BLESSING OF THE SPACE - The NEAC gathered around all the spaces for conference at 8:15 A.M. while Pat Parent offered a prayer to bless our spaces and time of holy conferencing.

HOLY CONFERENCING

OPENING MUSIC - Mark Miller and the music team opened us in song at 8:30 A.M.

CALL TO ORDER - Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar called the 26th session of New England Annual Conference to order at 9:00 A.M. Robert Sweet, Parliamentarian, John Blackadar, Conference Secretary, and Rene Wilbur, Conference Lay Leader, joined him at the head table.

WELCOME – Bishop Devadhar welcomed all to this time of Holy Conferencing along with Rene Wilbur, our Conference Lay Leader.

OPENING WORSHIP - Alicia Stewart led us in the call to worship.

OPENING PRAYER - Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer to open the conference. He spoke of the topic of this year’s conference is “Justice”. Bishop asked us to pray, focus, and follow.

EPISCOPAL ADDRESS - Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar offered us his Episcopal Address. (See Addendum #1 at the end of these minutes.)

SONG – “I am a child of God” led by the conference worship team.

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS – John Blackadar, Conference Secretary, announced:

1. For those of you that have not already discovered it, the wi-fi access code is NEAC19. It is found on your voting card.
2. Hearing assist devices are available from Fran Camacho at the Usher/Teller table in the front.
3. Nomination forms are available also at the Usher/Teller table as well.
4. ROLL CALL: will be taken from the registration desk outside the Expo Center.
5. According to our rules of procedure, any motion that is made must be in writing and presented to the Secretary and Presiding Bishop before it can be acted upon. Motion forms are available from any of the usher/tellers. Refer to page 221.
6. If you wish to be recognized, please rise and wave your voting card from your seat before moving to a microphone. This helps visibility from the stage.
7. Before addressing the Conference, say your name, and identify whether you are Clergy or Lay, along with the name, city and state of your church.
8. Your name tag will also serve as your credential which will allow you to vote. Yellow badges indicate Lay Members, Equalization Members, and Lay Members by Virtue of Office. Green badges indicate Clergy Members in Full Connection (Elders and Deacons, active and retired). Blue badges indicate other voting clergy Provisional, Associate, Local Pastors, and other full members who are granted the privilege of vote for General Conference delegates. Pink badges indicate other voting clergy Provisional, Associate, Local Pastors, and other full members who are granted the privilege of vote on all matters EXCEPT election of General Conference delegates. Beige badges indicate visitors or guests. In most cases your voting card will match your Name badge. Some with a Beige badge have the Disciplinary right of voice, but not vote, in which case you have an orange card which you can raise to be recognized by our Bishop. Orange cards can NOT be used to vote. Those with Yellow, Green, Blue and Pink badges and cards are able to vote on most matters which will come before the body. One exception will be at the clergy session where only Full Clergy (Green Badge) and other members of the Board of Ordained Ministry (indicated by a Blue Dot on their badge) are allowed to vote.
9. The current Consent Calendar is on page 11 of the Pre-Conference materials. Currently RS – 19 – 101 Minimum Cash Salary and RS – 19 – 108 - Special Grants have been removed from the Consent Calendar.

10. The vote on the Consent Calendar is scheduled for Friday at 1:30 P.M. as an Order of the Day. No debate or amendments will be allowed. The instruction for removal of an item from the Consent Calendar is on page 10 of the Pre-Conference materials. As a reminder, to remove any item from the Consent Calendar, simply provide the Conference Secretary with a written request for such, signed by 10 members of the Conference, before the close of the session at noon on Friday. If a form is helpful, one can be found on page 223 of the pre-conference Journal.

11. The voting for General Conference delegates will happen throughout the annual conference. All Laity with a yellow name tag were issued a hand-held voting machine for voting at that time. As a reminder to clergy, according to the Book of Discipline only clergy who are full members of the New England Annual Conference (Elders and Deacons, active and retired) and have a green name tag OR clergy who have completed the necessary educational requirements (appointed local pastor, Associate Members, Provisional Elder and Provisional Deacons) and have a blue name tag will be allowed to vote. Voting will commence right after lunch. If you have not already secured your voting device, you will need to pick it up just outside the door to the right before you can vote.

12. Other Orders of the Day have been scheduled as follows:
   a. Recognition of Retirees – this afternoon at 3:30
   b. Committee on Leadership Nominations – Friday morning at 8:35
   c. Memorial Service – Friday morning at 10:30
   d. State of the Church Report – Friday afternoon at 1:35
   e. Historical Questions of Ordinands – Friday afternoon at 4:30
   f. Laity Address – Saturday morning at 9:00

13. These additional documents and reports were included in the handouts by the ushers today, Thursday June 13, 2019:
   a. Yellow document listing current nominees for GC/JC election. Clergy on one side and lay on the other
   b. Nominating Biography for Archie Jones which was not included in the pre-conference materials
   c. RS – 19 – 219 – To Close Weymouth UMC
   d. Laity Statement
   Additional copies from the usher/teller in your area or at the usher/teller table on the floor to my right.

ENABLING MOTIONS – John Blackadar, Conference Secretary, moved the following motions which were seconded and adopted ad seriatim by the conference body:
1. The bar of the Conference shall be within the entire Expo Center.
2. The agenda printed in the 2019 Pre-Conference Materials, and adjusted by the Agenda Committee, be adopted as the working agenda for this session.
Thompson, Lori Umberhind, Garvin Warden, and Wendy Young be elected as ushers/tellers with Fran Camacho as Head Usher/Teller.

5. Those who have appropriately filed excuses with the Conference Secretary be excused from the sessions as requested. John noted that several of the written excuses brought him to tears and asked the Bishop to lead us in prayer after the vote. Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer.

6. All reports printed in the Pre-Conference Materials be adopted and printed in the Conference Journal.

7. I move that the standing Rules of Order of our Annual Conference found on page 120 be adopted.

SESSION ADJOURNED AT 10:00 A.M.

LAITY SESSION

GATHERING MUSIC @ 10:15 A.M. – “Give Me the Faith Which Can Remove” led by Brandan Morris on the piano.

