

Three Rivers District Conference

September 23, 2018

Gray UMC, Johnson City

As members of the Three Rivers District gathered for district conference, photos of the 81 churches that make up our district were projected on the screen. [Link to video](#)

Welcome and Opening Prayer: Rev. Dennis Flaughter, host pastor

Hymn: “Shall we gather at the river” During the hymn, members of the district came forward to bring water from their area, mingling it together in four buckets, representing the four rivers of the Three Rivers District. They placed the varied containers they had brought the water in onto the altar table creating a visible reflection of our diversity.

Election of Secretary: At the suggestion of District Superintendent Lauri Jo Cranford, Betty Yeomans-Barton was elected secretary by voice vote.

Conference Strategy Team Video: The conference viewed a video introducing the idea of Missional Hubs. This is a way for churches to respond to the needs of their communities and work together. [Link to video](#)

Czech Missions Report: Czech Missions Team Chair Sam Barnett. We began this partnership in 2006. Over the years, it has become the “old” mission. But we are no longer the Johnson City District. We are the Three Rivers District and it is time to renew our commitment and introduce this mission to the new district. We have teams that go each year to Vimperk, HoPo, Brno, Slany, Litomerice and to our own English Speaking United Methodist Church (ESUMC) in Prague.

Michelle McKinnon-Young and Gary Young started this ministry in 2011. John and Denise Redmond and their children have continued this ministry. This year Mark and Heather Hicks are going to Prague to replace the Redmond family. The church found its way under Gary and Michelle, and began to grow and find direction under John and Denise. People from all over the world are participating in worship. It isn't just for Americans.

With every mission team that goes to the Czech Republic, we are seeing growth. For the first time this year, a young man was baptized on the first day of camp in Vimperk. On the last day of camp he testified to the group and three more gave their lives to Christ. This year we had a young couple that started being part of the camps many years ago come to the US to learn. They spent a week with First UMC in Johnson City. They traveled to other places in the US to learn ways they can go back and win youth to Christ. We had a team of adults and youth that came and stayed at Camp Bays Mountain and worked with Appalachia Service Project this summer. They came to give back to us.

The number of participants in Czech missions is down. The revenue is down. The interest from our churches is down. We need you. We need participants. We need resources to support scholarships, to support ESUMC. We need prayers. Pastors, invite a speaker to come speak at your church. We will take 10 minutes or the whole sermon time; whatever you want.

A short video was shown with the youth who visited our district this summer, sharing what it is like to be Christian in an atheistic country. [Link to video](#)

Camp Bays Mountain Report: Rev. Jeff Wadley The water he brought today from the camp came from the swimming pool. That water touched at least 300 people that swam in the pool this summer. Jeff had a lot of fun with the Czech team that came this summer. They worked at the camp, and accomplished a lot. There are five camps in Holston but we are not in competition with each other. We are working together to get as many people to come to camp as we can.

It has been six years since the flood at Buffalo Mountain Camp. This means that on the first Sunday of June 2018, we opened camp for the first time in our area in six years. 258 campers attended Camp Bays Mountain this year. 21 campers made a commitment to camp for the first time. 24 expressed a call to ministry.

Camp Bays Mountain is now open for weekend retreats, weekday retreats, parties, group meetings. We are ready to receive you. Our Capital Campaign had an original goal of \$4 million. We are only \$375,000 from achieving that goal. One day soon we will be able to ring that bell (at camp) to signal that we have everything paid for. The five camps had a 60% increase in the number of campers this year. It was a phenomenal year. Other conferences are closing camps and selling properties, we are building camps. Thank you for what you have done to get this camp open. The camp's report is printed on pages 10 and 11 of the Book of Reports. Camp in the Community was held at First UMC, Johnson City. That report is on pages 12 and 13.

Wesley Foundation at ETSU Report: Rev. John Ousley. Today is the annual BBQ and auction. Next year's BBQ and auction will be September 29 so that it doesn't fall on the same date as district conference. Many of our Wesley Foundation students serve at our conference camps, so there is a close connection between camping and campus ministry. Thank you for your support over the years.

Sam Hopson, Wesley Foundation student, graduated from Candler in the spring and is now pastoring a church. We have student led Bible studies at the Wesley Foundation, and meals and worship on Tuesday nights. Churches are invited to serve that Tuesday night meal. Our mission trip this year will be to the Four Corners Ministry in New Mexico. Students are willing to come to your church to share about this mission trip as a fundraiser. If each church would give \$300, it would be a great thing for Wesley Foundation. We have five students living in Wesley House. Keep us in your prayers that we can continue to reach students. The Wesley Foundation's report can be found on pages 14 and 15.

