

Report from the General Conference

(Just a heads up: this will be a long one)

I recently came back from General Conference and I thought I would be able to share with you a brief report on what transpired there, but I am afraid I'm still struggling with knowing what to share. I am still trying to make sense of my own experience and of what I witnessed. Then, coming back to several significant pastoral care matters, I haven't had the chance to truly sit with my experience from General Conference. Nevertheless, I will attempt to share some things, and I apologize for this being a long article.

As you may know, the General Conference is the legislative body of the United Methodist Church. It is the official body that sets the direction for the denomination and determines the policies to govern our mission and ministry. There were hundreds of legislation items to be considered from a wide range of issues, including: church structure, the work of general agencies, central and annual conferences responsibilities and structures, matters pertaining to bishops and clergy, the mission of the church, and budgets. There were also petitions for resolutions on a variety of social issues, including: human sexuality, abortion, religious freedom, racism, xenophobia, disabilities, sustainable and responsible investment, immigration, care of creation/environment, stewardship, and a slew of others.

Needless to say, there were so many legislative items to be considered that the General Conference was only able to cover a few, something that is true for all General Conferences I believe.

If you were following the news or social media about General Conference, you will know that one of the issues that General Conference spent more time with is the issue around the inclusion of lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgendered/queer/intersex persons in the life of the church. On this matter alone, there were approximately sixty plus petitions and legislative items to be considered.

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LIGHTINGS AND ALTAR FLOWERS...

The Tower lighting for May is given in loving memory of my parents, Norman and Mary Fletcher and my brother, David Fletcher by Barbara Fletcher.

The Rose window lighting for May is given in loving memory of Dorothy Aho, Axel Swanberg, and Clara Swanberg by Nancy Aho, Heidi O'Leary and family.

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER THIS WEEK...

- ✠ Tim for continued healing and strength. May he feel God's love.
- ✠ Governor Charlie Baker on the loss of his mother.
- ✠ Barbara and Donald McLaren as they travel in Africa this week and next.
- ✠ Audrey Danso's 8th birthday on May 24th. Thank God for adding a year to her. I want God to continue to bless and protect her throughout her life. Amen.
- ✠ Neighbors with 3 children under 5 and one due in June. They need a new home immediately.
- ✠ Give thanks for the gift of friends and family.
- ✠ Betsy and Bruce Pennino welcomed a granddaughter, Sophie Marline Pennino, born on May 22nd. Sophie was 9 lbs. 8oz., and is doing well, as is her mom.
- ✠ Family and friends of Mildred Froemel who passed away Tuesday, May 17th.
- ✠ Diane Kane for continued prayers for Gods peace and healing.
- ✠ Someone's family all around the world who are sick
- ✠ Peace in the world and the entire church
- ✠ Vince as he waits to hear from an important job interview
- ✠ Those who are victims of world hunger
- ✠ Phyllis and Anthony who are thanking God for adding one year to their son's life; that God may guide him home and protect him throughout his life in His name
- ✠ My family, that my children will soon be able to come from Ghana to live with me; thanking the entire church for being my pillar in a time of need.
- ✠ Marriages all over this country and the world, that they may grow strong, and for restoration for those that are broken
- ✠ The United Methodist church as it struggles with knowing how to be church faithfully

Thank You, Thank You, THANK YOU!!!

We have received a nice thank you from Florence House for the more than four cartons of household supplies for their young mothers who will be moving to their first apartment. We wish to thank all who participated during the month of April. ~ Carolyn Bellil

General Conference continued...

A note about the legislative process: In our denomination, any United Methodist Church member, conference, general agency, or formal body of the church (e.g. a Sunday School program) can submit a petition or legislative item to be considered at General Conference. While at General Conference, there are several legislative committees that are formed to help sift through all these petitions and discern how to consolidate, revise, and select which ones can come to the floor of General Conference for vote. It's a cumbersome process.

In light of this process, you can imagine that there were petitions and legislative items from a wide range of perspectives. But, from the looks of things, in the legislative committees, any petitions that seemed to lean in the direction of inclusion were being voted down, and it was clear that the General Conference was bracing for a significant battle.