OPENING PRAYER & INTRODUCTIONS - Rene Wilbur – Conference Lay Leader welcomed all to the 2019 Laity Session and led us in prayer. Rene introduced the Associate Conference Lay Leaders: Joan Farrar & Ruby Blake, District Lay Leaders: Ruby Blake (MBH), Karen Cassidy (NH), Susan Chaffee (NME), Stephanie Cyr (CWM), Steven Dry (MBH), Joan Farrar (CM), Daniel Genannt (RISEM), Deb Grehn (CWM), Hazel Hammond (NME), Robert Hout (CMA), Rich Hughen (TRI), Callie McMahan (TRI), Theresa Mudgett (NME), John Nee (NH), Tricia Waldron (VT), and Margaret Wilson (CMA), Conference Director of Lay Servent Ministries: Marie MacDougall, Young Adult Representatives: Sarah Ames and Heidi Fiori, UMW: Betty Shippee, UMM: Tom Leach, At-Large Members: Bonnie-Jean Rowe & Jennifer Jordan, Cabinet Representative: James McPhee, and Director of Congregational Ministries: Rev. Erica Robinson-Johnson.

BIBLE STUDY – Rev. George Howard, Executive Director Global Coaching and Strategic Initiatives at General Board of Global Ministries led the bible study on the topic of Justice, this year’s Annual Conference session’s theme from Micah 6:8
We then had table conversations answering these two questions:
1) What does the scripture say about Justice?
2) How is the church called to God’s Plan for Justice?

RESPONSIVE PRAYER FOR JUSTICE -Led by Ruby Blake

VITAL CONVERSATIONS: JUSTICE MICAH 6:8

MESSAGE - Three messages were shared on the scripture: Act Justly—Stephanie Cyr; Love Mercy – Bonnie-Jean Rowe; and Walk Humbly – Karen Cassidy

MUSIC OFFERING – “You Raise Me Up” - Won and Unyoung Park accompanied by Brandan Morris on the piano.

UMW: Betty Shippee, President of the Conference UMW, talked about the UMW’s current social action campaigns: economic inequality, the criminalization of color and mass incarceration, climate justice, and maternal and child health care.

UMM: Tom Leach, President of the Conference UMM, said men’s ministries are making a comeback in NE, and thanked Rene Wilbur for her support. He introduced the Rev. Richard Vance, Director of the UMM Center for Men’s Ministries. The UMM is moving beyond its traditional men’s breakfasts, Rev. Vance said, into providing effective resources and training to men and youth around the word.

MISSION U: Lucie Fortier, Assistant Dean of Mission U, invited everyone back to Manchester for this year’s Mission U, which will be July 26-28, 2019.

LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES & CLM - Marie MacDougall, Director of the Conference Lay Servant Ministry, recognized all the Lay Servant Ministers.
SONG – “You Raise Me Up” was sung by Won and Unyoung Park accompanied by Brandan Morris on the piano.

DEACONESSES: Rene Wilbur recognized the Deaconesses: Roberta Bragan, Fay Flanary, Lucie Fortier, and Jana Marie Whitten.

CLOSING PRAYER – Ruby Blake led us in the closing prayer @ 12:04 P.M.

SONG – “We Are Marching” led by Bonnie-Jean Rowe.

CLERGY SESSION

CALL TO ORDER – Bishop Devadhar called the clergy session to order at 10:30 A.M. The Bishop requested the following persons be approved to be inside the bar of the Conference:
- Deborah Venator, Board Registrar – with voice, in order to answer questions, and no vote. Approved.
- Brenda Borchers, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop – without voice or vote. Approved.
- Tech assistants – without voice or vote. Approved.

According to Paragraph 409, retired Bishops serving appointments are allowed in the Clergy Session but will be required to leave if it moves into Executive Session.

Mark Demers, Co-Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, led us in worship. He asked us to be in prayer for Charlotte Pridgen-Randolph, Co-Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, who was called out of town unexpectedly due to a sudden death. Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer. Our entire session together was placed within the context of worship. We began with a period of hymn singing, and then proceeded through a worship service, answering the disciplinary questions and voting as they were appropriate during the service.

Kristy Besada and Alice (Alexx) Wood were introduced. Mark Demers moved that they be elected and commissioned as provisional deacons, and that they be licensed for diaconal ministry in preparation for ordination in the Order of Deacon. They were asked to leave the room, after which they were elected as individuals. Upon returning they were greeted with a standing ovation.

John Baker-Streevy, Benjamin Daggett, Kate Galop, Sara Garrard, Jordan Harris, Jeonghwan Kim, John Lucy, Bumshik Min, Kai Qu, and Spencer Shaw were introduced. Mark Demers moved that they be elected and commissioned as provisional elders, and that they be licensed for pastoral ministry in preparation for ordination in the Order of Elder. They were asked to leave the room, after which they were elected as individuals. Upon returning they were greeted with a standing ovation.

Hyung Yong Choi, Stephen Dale, Rachel Fraumann, Marcello Gomes, SeungRi (Victor) Han, Zachary Kerzee, Kim Kie, Jae Gil Lee, Myung Eun Park, Alecia Reeves-Freeman, Wanda Santos-Pérez, Lourey Savick, and Matthew Willis-Goode were introduced. Mark Demers moved that they be elected as full members and ordained as Elders. They were asked to leave the room after which they were each elected. Upon returning they were greeted with a standing ovation.

All the questions were answered and voted affirmatively in the required appropriate manner, including those with the necessary ⅔ and ⅝ votes.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 13, 2019

RECONVENED – Bishop Devadhar reconvened the conference at 1:30 P.M.

OPENING MUSIC - Mark Miller and the music team opened us with music.

OPENING PRAYER – Ruby Blake, Associate Conference Lay Leader joined the Bishop at the head table. She led us in prayer to open the session at 1:36 P.M.

VOTING INSTRUCTIONS - Bishop read from Rule 9 on page 28. The conference was instructed on how to vote. John Blackadar read the instructions for nominating delegates from the floor.

Lay Delegates Nominated from floor at Annual Conference with the numbers assigned to them:
213 Adama Brown Hathaway
214 Steve Dry
215 Zoe Mitchell
216 Terry Marshall
217 Susan Peel
218 Sharon Boyden

Motion to close nominations, seconded, and approved.

**RELIGION AND RACE STATEMENT** – The following statement from the General Commission on Religion and Race was read by John Blackadar. In this annual conference and across the United Methodist Church, we know that we are not where we ought to be in terms of full inclusion of all voices at our decision-making tables. As Christians, we are called to love, work and witness beyond barriers and biases of racism, sexism, ageism, and other expressions of institutional exclusion. The leadership we need as a church in this moment must reflect multicultural cooperation and collaboration. Our church’s commitment is to Just Love, to be the Beloved Community at all levels of church life. I encourage you to remember and affirm that commitment, as you vote for delegates to the 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences.

