Agency Support for separately incorporated institutions,” with all other references to be changed appropriately. The motion was seconded and Deann spoke to it as the director of United Methodist Open Door, one of the mission agencies involved.

Jan Todd and Brent Messick, both members of KE CF&A, spoke in favor of keeping the 10% tithe and the 1% askings separate. Brent also encouraged providing a screening process for agencies that apply for funds from the askings.

Other discussion brought out the facts that the 10% tithe also supports mission, churches are free to designate funds to an agency even if their apportionments are not paid, and churches will receive a letter soon showing their mission share, agency share, district share if applicable, and NE retiree health bill.

Several others spoke both for and against the Smith amendment and a member asked if “separately incorporated institutions” include Camping, Campus Ministry

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and New Church Development, which are corporations in the new Great Plains structure. The answer was that Mission Agencies refers only to agencies not owned outright by the conference.

Discussion continued with several speakers making the point that responding generously to the askings should be an emphasis in the new conference. In response to other questions, Gary Beach noted that only operating income is included in apportionment calculations and CF&A expects mission share payout to meet their predictions.

Scott Evans (NE clergy) moved the previous question at this point and the body voted to approve moving the question and closing debate on the Smith amendment. As the maker of the motion was from the Kansas West Conference, the bishop put the vote to that conference first and it failed to carry.

Amy Lippoldt (KW clergy) made a motion regarding District Superintendent and Director salaries, page 62. The amendment would strike the paragraph on lines 14-18 and replace it with "In 2014, all DS and director positions will move immediately to the 150% of the previous year's full elder base salary average." Based on 2013 compensation this figure is \$77,256 in base salary. This will result in a decrease of \$3700 (or 4.5%) for any continuing Nebraska DS but will be a substantial increase for all continuing Kansas Superintendents and any incoming DS. Additionally, strike all text starting on page 62, line 33 and ending on page 63, line 3. The motion was seconded and Amy spoke to it, citing her belief that although this would ask some District Superintendents to reduce their salaries, it was important for all at the cabinet table to be paid equally.

Troy Bowers (KE clergy) spoke against the amendment, citing the efforts of the Transition Team to do no harm and make changes gradually. Kent Rogers (KW clergy) spoke in favor of the amendment.

Gary Beach noted that the proposal does increase the bottom line of the budget and the additional money has to come from somewhere else. Bishop Jones read from Amy's written statement that she anticipated this would result in a \$15,000 overall increase to the budget and she proposed that the line item "Cabinet Operations" be reduced by the same amount, taking it from \$552,500 to \$537,500.

There being no further discussion, the vote was put to the Kansas West Conference first and the show of voting cards was too close to count. The tellers then proceeded to take a count by standing ballot and the result was 164 for the Lippoldt amendment and 185 against, thus the amendment did not carry.

Libby Oberdorf (KE clergy) moved to add a phrase, "with District Superintendent and Director salaries to be capped at a maximum of 200% of the full-elder minimum compensation set by the conference" to the end of line 12 on page 62. The motion was seconded and Libby spoke to it. The amendment was put to a vote by the Kansas East Conference first and did not carry.

Andrea Paret (NE laity) made a motion that "General Board of Global Ministries missionaries and Church and Community Workers be funded and supported at a

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similar level and in a similar way.” She also moved that the detailed budget be made available for those who need to look at it. Bishop Jones pointed out that Andrea was not amending a particular part of the plan, so he would assume that these are resolutions of instruction to the Great Plains CF&A and Andrea concurred.

The first motion was seconded and Andrea spoke to it, noting that the three conferences bring different ways of supporting mission personnel. Gary Beach agreed that this was an area that needed study and proposed asking the new CF&A work with the Mercy & Justice Team to bring a recommendation to Annual Conference 2014 that would bring harmony to this issue.

Some discussion followed before Scott Evans (NE clergy) moved to refer this motion to CF&A to get a good proposal for next year’s annual conference session. The total body voted in favor of the Evans motion and the missionary funding issue was referred to the Great Plains CF&A.

Andrea’s second motion asked that the detailed budget be made available. It was seconded and Gary Beach reported that members of the Great Plains CF&A Task Force group from each conference and all of the current directors have those detailed budgets which are available to be seen by anyone who would like to access them.

