

Johnson City District Conference

Sunday, September 24, 2017

Welcome and Prayer – Gerald Casson, host pastor

Hymn – *Come, Christians, Join to Sing*

Election of Secretary – Betty Yeomans-Barton was nominated by Patty Muse and elected.

Conference Strategy Team Report – Leanna Johnson shared that there will be very little change in what churches will be in our district. We will gain the Mountain City area and two churches from the Morristown District. The Strategy Team asks for our patience. They hope to have a lot of things in place by Annual Conference. The team recently held a retreat to put together a task force to look at staffing and financial health. It is not a science. There has been a lot of shift in population since the twelve districts were created. Thank you to those who took part in the surveys that asked for input. The team received 1700 responses which helped them to make informed decisions. The bishop and cabinet did most of the work in setting these boundaries. Leanna will be here afterward to take feedback and answer questions. In the next month we will start to look at names for districts. The team wants your input on that.

District Superintendent Report – Lauri Jo Cranford began by saying as we are working into a new understanding of our new district boundaries, she will continue to be in charge of Kingsport and Johnson City districts. This is a time of transition. Jeff Wright is in charge of Big Stone and will be transitioning into leadership in Kingsport. Please be patient as Lauri Jo may be a little slow in answering emails and phone calls. She is thrilled to be home. She spent eleven years of ministry here before becoming the Kingsport District Superintendent. There is a lot she knows but a lot to learn about the churches here. Lauri Jo looks forward to spending time in your churches and learning about your ministries. This will begin with charge conference time which will be the opportunity to learn what is going on in our churches.

District Lay Leader Report – Nan Carver read the words to a song that is special to her.

He's making diamonds, diamonds

Making diamonds out of dust

He is refining in his timing

He's making diamonds out of us

You have some great diamonds in your church – lay leadership. The key is education. No one knows your church better than lay leaders and members. For this reason, Nan has held two trainings in recent years. She will train even further, with the next topic being the History of Methodism. Why are we Methodist? Pastors are asked to encourage their lay leaders to be there, and to share in that with them.

Camp Bays Mountain Report – Jeff Wadley, Director, directed our attention to the written report in the booklet on pages 10-11. He has three things he wants to highlight. 1) There is a need for camp. In 2017 across Holston Conference, Camp in the Community for children who could not afford to go to camp served 801 campers. Overall 2,704 campers were served by camps across Holston Conference. Camp Bays Mountain is still in the construction phase. Next year we will have 420 spots available for campers. Last summer there were only 30 campers from Johnson City and Kingsport who attended our conference camps. There is a need for camp. 2) Construction phase 1 and phase 2 will be completed by year's end. Hopefully in January/February we will be open for retreats. 3) Board of Directors is very thankful for your giving. We had a goal of \$4.5 million to get the camp open. We have received \$3.1 million. There are other camps in our denomination across the US that are closing. Many conferences do not see a need for camp. In Holston there is something going on here that we can serve 801 in the community. Now we will have 5 camps to serve in the future. If you have not yet come to take a tour of camp, call Jeff and he will take you around.

Wesley Foundation at ETSU – Caleb Frazier reported to the district conference as John Ousley, Director, was at the Wesley Foundation for their annual BBQ and Auction. The ministry is offering Christ to young adults in this difficult time. They held a capital campaign a couple of years ago for Wesley House. \$80,000 was raised and the funds were used to renovate the old parsonage next to the Wesley Foundation. It is now being used by students for housing and leadership training. Over 50 students are in attendance at Wesley Foundation on Tuesday nights. There are multiple small group and Bible studies going on each week. Students have participated in the last year in local missions and a mission trip to Sitka, AK. One student, Samuel Hopson, is currently in seminary. Two more students are planning to go to seminary. So many Wesley Foundation students over the years have gone into ministry. So many have become UM and so many lives have been changed.