**CLERGY DELEGATION WITHDRAWAL** – We Chang would like to withdraw his name from election to the delegation and spoke of his reasons.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** – Instructions were given for balloting. John Blackadar stated you can vote for up to three persons on the first ballot.

**PRAYER BEFORE BALLOT** – Bishop Tom Bickerton of the New York Annual Conference led in prayer before the ballot.

**CLERGY BALLOT 1** – The first clergy Ballot was taken.

**PRAYER BEFORE BALLOT** – Trisha Warden led in prayer before ballot.

**LAY BALLOT 1** – The first lay ballot was taken.

**CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS** – The first clergy ballot elected Jay Williams with 138 votes.

**LAY BALLOT RESULTS** The first lay ballot, elected Bonnie Marden with 174 votes.

**LAY BALLOT 2** – Stephanie Cyr led us in prayer and the second Lay ballot was taken.

**CLERGY BALLOT 2** – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer and the second clergy ballot was taken.

**RS-19-210 UNITED METHODISTS OF NE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT’S LEADING: COMMISSIONING THE OPEN SPIRIT TASK FORCE** – was presented by Rebecca Girrell and Task Force. The motion was seconded and adopted with 532 votes.

**RETIREE RECOGNITION – ORDER OF THE DAY @ 3:30 P.M** - Erica Robinson-Johnson read the names of the retirees: Daniel Ames, Ernest Belisle, Kenneth Bevan, Louis Bond, James Boughman, Joseph Chamberland, M. Case (Casey) Collins, Christopher Dare, Mark Goad, Stacy Lanier, Lynn McCracken, James McPhee, Michael Morris, James Proctor, Valerie Roberts-Toller, and Richard Whitefleet Smith. Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer for the retirees. Valerie Roberts-Toller and Ernest Belisle spoke to the ordinands on behalf of the retirees. The ordinands were presented gifts from BOOM.

**CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS** The second clergy ballot yielded no election.

**CLERGY BALLOT 3** – Bishop LaTrelle Easterling led us in prayer and the third clergy ballot was received.

**LAY BALLOT RESULTS** – The second lay ballot yielded no election.

**LAY BALLOT 3** - Daniel Genannt, Lay Leader (RISEM) led us in prayer and the third lay ballot was received.

**RS-19-211 LOCAL CHURCH DISAFFILIATION** – was presented by Rebecca Girrell. Motion was seconded.

**POINT OF ORDER** -Tom Bentum, Gales Ferry, CT, requested that this be ruled out of order because it adds to paragraph 2553 and thus not authorized. Bishop Devadhar indicated that the Judicial Council has ruled that an Annual Conference can add to, but not subtract from, the Book of Discipline.
**AMENDMENT TO RS-19-211** - Dan Genannt, Lincoln, RI – suggested a friendly amendment by adding the words “for disaffiliation” on line 37 after the words church conference, so that section 1 would read “Before a District Superintendent may call for a church conference for the purpose of disaffiliation,...”. Becca accepted it as a friendly amendment.

**AMENDMENT TO RS-19-211** - Alexx Wood suggested a friendly amendment by adding the following sentence to line 44. “These conference entities must make an initial response to the request within 30 days or will be deemed to not impede the discernment process of the local church.” Becca accepted it as a friendly amendment.

**POINT OF ORDER** – Ken Mantler of Worcester noted that our process was incorrect. Once an individual makes a motion that motion no longer belongs to the maker, but the body. The maker has no authority to accept or reject a friendly amendment. That right belongs only to the body. The presider needs to ask the body if they object to the amendment.

**AMENDMENT TO RS-19-211 cont.** Bishop Devadhar asked the body if they would accept Alexx Wood’s suggested friendly amendment. The body was unwilling to accept it as a friendly amendment and discussion continued. The motion to amend still had not arrived on the secretaries table so Bishop Devadhar indicated that in the interest of time we will ballot while awaiting the presentation of the amendment.

**CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS** - The third clergy ballot elected Becca Girrell with 133 votes.

**CLERGY BALLOT 4** – Bishop Peggy Johnson led us in prayer and the fourth clergy ballot was received.

**VOTE ON AMENDMENT TO RS-19-211** – Body voted for adding the Wood amendment.

**VOTE ON RS-19-111** – was affirmative with 432 votes.

**REQUEST FOR A DECISION OF LAW** - Tom Bentum requested a decision of Law: I respectfully request a Decision of Law from the Bishop as to the authority of the Annual Conference to adopt RS – 19 – 211 since it adds terms inconsistent with Paragraph 2553. “Are the proposed steps of disaffiliation in RS – 19 – 211 in conflict with 2553?” Tom hand delivered a paper copy of the request to the Bishop’s table. Bishop Devadhar announced that he would render his decision within the required 30 day time.

**LAY BALLOT RESULTS** – The third lay ballot yielded no election.

**AMENDMENT TO RULES** - Mike Fisher moved to amend our rules to elect the top two vote getters on the next lay ballot. Bishop Devadhar declared the motion out of order because paragraph 32 of the Book of Discipline indicates that each delegate must be elected by 50% or more. Mike withdrew his motion.

**LAY BALLOT 4** – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer and the fourth lay ballot was received.

**CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS** – The fourth clergy ballot yielded no election.

**CLERGY DELEGATION WITHDRAWAL** - Andrew Foster III removed his name from the ballot for election to General Conference.

**CLERGY BALLOT 5** – Bonnie Jean Rowe led us in prayer and the fifth clergy ballot was received.

**INTRODUCTIONS** - Erica Robinson-Johnson, noted the special ecumenical guests that were present.

**GRACE** – Led by Jason Wells, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Council of Churches.

**ANNOUNCEMENT/ADJOURN** – John Blackadar read announcements. Bishop Devadhar declared us adjourned at 5:37

**THURSDAY EVENING JUNE 13, 2019**

**GATHERING MUSIC** – Mark Miller led us in music to reconvene @ 7:00 P.M.

**RECONVENED** – Bishop Devadhar called us to order at 7:19 P.M.

**OPENING PRAYER** – John Blackadar led us in prayer.

**LAY BALLOT RESULTS** The fourth lay ballot, elected Amanda Bonnette-Kim with 190 votes.

**LAY BALLOT 5** – Joan Farrar led us in prayer and the fifth lay ballot was received.
CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – The fifth clergy ballot elected Effie McAvoy with 88 votes. This completed the election for General Conference Delegates.

PRAYER BEFORE BALLOT -
CLERGY BALLOT 6 – Bishop Violet Fisher led us in prayer as the sixth clergy ballot was received. Bishop Devadhar reminded us to vote for up to 3 who would be elected to serve on the Jurisdictional Conference delegation and as alternates to General Conference (in the order of their election.)