Bishop Jones took the vote from the Nebraska Conference first and it passed, as did the vote from the Kansas East and Kansas West Conferences in that order

Gary Lortscher (KE laity) had two questions: On page 37, line 39, does the word “identity” refer to the legal status of the person and the answer was that this refers to the normal background checks that would be given to anyone and the legal status issue would be addressed by filling out an I-9 verification. The second question concerned the Standards of Conduct section on page 45 and where in that section is fraud addressed? Evelyn Fisher replied that fraud would be covered in Sections A 2 & 3.

Ken Van (KE clergy) made a motion to amend page 40 lines 10-11 by adding “without appropriate security measures” after “The Internet is not a secure communication channel, should not be used for sending or receiving confidential or sensitive information.” The motion was seconded and Ken spoke to it, saying that his concern was that the statement as it stood means that the Board of Ordained Ministry registrar couldn’t use email to give and receive the information she needs. As no one else rose to speak to the amendment, the bishop called for a vote of the total body, which approved the Van amendment.

Neil Kloppenborg (NE clergy) moved to amend page 33, line 24 by adding the words “disaster response coordinator” to the end of the sentence. The motion was seconded and Neil spoke to it, citing his feeling that the disaster response coordinator, just like the Hispanic evangelists, needs to be given free rein to be out in the field doing their job instead of housed in an office. There was no further discussion and the total body voted to approve the Kloppenborg amendment.

Gary Beach asked the body to refer to the handout distributed earlier in the evening which contains an amendment to eliminate inconsistencies on page 48 on the

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Personnel Policies. The amendment would delete lines 7-9 (editors note: actually lines 9-11) and replace with the following: "The Personnel Committee recommends updates to the personnel policies, provides for a favorable work environment and recommends to the Annual Conference budgets for personnel and guidelines for salary setting" and delete lines 15-16 and replace with the following: "Revisions to the policies shall be proposed by the Personnel Committee and approved by the Connecting Council." Gary moved for the adoption of this amendment and the motion was seconded and approved by a vote of the total body.

Oliver Green pointed out another editorial change needed on page 36 line 27 – it needs to read "Lay Leader and 4 associate lay leaders (5)." The change was approved by vote of the total body.

There were no other proposed changes to Section 4 and the bishop called for a vote of the total body on Section 4 as it had been amended and the section was approved.

After some closing remarks by Maria Campbell, the bishop called on Carol Roettmer Brewer (NE clergy) to close the evening plenary session with prayer.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 23**

**PLENARY SESSION** - On Friday morning, Mitch Todd (KE clergy) and Michael Tomson-DeGreeff (KE clergy) opened the session with prayer and music. Bishop Jones greeted the members and welcomed Tom Watson, the Nebraska Conference Lay Leader, to the head table.

Galen Wray (NE clergy) asked for prayers for David Jefferson, his district lay leader, who lost his wife this week and the bishop led the group in prayer.

**SECTION 5**

Bob Cox (KW laity) came to the stage to move the adoption of Section 5 of the Plan of Organization.

Mike Shockley (KW laity), moved to amend page 83 line 8 & 9 by striking the phrase "less than full-time" and replacing it with the words "three-quarter and one-half time." The motion was seconded and Mike explained that the joint distributing team, which he chaired, had intended the second wording but it got written up as "less than full-time." The bishop called for the entire body to vote on this housekeeping matter and it was approved.

Mike moved a second amendment on page 78, lines 18 & 19 regarding a special grant from the Nebraska Conference to Lance Lingard. The grant has been payable to Mrs. Jeanette Lingard Hanson, who has passed away, and the motion asked to change the payee to "co-guardians Mrs. Carissa Shirley and Ms. Holly Brant." The motion was seconded and approved by a vote of the total body.

Nan Kaye-Skinner (NE clergy) moved to amend page 75 line 25 by adding: "Participation by clergy of other denominations is optional. Local churches are responsible for contributions required by the clergy's denominational pension plan,

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when applicable.” The motion was seconded and Nan spoke to it, explaining that this information was an omission to the Plan. There was no further discussion and the total body voted in favor of the Nan Kaye-Skinner amendment.

Linda Battello (NE clergy) questioned the Equitable Compensation policy, asking whether the base compensation in the formula included mileage or continuing education. Gary Beach replied that it does not include those items, making a lower minimum but mileage, continuing education and other reimbursable expenses will be paid in addition to that. This is a change for Nebraskans. Linda lifted up the smaller churches which struggle to support their pastors and the pastors who serve those churches at a lower salary.

