

Lay Member Summary

Being United in Christ was the theme of the 2012 Florida Annual Conference, and around 2000 Florida United Methodists gathered at the Lakeland Center June 14-16 to learn how to change the world through Being United in Christ in their lives, their churches, and their communities.

Living Together in Unity

Speakers at the 2012 Annual Conference included guests across denominational lines. As Bishop Whitaker observed, the Holy Spirit “has been moving to bring back together Christians who have been separated by the cause of ecumenism. The church is the new community created by the Spirit of God to show to the world the way to live together in unity.”

- ❖ Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon helped open the conference June 14 speaking on ecumenical unity, calling Christian unity as central to God’s plan of salvation. A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) clergyman and a long-time educator and ecumenical leader, he is a retired General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. “Christian unity is not an option,” he said. “It is a gift to be received and expressed. ... Everyone who has communion with Jesus Christ has communion with everyone else who has communion with Jesus Christ.” He added, “The church is called to be a demonstration project of what God intends for all of creation.”
- ❖ From other denominations, Bishop John White of the African Methodist Episcopal Church preached during the Service of Holy Communion, and Bishop Ed Benoway of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America preached at the Service of Licensing, Commissioning and Ordination. President Gesner Paul of the Methodist Church in Haiti signed a revised covenant between the church in Haiti and the Florida Conference. Rev. Russell Meyer, executive director of the Florida Council of Churches, also spoke at the Conference.

Being United in Purpose and Vision

The Strategic Leadership Team made recommendations to the Conference for the alignment of resources and structures around our Purpose and Vision. Missional outcomes, with supporting action steps, focus on four areas: disciples who are becoming more like Jesus; congregations where all people are welcome; communities being blessed with Kingdom impact, and conference structures centered on fulfilling our mission. The delegates approved the report.

Being United in Appreciation of Bishop Timothy and Melba Whitaker

The farewell tribute to Bishop Timothy and Melba Whitaker was lighthearted and deeply felt, and the Conference expressed gratitude to the Whitakers during Saturday morning’s session, noting that his leadership has inspired the Florida Conference to reach out in ways to unite people.

Reaching Out to Unite People

Haiti-Florida Covenant. Bishop Whitaker and the Covenant team discerned the need for a revised Haiti-Florida Covenant, and the renewed partnership is defined by openness to God’s leading in mutual ministry. Because of this reaching out, more doors are opening to ministry with annual conference leadership. The Covenant was signed during the Conference.

Inclusivity Training. Geraldine McClellan, chair of the Commission on Religion and Race, updated members about three anti-racism measures approved in 2011. The clergy *Inclusivity Training* events have begun, with about 100 attending the first one. The next three will be held in September and October 2012. The cabinet is developing a process for fostering missional success in *cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments*, and a new local church version of the Employee Conduct Policy is being developed that *adds racial harassment as prohibited behaviors* in the Conference Employee Conduct Policy (more below). 2012 General Conference Hospitality Team. Rev. Jim Harnish and Marilyn Swanson led reaching out to Florida Methodists, building a hospitality force of over 1000 volunteers. Volunteers reached out to provide warm, Florida hospitality to General Conference delegates from all over the world, and the Conference celebrated the team’s success.

Being United as Caretakers of the Future

The renovated Barnett Lodge at Warren W. Willis Camp consecration service took place on June 2, and 300 attendees celebrated this milestone in the TOGETHER! for Kids and Camps capital campaign. The generosity of many Methodists showed a true commitment to the future generations of the church.



Being United in Working to End Childhood Hunger

Goals for 2012 include creating a model to "Adopt a Legislator" to promote social action throughout the year, provide mission interns to outreach centers and churches for direct ministry to children through day camps, and continued awareness and availability of supplemental Alice Lockmiller Grants. This year Lockmiller grants were awarded to 20 churches with programs for children in their communities.

Strengthening partnerships

Conference churches gave \$44,423 toward the offering collected during the communion service June 14. Seventy percent will be for mission projects in the East Angola Conference based upon needs identified by our missionaries, Leonardo and Cleivy Garcia, and endorsed by our team overseeing the partnership between the East Angola and Florida Conferences. The remaining 30% will support Alfalit, a Miami-based non-profit organization that promotes literacy worldwide. Alfalit celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, and the women of the Florida Conference were key contributors to its creation.

New Employment Conduct Policy

Wendy McCoy, Conference Director of Human Resources, reported that a new local church version of the Employee Conduct Policy is being developed for adoption by local churches. This policy addresses racial harassment, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct, and computer use/electronic communications. It is being recommended to replace the current "Local United Methodist Church Basic Policy Statement on Sexual and Gender Harassment and Misconduct of a Sexual Nature" on the annual Calendar of Reports that each District Office monitors for compliance.

Considering the Health of the Conference

- The conference treasurer reported that local church membership was 277,000 in 2011, down 8,000 or 2.8% from 2010. Average weekly worship attendance was up 2,000 or 1.4% at 142,000.
- CF&A reported the number of churches paying apportionments at 100 percent was up from 360 in 2010 to 381 in 2011; the percentage paid was 81.4 percent in 2011, compared to 78.6 percent in 2010.
- CF&A's 2013 budget request was 1.4% less than 2012.

Celebrating Partners in Ministry

- Ordination, licensing and commissioning of around 50 individuals;
- 175th anniversary of one church; 125th anniversaries for 7 churches; 100th anniversaries for 8 churches; 75th anniversary for 1 church; 50th anniversaries for 12 churches, and 25th anniversaries for 3 churches.
- Ministries of five churches 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 2012 Workbook on the website at www.flumc2.org.

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