SONG – “We are all one in Mission”

MISSION CELEBRATION - Erica Robinson-Johnson introduced George Howard of the GBGM celebrating its 200th year. They presented a video. $150,000 went to UMCOR this past year. George Howard spoke of the cross and anchor tradition which is still shared with newly commissioned missionaries.

SCRIPTURE - Matthew 28:19-20

COMMISSIONING A MISSIONARY - René Pérez introduced Patricia Moreira Marques. She is from Brazil and will be sent to Portugal to serve as a missionary. Bishop Devadhar commissioned Patricia Moreira Marques.

UMW 150th - Betty Shippee spoke and a video celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of United Methodist Women was shown.

BLACK COLLEGE FUND AMBASSADOR – James Cogman spoke and thanked the NEAC for once again giving 100% of their Black College Fund apportionment.

UMCOR - Barbara Burnside, Conference Disaster Response and Mission Coordinator introduced Tom Lank, the Northeast Jurisdiction United Methodist Volunteer in Mission Coordinator who spoke briefly about the work of Volunteers in Mission.

MISSION OF PEACE OFFERING - George Howard spoke of Mission of Peace he went with the Bishop. Maggie Stevens one of the youth going on next mission of peace introduced the Mission of Peace Offering and indicated 2 youth from Rhode Island will also going on the trip as well.

BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES – Scott Masters spoke briefly about the Conference Board of Global Ministries.

UMEM 50th - Scott Masters introduced Michele St. Cyr Executive Director of the United Methodist Economic Ministry. A check was presented to them for $2,997.52 which was collected from local churches.

JFON – Scott Masters introduced Gary Richards, Chair of Justice For Our Neighbors. Bob Parker challenged us last year to raise $30,000 this year and Gary said his board will match it. A check was presented to them for $31,613.43, which was raised from local churches. However, after the check was written additional money was received and the amount they received exceeded $33,000.00!

ADJOURNED – Conference adjourned at 9:09 P.M.

FRIDAY MORNING JUNE 14, 2019

GATHERING MUSIC – Mark Miller and the Conference music team gathered us at 8:30 A.M

CONFERENCE CONVENE...
RS-19-218 - COMMITTEE ON LEADERSHIP AND NOMINATIONS – Bonnie Marden presented the report from the Committee on Leadership Nominations and added additional names not printed in the booklet. Her report was seconded and adopted by the body. The entire COLN report is included in the opening pages of the Conference Journal.

METHODIST CONFERENCE HOME – Bonnie Marden moved the election of the directors of the Methodist Conference Home. Her motion was seconded and affirmed by the body. The entire COLN report is included in the opening pages of the Conference Journal.

UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION OF NE – Rene Wilbur, moved that the conference adjourn and reconvene as the Board of Directors of the UMFNE for the purpose of electing their Directors. Her motion was seconded and adopted by the body. The entire COLN report is included in the opening pages of the Conference Journal.

RS-19-213 NORTHEASTERN JURISDICTION DELEGATION MEETING – Effie McAvoy presented. RS-19-213 and it was seconded. Bishop Devadhar asked us to vote using our voting devices. The motion was affirmed with 427 votes or 83%.

RS-19-214 MAINTAINING CONFERENCE RESERVE FUNDS – Sara Ewing-Merrill presented RS-19-214 which was seconded. Again, using our voting devices, the motion was favored with 398 votes or 59.34%.

RS-19-304 PETITION TO GC TO AMEND THE TRUST CLAUSE – Becca Girrell presented RS-19-304 which was seconded.

MOTION TO REFER - Scott Campbell moved to refer the resolution to the Open Spirit Task Force to discern and come back to conference in 2020. His motion was seconded. Scott then moved to withdraw his motion to refer. The conference body accepted the withdrawal. Becca Girrell moved to withdraw motion RS-19-304. The conference body accepted the withdrawal.

CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – The seventh clergy ballot elected René Pérez with 105 votes and Leigh Goodrich with 104 votes.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The sixth lay ballot yielded no election.

CLERGY BALLOT 8 – Ruby Blake led us in prayer as the eighth clergy ballot was received.

LAY BALLOT 7 – Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi led us in prayer as the seventh lay ballot was received.

ADJOURNED - Bishop Devadhar declared us adjourned at 10:30 am

MEMORIAL SERVICE
FRIDAY MORNING @10:30 A.M.
OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND REMEMBRANCE
OPENING MUSIC - Mark Miller and the music team opened us in song at 10:30 a.m.
SCRIPTURE – Lamentations 3:19-33 NRSV
SERMON – The Rev. Dr. Elaine Heath brought the message “Letting Go.” (See Addendum #2 at the end of these minutes.)

NAMING AND REMEMBERING - Leeda Marsh and Garvin Warden remembered these saints:
OUR HONORED DEAD, 2018–2019


BISHOP: C. Dale White
LAY MEMBER: M. Phillip Susag

NAMING DISCONTINUED CHURCHES – First UMC, Peabody, MA; Moodus UMC, Moodus, CT; Greene UMC, Coventry, RI; Damariscotta UMC, Damariscotta, ME; East Haverhill UMC, Pike, NH; E. Monkton UMC, Monkton, VT; Grace UMC, Bangor, ME; and Weymouth UMC, Weymouth, MA.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION – Bishop Devadhar led us in communion.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON JUNE 14, 2019