There being no further discussion, the bishop asked the entire body to vote on Section 5 and it was approved.

**SECTION 6**

Troy Bowers (KW clergy serving in KE) came to the podium to move the approval of Section 6, speaking of the importance of pastoral leadership.

Jada Hodgson (KE laity) proposed a long motion concerning the Certified Lay Minister program, which would replace the wording on all of page 96 with the wording on the handout which was distributed to the assembly. The motion was seconded and Jada spoke to it, referring to the Kansas East CLM program which has received national acclaim and her desire that the Great Plains program follow the Kansas East program more closely. She mentioned that the financial implications would be the same as in the original proposal.

Lengthy discussion and questions followed. Evelyn Fisher noted for the Transition Team that, although the Kansas East CLM program did indeed go above and beyond what was required by the general church, the proposal in the Plan was an example of the Team's efforts to take the best practices from all three conferences. She also noted that many of the practices in Jada's proposal will be continued even though they aren't stated explicitly, and that anyone may take a CLM class but only those who were actually in the CLM process and in a ministry setting would be given the costly psychological assessment and the background checks.

Bryan Hankins (NE laity) pointed out that the CLM proposal in the Plan used the term “lay speaker” and the new terminology is “lay servant.” He asked if that could be corrected in the Plan and Bishop Jones ruled that the editorial change could be made to comply with The Book of Discipline.

Brian Kottas (NE clergy) moved to refer the Hodgson amendment to the cabinet for study and give them the option to further refer it to the Clergy Excellence Team. The motion was seconded and Brian spoke to it, speaking of the complexity of the issue. Kay Scarbrough (KE clergy) moved to amend the motion for referral by substituting the Congregational Excellence Team instead of the cabinet and the Clergy Excellence Team. The bishop called for a vote of the total body and the Scarbrough amendment carried.

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The Kottas motion as amended was then considered. Micki McCorkle (KW clergy) recommended not approving it as the cabinet had already had input into the Transition Team proposal in the Plan.

Quentin Bennett (KW clergy) called the question on all that was before the body. Bishop Jones pointed out that approving this motion would close debate on all of Section 6. The Bennet motion was seconded but failed in a vote of the total body.

Lew Kay-Skinner moved to call the question on the referral of the Hodgson amendment to the Congregational Excellence Team. The motion was seconded and approved by a vote of the total body, so debate was closed on the referral motion.

A vote of the total body was taken on the referral motion and did not carry.

Bruce Ferguson (KW clergy) moved to table the Hodgson amendment to give Jada a chance to re-write it after hearing the feedback from the members. There was no second so the motion died.

Teri Lucas (NE clergy) moved to amend the Hodgson amendment by adding "or serve as a specialist in a ministry team of a larger church" on line 5 after "small membership church." The motion was seconded.

Neil Gately (KE clergy) moved to call the question on all matters related to the Hodgson amendment, closing debate on it. A vote of the total body approved closing debate.

Bishop Jones called for the Nebraska vote on the Lucas amendment and it carried, as did the Kansas East and Kansas West vote.

The Hodgson amendment as amended was then before the body. After a question from Shirley Edgerton (KE clergy) about CLMs' ability to perform weddings, the Kansas East vote was taken on the Hodgson amendment and it failed.

Amy Lippoldt (KW clergy) moved for an editorial change on page 95: line 8 strike the word "newly" and on line 9 strike "course of study" and insert "appropriate educational requirements." The motion was seconded and Amy spoke to it, saying that the way it's worded makes it seem that those who are commissioned while in seminary might have to participate in residency and that's not true. It's not until they are commissioned and have finished their education requirements and have their MDiv, that they start the residency program. The entire body voted to approve this change.

In answer to a question about the psychological evaluation used by the Board of Ordained Ministry,

Bruce Emmert (KE clergy and chair of the BoOM) replied that the same test, the MMPI, was used for everyone, as recommended by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Bruce also moved two short editorial changes to the CLM section on page 96.

Bishop Jones instructed Bruce that he would first need to move for reconsideration of the CLM section since debate had been closed on it. Bruce moved for reconsideration for the purpose of making the two editorial changes. The motion was seconded and approved by a two-thirds vote of the entire body.