Offering: An offering was received to benefit ESUMC Prague. The total given was \$581.

Nominations Report: The nominations report was printed on pages 24 and 25 of the Book of Reports. There were no questions or changes to the report. James Keys moved that we approve these leaders for the following year. The motion was seconded. These leaders were approved by hand vote.

Nominations for At Large Members: Our district needs to elect 26. We have 10 listed in the Book of Reports: John Anderson (Munsey), Amy Blumberg (Gray), Lynice Broyles (Gray), David Frost (Gray), Andrea Gates (Piney Flats), Dell Gates (Piney Flats), Dan Gill (First, Mountain City), Jennifer Mongold (Sulphur Springs), Andy Nelson (First, Johnson City), Steve Reis (First, Johnson City). The district superintendent opened the floor for nominations. Nominated from the floor were John Baker (Gray UMC), Terry Muse (Munsey), Hugh Wallace (Telford), Mark Cutshall (Telford) R. O Smith (Centenary), Kristie Osterberg (Albright). John Rambo (Eden) Jennifer Boarman (First JC), Joel Thompson (Ebenezer), Emily Harding (Wheeler), Peggy Wansley (Eden), Dan Cross (Sulphur Springs) Joanne Baker (Gray), Cindy Cutshall (Telford), Sandy Knight (Marvins Chapel), Katie Huffine (Eden), Amanda Onks (Munsey), Dianna Cantler (Munsey). This gives us a total of 28 names. Ballots were distributed and the laity were asked to mark the two that they would like to elect as alternates. Dianna Cantler and

Amanda Onks were elected as alternates, and the remaining 26 will serve as our At-Large Lay Members for 2019.

Finance: Art Eckerson. The proposed 2019 Budget is printed on page 28 of the Book of Reports. There are very few changes for 2019. Under personnel expenses, the Committee on District Superintendency proposed a 5% increase in salary. Other lines in this section such as pension and taxes flow out of that expense. There is a reduction in copy expense. This is not a typo. Our long time salesman brought us a proposal for a new, updated copier at a lower expense. There is an increase in the cost for our payroll subscription.

We had put out a request to mission organizations as we do each year. At the time of our meeting we did not have a response from Coalition for Kids so the amount we had budgeted for CFK last year was split three ways: \$2500 for Coalition for Kids, \$2500 for ESUMC Prague, and \$2500 for First UMC Johnson City to support a new youth and children's ministry in their community.

We also received a request for an increase of \$3000 in the Housing Allowance for the District Superintendent. We have invested funds from the sale of the parsonage at the Holston Conference Foundation. \$6,000 of those proceeds can be used for the housing allowance which is well within the parameters set by the foundation and the Book of Discipline. There is a slight 1% increase in the budget over 2018.

David Frost moved that the budget be accepted. The motion was seconded. The budget was accepted by hand vote.

Fair Share Apportionments for 2019. The amounts for Fair Share Apportionments are printed on page 29 of the Book of Reports. Where there is a zero in the column for 2018, it signifies that these churches were previously in another district and paid their apportionments to their former district through 2018. The District Superintendent issued a challenge that 100% of the churches pay SOMETHING toward District Fair Share Apportionment and Conference tithe in 2019.

District Celebration: As she combined the water that had been brought forward at the beginning of the service, District Superintendent Cranford shared: Today we celebrate our unity and our diversity. We take water from Mountain City, from Unicoi, Erwin, Carter County, Greene County, Sullivan County, Johnson City, from lakes, streams, pools, the water bottle in our car; and we blend it. We mix it so that it can represent all of who we are as the Three Rivers District. Jesus told the woman at the well that she should be asking him for the living water. With the water we have collected today, we will water the tree that will be planted at the district ministry center. Each and every one of our churches has a role. The ministry that we provide comes from the same source. Together we will share the living water, step back, and see what grows. The containers that we brought water in come in different shapes, different colors, and have different uses, just like us. We celebrate that we are united as a district and that we are diverse as a district.

The body joined together in a liturgy provided by Holston Conference celebrating the creation of nine new districts, and then shared in Holy Communion.

Closing Hymn: One Bread One Body

Adjournment and Closing Prayer: District Superintendent Lauri Jo Cranford

Respectfully submitted: Betty Yeomans-Barton

