

Lay Member Summary



2014 Florida Annual Conference
The Lakeland Center, Lakeland, Florida

The Mission of God was the theme of the 2014 Florida Annual Conference, and around 2000 Florida United Methodists gathered at the Lakeland Center June 11-14 to learn and share about changing the world in mission with God.

We Are In Mission with God

Annual Conference speakers included GBGM's general secretary Dr. Thomas Kemper, who led a discussion about the changing role of missions. Jim Salley, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, delivered an inspiring address about AU's mission followed by a performance by the AU choir. Louisiana Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey delivered the sermon for Friday's ordination service, and Rev. Pam Cahoon, former executive director of CROS ministries, preached at the service of remembrance. Dr. Robert Tuttle, Jr. led Bible study. Bishop Ken Carter led the Communion Service on Wednesday evening.

- ❖ **Dr. Thomas Kemper:** Missionaries today "are really going from everywhere to everywhere," said Kemper, who was invited to lead a panel discussion Thursday afternoon at Annual Conference 2014. He showed audience members a map tracing paths to and from all parts of the globe. "So you can see that there's a Brazilian serving in Switzerland with a Hispanic-Latino community in Geneva, starting a church, building a church. "Mission now is from the margins. This is true in Vietnam. There are over 150 churches now, only in the last 10 years," Kemper said. In the Congo, Kemper said he saw people in tears because they were so happy to be sending missionaries to other places, instead of simply receiving them – and thus becoming a true part in the mission movement. Mission work is no longer simply done by other people elsewhere, Kemper reminded the members. "We are in this together," Kemper said. "Everybody is a missionary. Every Christian has to be a missionary."
- ❖ **Enrichment Sessions.** What used to be the pre-conference workshops offering was restructured this year to occur within the annual conference meeting on Thursday and Friday. The enrichment sessions supported and aligned with The Mission of God theme. Some sample titles included: Cost of Poverty Experience, Young Adults on the Ministry and Mission Journey, Guidelines for Engaging Multi-Cultural Differences, Helping Your Church Take Its Next Step in Mission and Safe-Keeping the Heart of the Church through Missions.
- ❖ **Telling Our Stories About the Mission of God.** Several members of the Florida conference shared stories about their experiences of being in mission with God or observing the mission of God being revealed. They provided inspiring stories about what they are doing individually, in a small group or with a congregation to fulfill God's dream for the world.

In Mission with God to Stop Hunger Now: A Million Reasons Campaign Exceeds Goals:

"A Million Reasons" - the yearlong Florida Conference mission to package 1,000,000 meals to fight hunger - was concluded at Annual Conference with a celebratory address from Rev. Pam Carter, who thanked churches small and large from all over Florida who packaged 1,685,801 meals, exceeding the goal by nearly 70 percent.

Strategic Leadership Team Report

In the fall of 2013, an SLT task force presented nine recommendations that were then reviewed and approved by the SLT, CFA and the Cabinet. These include continued work by the Conference Treasurer's office around District financial controls, standardization of District apportionments and the creation of an investment committee. It will include **(into the future)** work on Property Management and evaluation of properties in transition, working with Mission

Congregations, and helping churches who are struggling to be sustainable into the future. In evaluating the new Conference structure and the overall fulfillment of the mission and vision, members of the SLT met with each Conference office or Director to discuss and discover resource alignment. Continued work and evaluation of resource alignment will be needed into the future. The team is excited about a new project from our Bishop that would center on “creating fresh expressions” through identification and multiplication of “third places.”

<http://freshexpressionsus.org>

Bishop’s Offering

Conference churches gave over \$73,000 toward the offerings collected during the communion service Wednesday and the Thursday evening of Missions Emphasis. The bishop’s offering will be distributed equally to two areas.

Scholarships for students at Africa University. This is a United Methodist-related institution that provides higher education and opportunity to students who otherwise would not be able to afford it. The scholarships will go to students in the university’s Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance and the School of Theology. **Young adult missional movement.** The initial plan calls for three missional sites to be chosen in Florida and up to 12 young adults selected for yearlong mission projects. The participants will live in the community to be served; they’ll have a “rule of life,” and they will have spiritual direction and leadership training built into their year of service. This is seen as an opportunity to equip young adults to be the Christian leaders of the future.

In Mission with God to Advocate for Children

Around 90 people participated Advocacy Days and the walk to the capitol this year, with the purpose of reminding state lawmakers that some of their youngest constituents need their attention. The focus this year was supporting bills that would expand Medicaid eligibility, remove a five-year waiting period for immigrant children with lawful residency to qualify for Florida KidCare and beef up protection of children subjected to human trafficking. The conference provides mission interns to outreach centers and churches for direct ministry to children through day camps, and continued promoting the availability of supplemental Alice Lockmiller Grants for churches with programs for children in their communities.

Treasurer’s Report

- The conference treasurer reported that local church membership was 262,000 in 2013, down 7,000 or 2.6% from 2012. Average weekly worship attendance was down 2,400 or 1.7% at 135,400.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent was up from 394 in 2012 to 400 in 2013; the percentage paid was 85 percent in 2013, compared to 83 percent in 2012.
- CF&A’s 2015 budget request is 1.89% more than 2014.

Celebrating Partners in Ministry

- Ordination, licensing and commissioning of over 50 individuals. Ordained: eleven as elders, one as deacon. Commissioned: 18 as provisional elders, two as provisional deacons; No Recognitions of Orders in 2014; Licensed as local pastors: 23.
- 175th anniversary for two churches; 150th anniversary for one church; 125th anniversaries for 11 churches; 100th anniversaries for 6 churches; 75th anniversary for one church; 50th anniversaries for 4 churches, and 25th anniversaries for 3 churches.
- Ministries of six churches were recommended for discontinuation.

Complete coverage of this year’s annual conference event is available through the Florida Conference Connection, the Florida United Methodist News Services at <http://floridaconferenceconnection.info>. Full ministry reports are included in the 2014 Workbook on the website at www.flumc2.org.

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