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The first motion was to line 4: strike the word “pastoral” and replace with the word “ministerial.” The motion was seconded and Bruce spoke to it, noting that The Book of Discipline is clear about the definition of a pastor, which doesn’t include a CLM. The entire body voted to approve the first Emmert motion.

Bruce’s second motion was to replace the word “will” on line 19 with the word “may” so that the sentence reads, “After Items (a) through (d) above are completed, the DS may assign the CLM to a place of service.” The motion was seconded and the entire body voted to approve this motion.

Russell Brown (KE clergy) made a motion to eliminate the entire section referring to clergy and conference email addresses on pg 95. The motion was seconded and Russell spoke to it, noting that he would prefer that his email identity be with the local church and not the conference.

Discussion followed, with several speaking both for and against the Brown amendment. It was pointed out that it is possible to have several email addresses forwarded to the same account. Bishop Jones noted that the Great Plains Conference will have an information technology person on staff to help with these issues.

Quentin Bennet (KW clergy) moved to call the question, ending debate on the Brown amendment. The motion was seconded and approved by a vote of the entire body. The bishop called for the Kansas East Conference vote on the Brown amendment and it did not carry.

Richard Fitzgerald (KE clergy serving in KW) brought up an issue from the CLM section. Earlier the bishop had approved an editorial correction changing “lay speaker” to “lay servant” on page 96 line 24 but Richard believed that change was incorrect as lay speaker certification is a separate track and the wording should remain as it was in the Plan. The bishop apologized, noting that he hadn’t intended to make a substantive change, and the wording should remain as originally printed in the Plan.

Harold Keeler (KW clergy) observed that the body had been discussing Section 6 for an hour and a half and reminded members that the Plan is the Transition Team’s best effort to provide a document that will get the new conference started and doesn’t have to be tweaked to perfection now.

There being no further discussion, Bishop Jones called for a vote of the entire body on Section 6 and it was approved. The members were given a 30-minute break before considering Section 7.

**SECTION 7**

Several people asked for a moment of personal privilege to recognize wedding anniversaries - Erin and Wes Gately for their parents Neil & Bridget, Val and Ann Warman, Sandy and Ed Desplas, and Dean and Mary Alice Knewtson.

Bishop Jones introduced Courtney Fowler (KE laity), who joined him at the head table and has been nominated as the new Great Plains Conference lay leader. The

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bishop's wife, Mary Lou Reece, introduced the members of the youth delegations, who led the conference in the song, "You're My Brother."

Matt Fowler (NE clergy) was introduced to present Section 7, beginning on page 97, and he moved for its adoption. This section contains the Agreement of Consolidation and the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. It also contains articles and bylaws for Great Plains United Methodist New Church Development, Inc., Great Plains United Methodist Camps, Inc., and for Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc.

Linda Stokes (KE laity) moved to amend lines 6-7 on page 125 so that the classes of trustees listed in the bylaws of Great Plains United Methodist Camps, Inc. as 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 are changed to 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 in order to correspond to the Nominating Committee report, as classes are usually identified by the year the person goes off the committee, not the year they go on. Additionally, the same changes of class year should be made in the bylaws of Great Plains United Methodist Campus Ministry, Inc., on page 135 line 14. The motion was seconded. Bishop Jones asked David Seely, the Kansas West chancellor, to comment and his opinion was that if it is the will of the body that the initial trustees serve for at least a full year, then the amendment would be in order. By a vote of the entire body, the Stokes amendment was approved.

David Seely then asked for clarification whether the bylaws of all four corporations of the GPAC were intended to be included in the amendment, and Linda Stokes replied that the language in the bylaws of the other two corporations did not specify class years, so the amendment was limited to pages 125 and 135 only.

A member questioned the statement beginning on line 36 page 100 "No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation."

Kansas West chancellor Seely replied that "this is the accepted language recognized by the Internal Revenue Service for non-profit organizations. There is some ambit of activity on behalf of religious organizations to attempt to effect change through the political process. One can argue about where the line between influencing legislation and exercising one's right to petition one's government merge, but this language does define the ambit as the Internal Revenue Service has allowed churches to articulate it." Bishop Jones further noted that, although pastors and churches are told not to endorse individual candidates or strongly lobby about the details of particular bills, this statement doesn't affect our ability to voice our Christian social witness on issues where the teachings of our church are clear.