In the midst of all this, word came out that there had been some private conversations with the bishops about the possibility of the denomination splitting over the issue of human sexuality. The Bishops quickly responded to reject the idea of a church split, and to affirm their commitment to church unity. In an unprecedented motion, the Bishops were asked to provide the General Conference with some plan for a way forward in light of all the tension. The bishop came back with a plan that would table all conversation around human sexuality, form a commission to study the matter, and bring back recommendations for a way forward at a special general conference to be called before the next General Conference in 2020.

Some people welcomed this plan, others rejected it and saw it as a refusal to act on the part of the bishops, and yet others were skeptical or cynical about the plan, wondering what difference it was going to make since there were other such commissions in the past.

The conversation around human sexuality, however, was not the only contentious item of debate. There were others, including a debate over the very rules that the General Conference would employ for debate and discussion. As you may know, the General Conference employs parliamentary procedure and Roberts Rules of order to make decisions. It had been proposed that a new way of holding conversation around difficult matters would be needed. So one such way was put forward –

General Conference continued...

Rule 44 – which would have allowed for small groups to be formed in order to hold discussion around difficult matters, and to use the fruit of those small group discussion to discern new legislation to present to the floor. The General Conference spent three days debating this new rule, and in the end voted it down.

My main role at General Conference, had Rule 44 been approved, would have been to be a part of the team overseeing the process outlined in Rule 44. When the rule did not pass, our team’s role was to continue to facilitate conversation and attend to relational and communication matters around the General Conference process. So, for me, I spent my time being in relationship with the African Delegates. I listened to their concerns and frustrations and to how they were perceiving and experiencing the General Conference. Our team would gather together two to three times a day to share the feedback we were receiving and to discern any issues that needed the care and attention of those who were leading and overseeing the General Conference. In many respects, our team was providing “pastoral care” to the delegates with whom we were in relationship.

It was an exhausting experience. I have yet to reflect on any lessons learned and implications for our local church ministry. The most I can say today is simply this: Please pray for the United Methodist Church! If there is a time when we need the out-breaking of the Holy Spirit to sweep ever so powerfully across the denomination, now is the time! So, I can only pray, Come, Holy Spirit Come!

Thank you for indulging me.

~ *Pastor Shandi*

GRADUATES... Do you have a child(ren) graduating from high school or college? If so, please email your child’s name(s), school he/she is graduating from, and where he/she plans on attending next. We will be lifting up their names on Sunday, June 12th. Please email Debi **by June 8th** at office@wesleyworc.org or leave a note in the office when you are in church. (Please be sure to print neatly so I can read what is written.) Thank you.

COME LEARN ABOUT PARENTING IN AMERICA... Parenting in general is a challenge. Parenting in America can even be more challenging if you grew up in a different culture. You are invited to a Forum on Parenting in America. You will learn more about the standards and expectations for disciplining children in America and of any legal implications. You will have a conversation with other African parents, learn some new parenting techniques, and get your parenting questions answered. The event will be held on **Saturday, June 4th from 9:30 am -1:00pm** at the African Community Education Program (Fanning Building, 24 Chatham St., Worcester). The event is collaboratively sponsored by the African Community Education Program, the MA Department of Children and Families, Worcester Public Schools, the Worcester Family Partnership, Family Health Center's WIC Program and the Worcester Connections Family Resource Center of YOU, Inc. A light lunch will be provided. In order to prepare a count for the food and resources, *please sign-up with Pastor Shandi: 508-799-4191 x108.*

SUMMER CAMP IS NOT OUT OF REACH! Summer camp experiences can last a lifetime for a child, and we want to make sure that any Wesley family interested in sending their child to a Methodist summer camp can do so. Thanks to the generosity of the hungry customers at United Methodist Women bake sales, we can offer "camperships" -- funding to help a child attend camp this summer. Children's Christian Education Director Jean Grant has request forms for interested parents to fill out. Camp registration season is soon, so please let Jean know if you'd like to apply for a campership. All requests remain confidential.

HERALD VOLUNTEER(S) NEEDED: We are looking for a couple of volunteers to help put the Herald together on Wednesday mornings. They begin around 8:30/9 am and finish by 10:30. Often we will gather for coffee, snacks, and fellowship time afterwards. If you have a couple of hours every other Wednesday (sometimes a Thursday) and would like to help, please speak with Debi in the office. Thank you.