OPENING MUSIC - Mark Miller and the music team opened us with music.
RECONVENED – Bishop Devadhar reconvened conference at 1:30 P.M.
OPENING PRAYER – Joan Farrar, Associate Conference Lay Leader, led us in prayer.
CONSENT CALENDAR – John Blackadar presented the consent calendar for adoption noting that RS – 19 - 1001 & RS – 19 - 108 have been removed. It was seconded and adopted by a raising of hands.
RS-19-108 – David Hoyt moved the adoption of RS – 19 – 108 with the removal of section a, because Evelyn Roberts, a widow had passed away in May. The motion was seconded and affirmed by the body.
STATE OF CONFERENCE REPORT - René Pérez introduced the District Superintendents, opened in prayer, and presented the State of the Conference Report. Bishop Devadhar thanked the Cabinet for their work and faith and announced Rev. Jill Colley Robinson as the new Dean of the Cabinet. (See Addendum #3 at the end of these minutes.)
RS-19-201 – TO CLOSE THE FIRST UMC, PEABODY, MA - We Chang presented RS-19-201 which was seconded and adopted.
RS-19-202 – RESOLUTION TO CLOSE MOODUS UMC, MOODUS, CT - David Calhoun presented RS-19-201 and noted an editorial change in line 20 which should read “145 years”. The motion was second and adopted.
RS-19-203 – TO CLOSE GREENE UMC, GREENE (COVENTRY), RI - Andrew Foster III presented RS-19-203 which was seconded and adopted.
RS-19-204 – TO CLOSE THE DAMARISCOTTA UMC, DAMARISCOTTA, ME - Karen L. Munson presented RS-19-204 which was seconded and adopted.
RS-19-205 – TO CLOSE THE EAST HAVERHILL UMC, LIME KILN RD, PIKE, NH - Taesung Kang presented RS-19-205 which was seconded and adopted.
RS-19-206 – TO CLOSE THE EAST MONKTON UMC, CHURCH RD, MONKTON, VT - Jill Colley Robinson presented RS-19-206 which was second and adopted.
RS-19-207 – TO CLOSE THE BANGOR, ME, GRACE UMC, - Jacquelyn Brannen presented RS-19-207 which was seconded and adopted.
RS-19-219 – TO CLOSE WEYMOUTH UMC, WEYMOUTH, MA – We Chang presented RS-19-219 which was seconded and adopted.
PRAYER FOR CLOSING CONGREGATIONS - Rev. Jill Colley Robinson led us in prayer for the closing of all the congregations.
CONFERENCE STATISTICIAN -Joy Mueller gave statistical report by statistical quiz to body.
RS-19-104 – 2020 PROPOSED ANNUAL CONFERENCE BUDGET – Pg. 115-117. Bill Burnside and Nancy Bischoff presented RS-19-104 which was seconded. Lengthy discussion followed.
TO POSTPONE RS-19-104 – Nancy Bischoff moved that further consideration of the budget be postponed to a special conference to be called at the discretion of the Bishop. The motion was seconded and defeated with 183 yes and 407 no or 68.98% against. Bishop Devadhar announced that we would reconvene in a business session for one hour later this evening following the ordination service.
LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The seventh lay ballot elected Ralph R.R. Oduor with 189 votes. This completes the lay delegation to the General Conference.

CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – The eighth clergy ballot yielded no election.

PRAYER - Kelly Turney led us in prayer for the Ordinands.

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS – Bishop Devadhar asked the Historical Questions of those to be ordained who were presented by Becca Girrell, Kelly Turney, and Mark Demers of the BOM. Those presented were Hyung Yong Choi, Stephen Dale, Rachel Fraumann, Marcelo Gomes, SeungRi (Victor) Han, Zachary Kerzee, Kim Kie, Jae Gil Lee, Myung Eun Park, Alecia Reeves-Freeman, Wanda Santos-Pérez, Lourey Savick, and Matthew Willis-Goode, this year’s candidates for ordination as elders.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – John Blackadar gave announcements.

GRACE - Laura Everett, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches led us in grace before dinner.

FRIDAY EVENING JUNE 14, 2019

ORDINATION SERVICE – Bishop Devadhar preached the sermon, “God Called You.” (See Addendum #4 at the end of these minutes.)

Commissioned as Provisional Deacons were: Kristy Erin Besada and Alice (Alexx) Elaine Wood.

Commissioned as Provisional Elders were: John Micah Baker-Streevy, Benjamin Dean Daggett, Kate Alliston Galop, Sara Taylor Garrard, Jordan Marcel Harris, Jeonghwan Kim, John Herbert Lucy, Bumshik Min, and Spencer Everett Shaw.

Ordained as Elders were: Hyung Yong Choi, Stephen Alan Dale, Rachel Elizabeth Fraumann, Marcelo Damasceno Gomes, SeungRi (Victor) Han, Zachary Lee Harrison Kerzee, Kim Elizabeth Kie, Jae Gil Lee, Myung Eun Park, Alecia Addie Reeves-Freeman, Wanda Monserrate Santos-Pérez, Lourey Middlecamp Savick, and Matthew Franklyn Willis-Goode.

RECONVENED – Bishop Devadhar reconvened the annual conference at 10:00 P.M.

OPENING PRAYER – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer.

LAY BALLOT 8 – Bishop Devadhar reminded us that the laity could vote for up to 3 individuals which would complete the delegation to the Jurisdictional Conference and also serve as alternates to the General Conference. Rene Wilbur led us in prayer as the eighth lay ballot was received.

PRAYER BEFORE BALLOTING – Jill Colley Robinson led us in prayer.

CLERGY BALLOT 9 – Jill Colley Robinson led us in prayer as the ninth clergy ballot was received.

RS-19-104 – 2020 PROPOSED ANNUAL CONFERENCE BUDGET cont.–

AMENDMENT – Sandra Bonnette-Kim moved to amend RS-19-104 - on pg.116 by reducing line 95 by $9,252.00. Her motion was seconded.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE RULES – David Abbott moved to suspend the rules to allow for closing debate (calling the question) before 3 speeches for and 3 speeches against were heard. His motion to suspend the rules was upheld by the necessary 2/3 vote.

MOTION TO CALL THE QUESTION – David Abbott moved to call the question on all that was before us. His motion to call the question was affirmed by the body.

AMENDMENT - The amendment presented by Sandra Bonnette-Kim failed.

RS-19-104 VOTE – The motion prevailed, and the budget was adopted.

RS-19-209 – DESIGNATION OF NUMBER OF DISTRICTS was presented by Nancy Bischoff. It was seconded and adopted by the body.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – the eighth lay ballot elected Ana Maria Rodriguez Alphonso with 129 votes.

CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – the ninth clergy ballot elected Sandra Bonnette-Kim with 79 votes. This completes the delegation to Jurisdictional Conference.

LAY BALLOT 9 – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer as the ninth lay ballot was received.
CLERGY BALLOT 10 - Bishop Devadhar reminded the clergy they could vote for up to 3 individuals who would compose the alternate delegates to the Jurisdictional Conference and then led us in prayer as the tenth clergy ballot was received.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – the ninth lay ballot elected Noah Spicer with 118 votes.

CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS - the tenth clergy ballot elected David Calhoun with 73 votes.

ADJOURNED – Rene Wilbur led us in prayer and Bishop Devadhar declared us adjourned at 11:35 p.m.

SATURDAY MORNING JUNE 15, 2019

OPENING MUSIC – Mark Miller and the Conference musicians.

CONFERENCE CONVENED at 9:03 A.M. Bishop Devadhar called us to order, welcomed everyone and Bob Hout, Lay Leader (CMA), joined the Bishop at the head table.

OPENING PRAYER – Bob Hout led us in prayer.