Lance Carrithers (KW clergy) asked if the new Great Plains corporations will have to re-apply for 501 (c) (3) status and the answer from Gary Beach was that they do and the attorneys will be spending the fall getting the legal framework of the new conference set up, including the non-profit status. Lance also asked if the application form 1023 to the IRS need to be approved by this body and the answer from the chancellor was no.

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Dirk Hutchinson (KW laity) asked why the Great Plains Conference will be incorporated as a Kansas corporation instead of a Nebraska one and would it make a difference if the episcopal office moved to Nebraska? Bishop Jones replied that there had been much consulting with people in both states and the chancellors and the legal opinion was that it makes no difference which state the conference is incorporated in, so he made the decision to incorporate in Kansas. Even if the episcopal office moves to Nebraska, there will still be staff in both states and where the conference is incorporated doesn't matter.

Linda Battello (NE clergy) asked if a church has a business license in Nebraska, will they have to reapply for it if the Great Plains Annual Conference is incorporated in Kansas. David Seely answered that the incorporation of the Great Plains Annual Conference won't affect the legal status of any local church in either Kansas or Nebraska.

There being no further discussion, Bishop Jones asked the total body to vote on Section 7 as amended by the change of class years, on pages 125 and 135, and the vote of the members of the three conferences was to approve Section 7.

**SECTION 8**

Pat Ault-Duell (KW clergy) was introduced to present Section 8 and move for its adoption on behalf of the Transition Team.

Duane Harms (KW clergy) asked why the Wichita State Campus Ministry was not listed in the section on Relationships with Colleges, Universities, and Health and Welfare Institutions. Bishop Jones answered that the conference does not have a relationship with Wichita State University as an entity like it does with United Methodist universities, but the various campus ministries are covered in another section, including the Wichita State campus ministry.

Larry Harris (KW clergy) asked if the name of Youthville on line 26 page 140 should be changed to their new name of EmberHope. The bishop's answer was that the name change has now been finalized and that reference should be changed. Larry so moved, the motion was seconded, and the total body voted to approve his amendment. Evelyn Fisher pointed out that the organization will still use the Youthville name for their ministry with children, but their services have expanded and the EmberHope name is for the entire organization.

Jerry Vogt (KW clergy) asked about the relationship with the Kansas Health Foundation and the bishop replied that the conference works closely with the Health Foundation but has no formal legal tie with it.

There was no further discussion and Bishop Jones called for the total body to vote on Section 8 as amended. The vote was to approve Section 8.

**SECTION 9**

Bruce Draper (KE clergy) was introduced as the chair of the interim nominating committee to present Section 9, the report of that nominating committee. Before beginning, Bruce related an incident that occurred as he checked into his hotel. After he identified himself as being with the United Methodist conference, she said, "It seems like we're being invaded by liberal Christians . . . and I like that!"

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Bruce then explained the process the interim nominating committee had followed, called attention to an amendment which had been distributed, and moved for the adoption of Section 9. The bishop asked that any corrections to spelling, email addresses, etc. be given to the conference secretaries in writing rather than brought to the floor.

Dion Lefler (KW laity), moved to add "Wichita State University, Rev. Charles Claycomb, Wichita KS." to the list of ex officio non-voting campus ministers on page 150 after line 4. The amendment was seconded and he spoke to it, stating that there was presently no campus minister assigned to WSU but several pastors volunteer time to keep the ministry alive and he felt that there should be some representation on the GPUM Campus Ministry, Inc. Board. The bishop called for a vote of the total body on this amendment and it was passed.

In response to several questions, it was reported that the information on the Nominating Committee report will be changed to reflect the new greatplainsumc.org email addresses and that laypersons serving on conference committees and boards will be able to have greatplainsumc.org email addresses if they desire. However, it will take time for the Communications office to transition to the new emails.

Andrew Gardner (KE clergy) moved to add Dr. Patricia Caruthers to the Pensions and Benefits Team. The bishop pointed out that there were no empty slots on the Team and Andrew would need to move to replace one of the nominated team members with Dr. Caruthers. Andrew then changed his motion to replace Jeff Prothro with Pat Caruthers. There was no second and the motion died.