RAMADAN OBSERVANCE... The Ramadan Observance this year will be held at the Islamic Society of Great Worcester mosque at 57 Laurel Street in Worcester (not the mosque on East Mountain St. this year). The observance will be held on the evening of Sunday, June 26. There is no charge, but seats need to be reserved, so if you wish to attend our interfaith celebration, please inform Margaret Watson, as the mosque has asked us for a head count.

FROM CARTY CUPBOARD FOOD PANTRY

As we get close to the end of the school year we are trying to get together some extra snacks and healthy food items for families with children. So when the cry "there's nothing good to eat!" goes out we can have some healthy things to offer them. We are looking for the following items to offer them...

Granola bars
Cereal with high protein
Fruit cups packed in juice not syrup
100% juice, juice boxes

Thank you for thinking of the children in need when you shop. ~ *Nancy Spencer*

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School! There are two easy ways to register for our fun summer camp! Complete a registration form at the office desk and turn into the office or Jean Grant or register at this link: <https://www.groupvbsspro.com/vbs/ez/WesleyWorcester>.

Volunteers Needed!!! Vacation Bible School relies on the combined effort of its many volunteers. We had a great turn out of over 45 kids last year with over 20 volunteers! Interested in helping with our children's ministry? This is a great way! We can use help in ALL areas - behind the scenes (donations, decorating, preparation, shopping, cooking, cleaning, set-up) or hands-on with the kids (station leaders, youth crew leaders, registration, music/sound). All help is welcomed! Please see Jean Grant to inquire. I'd love your help! grantgirl05@yahoo.com or 508-886-6571.

Teachers, Greeters, and Helpers... Our Sunday School program also relies on its dedicated volunteers. We are seeking anyone interested in helping - from helpers (youth, adults), to greeters (youth, adults), or teachers (adults). See Jean. Scheduling is flexible and based on your own personal availability.

Closet Clean up... I would love some hands-on helpers to spend a few hours with me to sort through two of the Sunday School closets. If you are available to help out, let me know. We can schedule the clean up for a weekend or a weekday. Thanks so much!!

MISSION MATTERS

Volunteering at IHN... Thank you to all who answered IHN's call to serve outside of Wesley's regularly scheduled weeks-- Chris Kerns, Emmanuel Okrah, Gladys Poku, Judith and Rebecca Barton, Mercy Peacock, and Nancy Cook. Chris and Nancy each covered two shifts, and Chris worked at the Community Supper before going to IHN for the night!

May 21st Community Supper and Leaders Needed... A large group from Florence House attended the May 21st meal, and also 4 people from a group home... A resident had died there a few hours before, and the coordinator wanted to take the others out of the home to a positive place. Wesley was the positive place she thought of, because her husband had grown up here.

July 30, Aug. 27, and Oct. 29 are the 2016 dates remaining for you or your group to volunteer to lead a community supper. Please talk with Betsy Pennino or Lisa Fagerstrom about which month to reserve and to get the several pages of suggestions for ease in running a community supper. (They're in the Mission Committee mailbox.)

June 25th Community Supper... Esther Circle volunteered to produce the June meal of spaghetti and meatballs, salad, beverages and dessert. *Donations of desserts (finger foods) would be much appreciated.* You are always encouraged to share the meal with our neighbors .

Give a Used Phone... Save a Life... Safe Havens, an interfaith partnership against domestic violence, is again collecting used cell phones (not-so-smart phones only), with batteries and chargers. Newer phones will be reprogrammed *to allow victims of domestic violence or elder abuse to dial 911 and other emergency numbers.* Older phones will be sold for parts, and the proceeds will support Safe Havens' work to help victims and survivors. Often abusers try to prevent victims from phoning for help, so your used phone could become a lifeline.

You may leave your discarded phones in the Brewer Hall box labeled for Safe Havens. Pastor Shandi will take them to Annual Conference on June 16th.

IHN's "Family Fundsday" on Saturday, June 4th... A "Families Together" day of arts & crafts, games, raffles, music, homemade food, bake sale, etc. will be offered on June 4, starting at 1 pm. The \$3 admission will support IHN's renovating a 3rd bathroom. The location is the Unitarian Universalist Church, 90 Holden St. in Worcester (next to Bancroft School).