REPORT OF THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE - Kristine Anderson reported for the Committee on Journal that the proceedings of the previous day has been reviewed and found to be in order. She moved their adoption. The motion was seconded and adopted. Kristine moved the proceedings of today’s session be adopted and all proceedings be printed in the Conference Journal. Her motion was seconded and approved by a voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENT – John Blackadar announced the Clergy need to elect two alternates to Jurisdictional Conference and the laity need to elect one more delegate to Jurisdictional Conference.

CLERGY BALLOT 11 - Bishop Mark Webb led us in prayer as the eleventh clergy ballot was received.

LAY BALLOT 10 – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer as the tenth lay ballot was received.

POINT OF PRIVILEDGE - Bishop Devadhar spoke of a death in Jay William’s family.

PRAYER – Becca Girrell led us in prayer.

LAITY ADDRESS – Joan Farrar (CMA) noted we had nine submissions for the Laity address, a record number for us. She introduced Ophelia Hu Kinney, of HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME to give the Laity address.

MOTION - Rene Wilbur made a motion to print the Laity Address in the Conference Journal. Her motion was seconded and adopted. (See Addendum #5 at the end of these minutes.)

RECOGNITION – Bishop Devadhar introduced Adama Brown-Hathaway who presented a petition titled: New England Conference Laity Statement: A Response to General Conference 2019. She requested that the statement signed by over 1,500 laity from New England and elsewhere, be printed in the Journal. It did not require a second. Because there was no objection it is printed in the Journal. (See Addendum #6 at the end of these minutes.)

RS-19-217 - A RESOLUTION TO BOYCOTT GC 2020 - Bishop Devadhar told us that he has been instructed to rule resolution out of order. However, after he spoke with the College of Bishops, he will allow the motion to be presented for conversation purposes. Bishop Devadhar has decided, in conversation with Will Green, that Will can present the resolution and allow 3 speeches for and 3 speeches against, but no vote will be taken.

Will Green presented the resolution and 3 speeches for and 3 speeches against were heard by the body.

POINT OF ORDER – Bill Elwell asked if we had crossed the line of holy conferencing? Yes, we are complicit, being a part of a broken system, but are we being oppressive to others in our midst with our language? Bishop Devadhar indicated that we had concluded conversation on this issue.

PRAYER – We Chang led us in prayer.

CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – The eleventh clergy ballot yielded no election.

CLERGY BALLOT 12 – Tricia Morgan led us in prayer and the twelfth clergy ballot was received.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The tenth lay ballot yielded no election.

LAY BALLOT 11 – Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer and the eleventh lay ballot was received.
CLERGY BALLOT RESULTS – The twelfth clergy ballot elected Cristian De La Rosa with 56 votes and Charlotte Pridgen Randolph with 53 votes. This completed the clergy balloting.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The eleventh lay ballot elected Claire Holsten with 109 votes. This completed the lay delegation to Jurisdictional Conference.

LAY BALLOT 12 – Bishop Devadhar reminded the laity they could vote for up to 3 individuals, Christy Wright led us in prayer, and the twelfth lay ballot was received.

MUSIC – Mark Miller introduced Galen Schad who played the keyboard during balloting.

RS-19-101 – NE CONFERENCE MINIMUM CASH SALARY RESOLUTION - Pat MacHugh presented RS-19-101. It was seconded and approved by a show of hands.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The twelfth lay ballot elected Adama Brown-Hathaway with 191 votes and Uchenna Joan Awa with 158 votes.

LAY BALLOT 13 – Ruby Blake led us in prayer and the thirteenth lay ballot was received.


LAY BALLOT RESULTS – The thirteenth lay ballot yielded no election.

LAY DELEGATION WITHDRAWALS – Steve Dry asked that his name be removed from the ballot. Brianne McFarland asked that her name be removed from the ballot. Audrey Reuman asked that her name be removed from the ballot.

LAY BALLOT 14 – Mark Miller led us in prayer and the fourteenth lay ballot was received.

RS –19-216 – RESPONDING TO EMERGING EXPRESSIONS OF METHODISM –Sean Delmore and Effie McAvoy presented a substitute motion for RS-19-216. Chico Martin suggested a friendly amendment “Add after "and trans people", "hierarchical organizational structures.” The friendly amendment was accepted by the body. The substitute was seconded and adopted.

RS-19-306 – RESOLUTION RELATING TO VOTING RIGHTS AND CLERGY MEMBERSHIP STATUS – Scott Masters presented RS-19-306 which was seconded.

AMENDMENT - Sara Garrard moved to add “including, but not limited to POC, +Q +T, women, LGBTQIA+ persons, and differently abled persons” on line 13 after the words “affirms that its members.” The amendment was seconded.

SUSPEND THE RULES – Linda White moved to suspend the rules for the purpose of calling the question. Her motion was seconded and affirmed by the necessary 2/3 vote. Linda then moved to call the question on all that was before us. Her motion also prevailed by the necessary 2/3 vote. The Garrard amendment failed and RS-19-306 prevailed as presented.

LAY BALLOT RESULTS – Lay ballot fourteen yielded no election.

LAY DELEGATE WITHDRAWAL – Zoe Mitchell withdrew from ballot.

LAY BALLOT 15 – Bishop Violet Fisher led us in prayer and the fifteenth lay ballot was received.

LAY BALLOT 15 RESULTS – Lay ballot 15 1 election Roberta Bragan was elected with 194 votes or 75.19%. This completed the Lay election for Jurisdictional conference alternates.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – Bishop Devadhar mentioned the setting of appointments will be confirmed by email.

GRACE – Heidi Fiore led us in prayer before lunch @ 12:04 P.M.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON JUNE 15, 2019

OPENING MUSIC – Mark Miller and the Conference musicians invited the body back to their seats.

CONFERENCE CONVENED at 1:35 P.M. by Bishop Devadhar. Bishop thanked everyone. Dr. Leonard Young, Parliamentarian of the General Conference joined Bishop Devadhar at the head table.
OPENING PRAYER – Brenda Borchers led us in prayer.

RS-19-303 – A STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE FROM THE NEAC – Vicki Woods moved the adoption of RS-19-303 and her motion was seconded.

AMEND RS-19-303 - Joy Toll-Chandler offered a friendly amendment to line 43 replacing the words “non-binding resolution” with the words “statement of conscience”. Joy’s friendly amendment was affirmed by the body. RS-19-303 was then adopted as amended.