Oliver Green asked if The Discipline called for the Conference Lay Leader to be a part of the Nominations Committee. The reference was found in Paragraph 607 and Oliver moved to add "Lay Leader ex officio with vote to the list on page 151 with the name of Courtney Fowler." The motion was seconded and the total body voted to approve the amendment

Teri Lucas (NE clergy) moved to add a new line 42 to the list of camp site council chairs on page 148 – "Camp Norwesca, Mark Crist, Norwesca Council Chair." The motion was seconded and Teri spoke to it, saying that Mark had been named as Norwesca Council Chair after the list had been prepared and should be added. The total body voted to approve the motion. In response to a question, Evelyn Fisher commented that the other site boards not listed had not sent in names, but they could still be added.

Grace Foiles (KE youth) moved on behalf of the youth to amendment page 148 after line 29 by adding: "Conference Council on Youth Ministries may select up to four additional youth in order to allow for ethnic and geographic diversity as well as allowing active youth to continue serving when they move outside the bounds of their district."

Bishop Jones stated that the conference had already approved the structure in Section 2, and in order to consider this amendment, the body would first need to reconsider the structure. He asked if Grace was willing to move to reconsider Section 2 and she did. The motion to reconsider was seconded and approved by more than a 2/3 vote of the entire body. Grace then made her motion to add four names to the

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CCYM to allow for ethnic and geographic diversity. The motion was seconded and the entire body voted to approve the Foiles amendment and then voted to approve Section 2 as amended.

Nan Kaye-Skinner noted that she saw a disproportionate number of large communities represented in the Nominations Committee report. She moved that in their future work, the Nominating Committee should be advised to ensure a larger representation by small membership churches and outstate areas. The motion was seconded and the total body voted to approve it.

Andrea Paret (NE laity and Peace with Justice Coordinator) commended the Nominating Committee for their work but pointed out several areas where Kansas representation greatly outnumbered Nebraska members. She asked that the committee be more sensitive to this in the future.

Don Anderson (KE clergy) asked who will nominate members of the Native American Ministries Committee and the answer was that the structure allows teams to recruit sub-teams and the Vital Congregations Team will be the group responsible for forming ethnic ministries sub-teams.

Lyle Schoen (NE clergy) called attention to page 150 and the fact that the conference voted on Thursday to add the Conference Secretary of Global Ministries and the Peace with Justice Coordinator to the Mercy and Justice Team. Lyle moved the nomination of Alan Gager to the position of Conference Secretary of Global Ministries. The motion was seconded and Lyle spoke of Alan's experience in the area, both on the conference and jurisdictional levels. There were no other nominations to the position and the body voted to elect Alan as Conference Secretary of Global Ministries and thus a member of the Mercy and Justice Team.

After Andrea Paret asked for clarification on whether her position would continue past December 31. Zack Anderson (NE clergy) moved to nominate Andrea Paret as Peace with Justice Coordinator for the Great Plains Conference. The motion was seconded. There were no other nominations and the total body voted to approve Andrea Paret as Great Plains Peace with Justice Coordinator. A member asked if one more person needed to be added to the Mercy & Justice Team as Andrea was already a member. The bishop's reply was that the Nominations Committee can fill any vacancies by taking them to the Connecting Council or to Annual Conference next June.

Marilyn Zehring (NE laity) asked if all of the people on general boards and commissions had been named to the corresponding conference committees. Bishop Jones replied that it was the intention of the Nominations Committee to do that and if anyone had been overlooked, to let the Nominations Committee know.

Kevass Harding (KW clergy) moved to call the question, closing debate on Section 9. The motion was seconded and the entire body vote to approve closing debate on the Nominating Committee report by more than a 2/3 margin.

Bishop Jones called for a vote of the entire body on Section 9 as it was amended and it was approved to cheers and applause

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Oliver Green moved the adoption of a resolution which had been previously distributed to the members:

**“Uniting Resolution of the Great Plains Annual Conference  
 For United Methodist Mission and Ministry  
 In Nebraska and Kansas  
 August 24, 2013**

**“WHEREAS**, In May and June of 2012 the Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska Annual Conferences all voted overwhelmingly to create the Great Plains Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church in order to serve more effectively the cause of Christ in Nebraska and Kansas, and

**“WHEREAS**, the South Central Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church in July of 2012 voted to create the Great Plains Annual Conference, and

**“WHEREAS**, hundreds of persons have contributed to the Plan of Organization through working groups, committees, councils, boards and feedback provided in many different listening sessions, and,