1 Thessalonians, *In Context* (1 Thess 2:1-20)

{notes from the Brewer Hall Study Group, May 8-15, 2016}

Previously (Chapter 1), Paul had begun this letter to the Jesus group at Thessalonika (established less than seven months previously), with a formal introduction, and had recounted the positive reports about this group that he had received since then from the prior Jesus groups in Macedonia and Achaia.

Attitude of Paul and Associates

(vv. 2:1-2) {The initial visits of Paul and associates to Philippi and Thessalonika are recorded in detail in Acts 16:12-40, and 17:1-9. They were indeed “shamefully treated” at Philippi (a Roman colony and the leading city in that district of Macedonia) but were ultimately vindicated by the magistrates who came in person to publically apologize and release them. Their visit to Thessalonika was far less hostile.}

Paul’s use of the phrase *theō ēmōn* (“God of us”; i.e., “our God”) reinforces that he and his audience share the same deity – the God of Israel, whose Gospel he brings. The prior opposition that he had faced on his arrival in Thessalonika resulted from the local Israelite community’s feeling aggrieved by Paul’s {sheep stealing} among their members. *Their* God of Israel already had a theocracy in Jerusalem, to which the local Israelite community subscribed. The past was normative, social interactions were approved only with others who held traditional values, and innovations and change agents were suspect. To his opponents, Paul clearly sounded like a false prophet, to be dealt with according to Deut 13:1-5, 12-18. Thus, Paul’s insistence on his own positive qualities (v. 10).

(vv. 3-4) The terms *plánēs* (“error”; NRSV “deceit”), *akatharsias* (“uncleanness”; NRSV “impure motives”), and *dólō* (“guile”; NRSV “trickery”) characterized false prophets in Israel’s history.

(vv. 5-9) Paul notes that the “apostles of Christ” were authorized to demand support from the Jesus groups that they established, a *quid pro quo* mentioned later (1 Cor 9:1-18). Yet emphasizing the purity of his motives, he waives such a reciprocal obligation on the part of the Thessalonians, and supports himself.

(vv. 10-12) The term *dóxan* (“glory”) refers to the visible features that reveal one’s honor status. The goal of Jesus-group members is to participate in a new political system – the kingdom of God.

(vv. 13-15) Paul communicates his awareness that the Jesus group he had established in Thessalonika was able to endure and persevere in face of conflict from traditionalist Israelites, as had the Jesus groups in Judea.

[The first people to adopt an innovation such as the Gospel of God by a change agent such as Paul are called innovators (risk takers, controlling adequate material resources – a meeting place and support for those who might be cut off from community aid) and first adopters (locally focused opinion leaders, serving as role models for other members of the social system who wish to become adopters).]

(v. 16) The Judeans who are hindering Paul from his change-agent task of speaking to the *éthnesin* (“nations” or “other peoples”; usually translated “Gentiles”; here, better interpreted as ‘Israelites among the other peoples’) seem to be those who had previously supported Paul in his Pharisaic zeal to destroy the Jesus groups. “But (God’s) wrath...” *éphthasen dè ep’ autoùs* (“...came on them to the end”) uses the “proleptic aorist” verb form, describing a completed action soon to occur. The wrath that Paul had in mind was likely a catastrophe emerging from the sky over Judea and onto Jerusalem, sent by the God of Israel to maintain his honor in the face of continued Israelite sins.

Paul’s Desire to Revisit

(v. 17) Paul’s attachment to the Jesus group at Thessalonika is understandable considering the early stages of small-group development: anxiety and low-level commitment in the forming stage; intra-group conflict and clique formation in the storming stage; and conflict resolution and growing cohesion in the norming stage.

(v. 18) Paul’s claim that he was hindered from returning to Thessalonika, twice, by *satanàs* (“Satan”) is his way of saying that there was some deception or ruse that he attributed to the tricks of this cosmic non-human person whose role is to test loyalty to God (like the secret agents of the Persian emperor testing the loyalty of his subjects).

(vv. 19-20) Paul now shares the motive behind his dedication as God’s change agent – to be honored at the coming of the Lord Jesus. The Thessalonians, who have adopted and persevered in the Gospel of God, form the basis of his hope and joy soon to be experienced in public honor (“glory”) at the Lord’s coming. Paul’s assumption is that he belonged to the inner circle of Jesus’ apostles, to be observed

DID YOU KNOW?