SUSPEND RULES – We Chang moved that our rules VII.C.3.c. and f. be suspended and replaced by with 2 speeches for 2 speeches against for up to 2 minutes each before the question can be called. His motion was seconded and adopted by the necessary 2/3 majority.

RS-19-208 – INCREASING TRANSPARENCY REGARDING HATE CRIMES – Effie McAvoy moved RS-19-208 as amended by the committee. The resolution was seconded and adopted.

RS-19-212 - ASPIRING TO LIVE IN NON-CONFORMITY – Sandra Bonnette-Kim presented RS-19-212 indicating an editorial change in line 96 changing the word “affirmation” to “aspiration” which was seconded. The body affirmed the editorial. Frank Gulinello, Jr. moved to amend. “I move that the statements of non-conformity by our cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry following the Special Session of the General Conference in 2019 be added to RS – 19 – 212. His amendment was adopted by the body. The resolution was then adopted as amended. (The statements can be found in RS – 19 – 212 where the entire resolution is printed.)

RS -19-215 - ASPIRING TO DO NO HARM – Bonnie Marden moved RS-19-215 which was seconded. Jacob Juncker moved to add a friendly amendment to the implementation schedule as follows: “4. The Conference Statistician shall publish as part of the statistician’s report the apportioned amounts and funds received for fund 1, fund 2, and fund 3 of every local church in the district. Local churches who refuse to remit fund 1 shall be noted as part of the statistician’s report.” There being no objection from the body, the Juncker amendment was received and the resolution was affirmed as amended.

RS-19-301 – EXCLUDE GOVERNMENT DEBT OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN PROLONGED MILITARY OCCUPATIONS – Zoe Mitchell and Bill Aldrich moved and presented RS-19-301. It was seconded and adopted.

RS-19-302 – AMEND THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE TO EXCLUDE THE GOVERNMENT DEBT OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN PROLONGED MILITARY OCCUPATIONS – Bill Aldrich and Zoe Mitchell moved and presented RS-19-302 which was seconded and adopted.

RS-19-305 – PETITION TO GC TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION – Becca Girrell moved and presented RS-19-305 which was seconded and adopted.

COMMITTEE ON LEADERSHIP ON NOMINATION – Bonnie Marden mentioned that the Open Spirit Task Force received nominations from more than 60 people, they have narrowed it to 35 people. Jay Williams has agreed to convene the first meeting. Names will be presented to the Conference Secretary for inclusion in the Journal by July 1.

Bonnie moved that John Blackadar be elected as the Conference Secretary elect, and that Joy Mueller be elected as the Conference Statistician elect for the upcoming quadrennium. Her motion was seconded and adopted.

GCFA – Jacqulyn Simmons, representing the General Council on Finance and Administration, thanked NEAC for paying 100% of its World Service Fund last year.

PARLIAMENTARIAN of GC - Dr. Leonard Young reported briefly about several suggestions for future conferences

1. Speakers make presentations from the floor or podium and leave so it is equal.
2. Have the timer is on the screen so all can see it and the Bishop is not the only one monitoring.
DELEGATION 2020 – The delegation has been organized and they have elected Jay Williams Delegation Leader, Bonnie Marden Vice President, and Becca Girrell Secretary. Bishop Devadhar and Bishop Fisher led us in prayer.

GREEN MOUNTAIN COLLEGE – Video was shown. Green Mountain College is closing. Bishop Devadhar led us in prayer for Green Mountain College.

LIFETIME DISCIPLESHIP AWARDS – Wesley Palmer of the Preacher’s Aid Society, presented Marcia Hoyt of Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA, and Linda Reiber of First UMC, Portsmouth, NH with Lifetime Discipleship Awards.

UMFNE NEW DIRECTOR – Jim Mentzer President of UMFNE, Jim noted that Rev. Ted Crass is the new President of UMFNE beginning July 1. Bishop Devadhar presented Jim with a plaque for his leadership of the Foundation.

DISCIPLESHIP AWARDS – Rick McKinley presented the One Matters Discipleship Awards – to Pearl St., Brockton, MA, Peoples Church, Newburyport, MA, and West Baldwin, West Baldwin, ME.

OFFERING TOTALS – John Blackadar announced the following offerings:
Mission of Peace $3,447.30
Camping and Retreat Ministry Scholarships $4,330.32
NEAC Ministerial Education Fund $3,404.75
Jewelry Sales for Youth/Young Adult spiritual formation scholarships (by Prema Devadhar and Lori McKinley) $2,850.00.


SETTING OF APPOINTMENTS – Bishop Devadhar indicated that all appointments will be sent by email and asked pastors and lay members to see their respective DS’s for paperwork.

PRAYER – Rene Wilbur led us in prayer for all the appointments.

GUEST - Bishop Alan Gates of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, was introduced. Bishop Gates brought greetings and talked about the shared ministries with NEAC.

ZIEGLER PREACHING AWARD – Becca Girrell introduced the Ziegler preacher, Jay Williams, pastor of Union UMC, Boston, MA who called us to follow Jesus as we leave this place.

***** (See Addendum #7 at the end of these minutes.)

MOTION – John Blackadar moved that all four prophetic messages be printed in full in our Journal. His motion was seconded and approved by the body.

CLOSING WORSHIP – Following closing worship the NE Annual Conference adjourned at 4:02 P.M.

ADDENDUM #1

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar
New England Annual Conference
United Methodist Church
Episcopal Address
June 13, 2019
Theme: “Vital Conversations: Justice”
Scripture: Micah 6:8
I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My wife, Prema, joins me in saying how happy we are to minister with the wonderful people of New England, even as we face these challenging times for our denomination. You are a people of strength and faith. We love you dearly.

This year’s annual conference theme is “Vital Conversations: Justice,” and we have selected Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” as our guiding scripture.

This morning, I want to focus on the issue of justice from a biblical perspective. First, I want to frame this verse in Micah against the backdrop of how we read and interpret the Bible. Second, I want to focus on the theme of justice within Micah 6:8. Lastly, I want to invite all of us – in these challenging times - to follow Micah’s teaching in our faith communities and in our lives. Frame, Focus, Follow.

Frame

It is important to acknowledge the pain caused by the decisions made by our denomination. As I said in my open letter to the conference, which can be found on our website, “we continue to repent of the ways in which our legislative and judicial processes do harm to individual persons and groups — particularly our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, asexual and intersex siblings and fails us in our Christian mandate to love one another after the example of Jesus.”

John Wesley said he was a person of one book, meaning he sought guidance for life first and foremost from the Bible. Albert Outler, a United Methodist theologian and one of our most important Wesley scholars, helped the people called Methodists to understand the four-fold tools of interpretation handed down by Wesley, popularly referred to as “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.”

