

🎵 A Note from the Pastor

When Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. A huge storm arose on the lake so that waves were sloshing over the boat. But Jesus was asleep. They came and woke him, saying, “Lord, rescue us! We’re going to drown!” He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you people of weak faith?” Then he got up and gave orders to the winds and the lake, and there was a great calm. The people were amazed and said, “What kind of person is this? Even the winds and the lake obey him!” ~ Matthew 8: 23-27

I spent most of last week in Modesto at Annual Conference Session 2019. The theme for the week was “In the Boat with Jesus. The week of Conference is always busy. We had two lay delegates and two volunteers who attended with me, and I think we all left the conference tired. A report follows of what I consider the highlights; but a full report of all the recommendations, resolutions and petitions is available online at http://calnev-email.brapp.com/files/2019+acs+recommendations%2c+resolutions%2c+and+petitions_compilation+4.2_linked_062119.pdf

I bring greetings from Bishop Carcaño, DS Debra Brady, and two of your former pastors, Marty Murdock and Karen Stoffers-Pugh. I am very excited to announce two things that happened that affect all of us at Wesley. First, I have been reappointed to Wesley for another year of ministry. Let’s do great things together to proclaim the glory of God! Second, we have been selected to be a part of a 30-church “Growing Young Cohort” in partnership with Fuller Youth Institute. I am thrilled to have the chance not only to grow Wesley but also to encourage young people in leadership. Win-win! We will need to develop a team to attend. As many people as are interested may be part of the team and do the on-line training, but only four people may attend the summits in Sacramento. These first of the two summits is October 19 and 20, and if one member of the team is between the ages of 13 and 29, we will receive a \$250 discount. I will need two more adult volunteers to attend the summit, and as many more of you who would like to be part of the local team. Please call the office (871-3030).

Item 1: We passed a Conference budget of just over \$8M, with funding of \$6M from church tithes and the rest from other sources such as grants, earnings and other funds.

Item 2: Report on nominations for various committees within the Annual Conference

Items 3-4: Four UMC churches in the Conference were closed: Isleton, Pacific Grove, and two in Milpitas.

Item 5: Standing rule change affecting the disposition of funds from the sale of local church property. We will no longer have church "Extension Societies," there will now be "District Unions." Conference is trying to change who actually receives the bulk of the funds, but this matter is still under discussion, at least in our district.

Items 6-8: These recommendations come up yearly regarding retired clergy housing, pension rates, and health insurance.

Item 9: Lodi First UMC will be designated as a Historic Site by the Conference Commission on Archives and History

Items 10-11: (both withdrawn)

Item 12: Annual Conference Session (ACS) has created a new task force to look at a variety of ways California/Nevada can stay in compliance (or not) with the changes in the Book of Discipline (BOD) that will go into effect following the recent special General Conference. There were several models suggested, including making the US a Central Conference, so implementation would be more contextual, developing models that range from conservative to progressive or exploring separation from the UMC. The task force will make written and oral reports to the 2020 General Conference.

Item 13: A change to the Standing Rules regarding ACS to reflect the procedures already in effect, such as setting the bar in plenary, where the ACS will take place, etc.

Items 14 and 16: Recommendations for a Samoan and Fijian Church starts: Both were referred to the cabinet.

Item 15: Has to do with Nominations for various Conference Committees. This resolution was referred to the Conference Committee on Nominations and Connectional Leadership Development.

Item 17: This resolution was sent by a committee of which Bob Schwartz and I are members. We are called to reach out to Muslim individuals and worship centers to build “relationships of affection and prayer,” and to reach out to all faith traditions to “build communities of healing and understanding.” We are also to organize a study of White Privilege and the impact of hate groups in our communities. We will do that in the fall.

Item 18: As an Annual Conference, we affirm our commitment to minister to all people, including LGBTQi+ persons and reject the punitive policies of the TrADITIONAL PLAN adopted at GC19.

Item 19: Calls on the conference to urge the governors of California and Nevada to pardon and expunge the records of low-level non-violent drug offenders.

Item 20: “Speaking Up for the Children of Gaza.” Because the people in Gaza (including over a million children) are facing food insecurity due to Israeli occupation, we were asked to share the totality of this resolution with our members. Here is the resolution; the background information is available online. Be it resolved that the California-Nevada Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church strongly recommend that members share and discuss this resolution, in its entirety, with their congregations and, Be it further resolved that the conference encourage members to be in conversation with policymakers, urging them to apply the standards of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as endorsed by the United Methodist Church, especially as those documents relate to the besieged children of Gaza; and, Be it further resolved that this annual conference urge every congregation to engage with Advance # 629001, Augmenting Food Production and Income in Times of Siege: Urban Gardens, and/or Advance # 14908A, Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees – Middle East Council of Churches, as means of involving Conference children and adults in assisting the children of Gaza.

Item 21: Resolves to send a delegation to Governor Gavin Newsom’s office to thank him for the moratorium on the death penalty.

Item 22: Forms a task force to study “the root causes and ramifications of militarism, racism and poverty on children, especially as it pertains to their detainment and incarceration.”

Item 23: Supports the the approval of the full communion proposal at General Conference in 2020.

Item 24: Was not supported: It recommended each church redirect its tithe to support only those ministries that are fully inclusive. It was found to be unconstitutional.

Item 25-32: Recommendations to petition GC20 to give voting rights to licensed Local Pastors, Provisional Elders, Associate members on a number of matters.

Item 33: Supports efforts of the Western Jurisdiction “to reject policies that discriminate against LGBTQ” that were reinforced GC19

Item 34: Urges churches to educate members in the Wesleyan quadrilateral, understandings of personal piety, social holiness, the nature of our theological task, and Prevenient, Justifying and Sanctifying Grace. We are also to learn about the baptismal vows of the UMC, our understanding the realities of diverse gender identities and acknowledge how the local and general church have caused harm by actively and passively discriminating against minority groups. We are also to discuss how we will or will not participate in Methodism following the rulings of GC19.

Item 35: sets the 2020 minimum salary rates for pastors

(There were no items 36-40)

Item 41: Endorses the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act that suspends military and security aid to Honduras and prohibits “multinational bank loans to Honduras until certain human rights conditions are met.”

Item 42: was not passed because the language was merged with item 18, mentioned above.

Item 43: Urges Bishops to find creative ways to fund a special conference of the Western Jurisdiction to live in the spirit of the “One Church Plan.”