The celebration of Pentecost marks the end of the Great Fifty Days of Easter, after which we enter in a portion of the liturgical year known as Ordinary Time, a time when we mark the weeks between the great cycles of the liturgical year. However did you notice that the first Sunday in this season of Ordinary Time had a special name? In the liturgical calendar the first Sunday after Pentecost is known as *Trinity Sunday*, a celebration that commemorates a doctrine of the church rather than an event. The word *Trinity*, defining God as “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”, derives from the Latin *trinus* “threefold, triple”. Although the New Testament clearly contains texts that refer to the persons of the Trinity, the word *Trinity* is not a biblical term. It is believed that the actual term *Trinity* was first used to refer to the members of the Godhead by the early church father Tertullian in the late 2nd or early 3rd Century. As a formal doctrine of the church, the Trinity was further defined by the councils of the church in the 4th and 5th Centuries. The actual designation of a specific Sunday of the church year as Trinity Sunday occurred even later—by decree of Pope John XXII in 1334.

Our opening hymn for worship on Trinity Sunday, *Holy, Holy, Holy* (UMH 64) is described in the *Companion to the United Methodist Hymnal* as a reflection on the “transcendence and praiseworthiness of the Holy Trinity.” It is a 19th century text that was written specifically for the occasion of Trinity Sunday.

Although only one Sunday a year is designated as Trinity Sunday, the theology of the Trinity pervades our worship throughout the entire liturgical year. For example, the doxology that we sing each week at the time of the presentation of the offering includes Trinitarian language. Similarly, symbols of the Trinity are very common in church architecture and visual art as physical reminders of this important doctrine. In the case of our own sanctuary, the beautiful stained glass window above the altar is inspired by the *Te Deum*, a wonderful text of the early church that is also sometimes known as the *Canticle of the Holy Trinity*, as in the *United Methodist Hymnal* (#80). The first section of the text is largely a hymn of praise to God the Father which concludes with a Trinitarian doxology. Thus each week in worship we not only sing of this basic tenet of our faith, but we also have in front of us a visual representation recalling this important doctrine of the church.

Submitted by,

Deborah A. O’Driscoll

2016 HERALD SCHEDULE

Below are the next Herald mailing dates along with the deadline dates.

Article Deadline Date	Herald Mailing Date
Mon., June 6	Wed., June 8
Mon., June 20	Wed., June 22

If you have an article, please email it as a Word attachment to:

office@wesleyworc.org

ALTAR FLOWERS on Sundays are available for donation in honor, celebration or in memory of a loved one or friend. Stop by the office and reserve the date in the Altar Flower book. You can reserve the chapel or the sanctuary. After church you are welcome to take the flowers home to enjoy or you may leave them to be delivered to a shut-in or member/friend in the hospital or in rehab. The cost for the two arrangements in either the chapel or sanctuary is \$50. Please be sure to complete a form with the dedication and return it to Debi with the payment as soon as you are able.



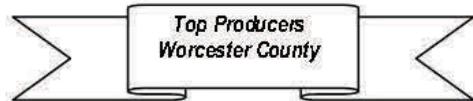
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WESLEY HERALD
MAY 26, 2016

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WESLEY STAFF & LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Pastor Shandirai Mawokomatanda
- Director of Music Ministries Brett Maguire
- Music Assistant Deborah O'Driscoll
- Director of Children's Christian Education Jean Grant
- Director of Christian Formation & Discipleship Lisa Fagerstrom
- Toddler Care Leader Lori Conlon
- Building Superintendent Phil Johnson
- Business Administrator Lorna Mattus-Merrill
- Church Secretary Debi Ritacco
- Custodians Carol Flionis, Gerard Piscitelli, Steve Boyns
- Head Usher David Dagle
- Church Council Ron Ramsay, Tom Ingrassia
- Board of Trustees Annelle Benson
- Carty Cupboard Food Pantry Nancy Spencer
- Communion Steward
- Education Work Area
- Finance & Stewardship Co-Chairs Michael Edmunds, William Wong
- Ghanaian Association Paul Hayfron
- Hospitality Team Vivian Assie
- Layleader Deborah O'Driscoll
- Medical Ministry Ron Ramsay
- Memorial Gifts Linda Carlson
- Mission Coordinator Betsy Pennino
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