Czech Missions Report – Sam Barnett, Chair of the Czech Missions Team started by sharing a story. When he first moved into his home in Erwin he planted a scraggly little evergreen tree near the street. Even though he watered it and nurtured it he noticed it would grow a little bit and then get brown spots. He eventually realized that neighborhood dogs were helping water it. There were times he thought it would die and he would have to pull it up and throw it away. The good Lord watered it but without Sam's additional watering it would not have survived. This is where our Czech missions are at. We planted the tree. We have to water it. We have been doing this for nearly ten years. Six teams went to Czech this year, but there was an opportunity for more teams. 32 people from our district served this year. We reached over 300 children and adults. What we have heard from kids: "I am glad you are here. I am a Christian and it is so hard to be a Christian here. My parents and friends and boyfriend are not Christian."

The English Speaking United Methodist Church was started to serve expats. Now we are serving more local people and people from other countries. Twelve countries are represented in this congregation. It is not easy for the Redmonds living in a place where people do not speak their language. It is a sacrifice. The church is starting to serve others through outreach in places like Horni Pocernice.

We had a real need in the Czech Republic at the time when the tree was planted. There are still brown spots and bad water. We need to serve now more than ever. Interest has waned. Giving is at the lowest it has ever been. We would like to see a fire re-ignited. Ministries like Camp Bays Mountain and Wesley Foundation do not exist in the Czech Republic. The young people we work with need those things. We need this ministry to get to the point of the full grown tree. The district took on the burden of this 10 years ago, but we now have interest in the Holston Conference in helping. The goal is that the conference will embrace this mission. Sam asked Tom Hancock, Chair of the Conference Missions Ministry Team what we need to say to that team to gain their support. He suggested we share Luke 10:2. *The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.* We need you – not just money. We need long term people. People to go for 90 days. People to step out and be uncomfortable. People to serve.

Offering – ESUMC An offering was taken to benefit the Redmond family serving the English Speaking United Methodist Church in Prague. Total given was \$843.

Business of the District Conference:

Nominations – Lauri Jo shared that because we realize this will be a transition year, we asked that people serve for one more year and help us through this transition time. The slate of officers is printed in the Book of Reports. This comes from committee so doesn't need a second. No discussion. Slate of officers elected by hand vote.

At Large Lay Member nominations – Lauri Jo pointed out that we need 20 persons to serve in this capacity, and have received 14 nominations. She opened the floor for nominations. Nominated from the floor: Katie Huffine, Eden; Steve Dugger, Valley Forge; Amanda Onks, Munsey Memorial; Diana Cantler, Munsey Memorial; Glenda Gray, Cokesbury; Sharon Cradic, First Johnson City; Richard Ray, Watauga Point; R.O Smith, Centenary. Ballots were distributed to the laity and instructions given to vote for 20 or fewer names. The following persons were elected: (alphabetical order): John Anderson, Amy Blumberg, Sharon Cradic, Cindy Cutshall, Mark Cutshall, Steve Dugger, David Frost, Andrea Gates, Dell Gates, Glenda Gray, Katie Huffine, Ruth Hyatt, Jennifer Mongold, Andy Nelson, Amanda Onks, Richard Ray, Steve Reis, Hugh Wallace, Peggy Wansley, Craig Zirkle. Elected as alternates were Diana Cantler and R. O. Smith.

Finance – Art Eckerson, Finance Chair, shared that there are very few changes in the budget. The Office Administrator Salary increase is based on a recommendation of the Committee on District Superintendency. Other increases in the personnel section flow from that. We need to increase Telephone/Internet due to a change in carrier because of location change.

In the Missions area, Good Samaritan requested \$10,000 which is a decrease from 2017. Contact Ministries did not send a request for funding so we dropped them from the 2018 budget. We raised Family Promise based on their requested increase.

Overall this proposed budget shows a 1% increase over 2017. The committee is recommending keeping the Fair Share formula at 2.3%.

Art opened the floor for questions. There being none, the conference voted in favor of budget and Fair Share as published in the Book of Reports by voice vote.

District Conference Resolution – This is especially important in this year of transition in case we need to make changes in leadership. The resolution is as follows: *Since there may be business matters that are not completed or are omitted during this session of the District Conference, or business needing action between sessions of the District Conference, it is recommended that the District Discipleship Team be empowered to care for such matters.* This resolution was adopted by hand vote.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper – Gerald Casson, host pastor, led the congregation in communion.

Closing Hymn – *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*

Benediction

Respectfully Submitted by Betty Yeomans-Barton