**“WHEREAS**, the Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West Annual Conferences have met together in special session at the Uniting Conference, August 22-24, 2013 held in Salina, Kansas, and,

**“WHEREAS**, Kansas West, Nebraska and Kansas East Annual Conferences have voted separately to approve the Plan of Organization,

**“THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED** that the Great Plains Annual Conference is hereby created and will begin operation effective January 1, 2014, with the organization, policies, procedures and leaders set forth in the Plan of Organization, for the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the calling to equip and connect congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ and the vision of great churches, great leaders, great disciples and a transformed world, and

**“THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the United Methodist people of the Great Plains Annual Conference will pray for the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us toward greater Christ-centered excellence in youth ministry, preaching and worship, community engagement and transformation of the world.”

The resolution was seconded with cheers and was approved with “Amens” by a unanimous vote of the members of all three annual conferences. There were no votes opposed. The vote was followed by a standing ovation. Bishop Jones requested that the minutes show that the vote was unanimous. (There were 457 total members voting from Kansas East. There were 556 total members voting from Kansas West. There were 397 total members voting from Nebraska.)

Mary Lou Reece told the story of how Bishop Jones high-fives himself when there is no one else around to do that with. She asked the Great Plains Conference to high-five themselves in congratulations.

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Bishop Jones then talked about the changes that would be necessary since the business of the conference was finished early. The Afternoon of Service volunteer projects in Salina would happen as planned and the evening worship service would be a combination of the Friday evening and Saturday morning services, with the offering to the three conference mission partners and to New Church Development. The Uniting Conference would end at the close of worship.

The bishop introduced Nancy Lambert (NE clergy), who is the new Director of Clergy Excellence and Assistant to the Bishop. She called attention to a handout listing events that are already planned for the coming months and to a Survey Monkey link for giving feedback about the Uniting Conference.

Nancy made a motion that the 2015 Great Plains Annual Conference be held in Wichita June 10-13, a Wednesday through Saturday. The motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

Evelyn Fisher gave instructions for the Afternoon of Service and commented that a Salina newspaper story had called the afternoon the largest volunteer event in Salina's history. She thanked all who had worked hard to prepare for the volunteer event and reminded members of the celebration banquet in Heritage Hall at 5:30.

Mike Chamberlain (KE clergy) rose to thank Bishop Jones for leading the conference "with grace and care and inclusion and an appreciation for all three conferences." Bishop Jones received a long standing ovation and spoke of feeling so blessed to be a United Methodist preacher and a bishop, first in Kansas and now of the Great Plains Area. He reminded members that "this conference is a turning point and we have done our work well, but you know what? It's really simply like a huddle at a football game. The real play starts tomorrow and Sunday and Monday and every day thereafter." He then dismissed the members to get ready for the Afternoon of Service.

**CLOSING WORSHIP** - The @The Well Band from the United Methodist Church at the Well in Wichita provided music and leadership for this service. The members of the extended cabinet of the Great Plains Annual Conference were introduced and prayer shawls were prayed over and given to the leaders of the staffs in the three conference offices.

Bishop Jones read from Acts 15 and, in his sermon, continued talking about his experiences in finding himself as a young adult. He related that his entire ministry has been spent trying to help United Methodism reconnect with who it really is and understand that faithfulness to your past requires change for your future.

He listed essential doctrines of United Methodism:

\* "First of all, what's most essential about United Methodism is our deep commitment that God is love.

\* "My second point about the DNA we're discovering together is that God is holy - the God who loves everybody as they are never wants to leave anybody where they are.

\* "Our third doctrine is that Jesus is God. We have got to engage in evangelism to share with people the good news that there is a risen savior and he is still alive and still at work today and can help you follow the Wesleyan way to fulfillment, joy, and happiness.

\* "The next doctrine that's characteristic of us as United Methodists is that the Holy Spirit is God and is still working."

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The message was followed by communion, during which an offering of \$9,872.74 was taken for Zimbabwe, Haiti and Nigeria, and New Church Development. A video of the work done during the Afternoon of Service was shown, and members were invited to take the litany in the bulletin and a red candle home to their churches to use on the first Sunday in January. The Uniting Conference was then dismissed with the benediction: "My brothers and sisters in Christ, go in peace. Grow in God's grace. And may God use each of us to lead churches to become great, disciples to become great, leaders to become great, to transform the world according to God's will. And all God's people said...Amen!"