We use scripture, tradition, reason, and experience to help us acquire a holistic understanding of any given issue. What is driving the people of The United Methodist Church apart today is our different approaches to interpreting that first one: scripture; particularly regarding the four biblical references to homosexuality and the gospels’ mandate to love as Jesus loved. This address will not revisit those. Our focus today is on justice and the word that comes to us from Micah.

E. Stanley Jones, the famous 20th century evangelist, helps us on this point of interpretation. In his book, The Christ of the American Road, he explains that we are not “People of the Book” who read and interpret scripture literally but “People of the Person.” 1 Jones continues by reminding us that the prologue in the gospel of John does not say, “‘The Word became printer’s ink,’ but it is said, ‘The Word became flesh.’” 2

The Word of God is not to be understood as a code. “Instead,” writes Jones, “our code is a Character. We follow a living mind instead of a fixed letter. Therefore, our goal is a flying goal—always ahead of us, inexhaustible. You can exhaust a letter; you can never exhaust a Life. We value the letters of the

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2 ibid.
Book...but the Revelation is in the face of Jesus Christ. That Life was there before the letter was written, and it is in the letter and yet beyond the letter—not different from, but beyond.”

Jones invites us to be “People of the Person”—the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible is a living organic expression of God’s Word that grows and changes with us as we grow in relationship with God in and through the Holy Spirit.

Thus, I interpret the Bible in light of our relationship with the living Christ and the movement of the Holy Spirit. I consider it our task to understand as much as we can about the context of a Bible verse—how it was understood in the days when it was first spoken—then to use our God-given minds and reason to understand what the text means for our day, formulating our understanding while taking into consideration our experience as human beings.

For this conference, we seek to understand Micah 6:8. That is our focus.

Focus

In this verse, as with those that touch on human sexuality, we are trying to understand words spoken by the prophet 2,700 years ago and find in them inspiration and direction for our lives today. Our differing understanding of how to do that has caused pain and division in our church. So how do we draw meaning from a message delivered so long ago in such a different culture and context?

Micah was younger than the prophet Isaiah and a contemporary of the prophet Hosea.

After more than 50 years of prosperity, the people of Israel had fallen on hard times. The Assyrians were advancing from the east and eventually came to rule the northern kingdom of Israel and dominate, by their influence, the southern kingdom of Judah. Micah was a common Jew who came from a small village in the Judean foothills southwest of Jerusalem.

Micah echoes the words of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah in demanding that Israel practice authentic worship to the Lord. Like these other prophets, he shared strong words of judgment on God’s people as well as the promise of divine forgiveness and hope for a future restoration.

The judgment was for the way the people of Israel had begun to worship idols and to practice child sacrifice and witchcraft. These practices developed in a time when the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing. The poor were being oppressed and could find no recourse through the courts because of corrupt judges.

People participated in worship that included non-Jewish expressions influenced by popular culture. Micah stood up for a true faith that revolved not around the burnt offerings only the rich could afford, but around one’s behavior: to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

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3 ibid
Micah’s ministry teaches that God delivers us from the darkest circumstances when we practice justice, love, and humility.

**Follow**

Let’s unpack three things God yearns for in our behavior, as told to us through the prophet Micah.

God yearns for us to do what is just. The Hebrew word is *mispat*. God doesn’t want empty words about justice or complaints of the lack of justice. God wants us to do justice. God yearns for us to behave in such a way that our actions are just and ethical toward others. What does that look like in our day and context? Certainly, it has implications for how we treat people living with economic hardship. Certainly, it has implications for how we respond when people experience oppression. Certainly, it has implications for how we act toward our LGBTQIA+ siblings.

We are doing justice in New England: so many of our churches have shown concern for our LGBTQIA+ siblings in the wake of denominational decisions reinforcing exclusion. Churches have gone out of their way to demonstrate to their communities that all are welcome.

God also yearns for us to show constant love – in Hebrew, *aharat esed*, which translates as “to love kindness,” which is the wording in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). I like the Good News Bible’s translation, “to show constant love.” God yearns for us to show constant love as we act justly toward our neighbors.

As in the time of Micah, we, too, are seeing an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. The prophet speaks to our day when he says that God requires us to act justly and to show constant love to those who experience injustice and oppression because of economic hardship.

We see so many manifestations of this. Immigrants leave harsh circumstances and risk much to seek a better life here in the United States. Did not Abraham and Sarah migrate from Ur to Palestine? Did not Moses lead the people of Israel from Egypt to the land “flowing with milk and honey?” Did not Joseph, Mary and Jesus migrate to Egypt to find safety from Herod and then to Nazareth to find safety from Herod’s son? Does God not require us to offer justice and kindness to immigrant peoples?

Legislators around the country are attempting to turn back the clock by passing laws that deny or restrict the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. In Tennessee, the legislature wants to deny same sex couples the right to adopt children. Does Micah not tell us what to do? Act justly and show constant love.

I share with you the story of two women who have made a difference in India. Arundhati Katju and Menaka Guruswamy are among *Time Magazine*’s “100 most influential people in 2019.” These two lawyers led a movement to have a law leftover from British colonial days struck down. The 157-year-old statute made all sexual activities that were deemed quote “against the order of nature” punishable by law. These two women sought fundamental rights of privacy and dignity for LGBTQIA+ people in India. Katju and Guruswamy acted justly by helping their LGBTQIA+ siblings win the freedom to love.

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What does the Lord require of us, today, under our circumstances? How do we live out justice and constant love?

The third behavior God yearns for is humble fellowship with God. The key Hebrew word in Micah’s verse is halak. God yearns for us “to walk with God, careful to put God first and to live in conformity with God’s will. Our life pilgrimage is likened to a walk with God as our constant companion.”

The invitation from Micah 6:8 is for us to follow his prescription for what God deems as good: to live out justice through our actions toward those who are maligned, mistreated and oppressed by our current cultural context.

In our day, we think especially of the LGBTQIA+ community. We are to show constant love to our neighbors, regardless of race, nationality, sexual orientation, or political perspective. In the DNA of the Wesleyan and Methodist tradition is the open communion table. We invite all to the table because holy communion is a means of grace, and we want to extend that means of grace to all.

As so many of our churches have affirmed, all means all. In our humility, we say to our siblings who disagree with us theologically that we may be wrong, but we live out of this conviction as we seek to walk humbly with our God, our constant companion, our Guide, our Redeemer in every aspect of our life’s journey.

As we frame, focus, and follow God’s word, I hope that every United Methodist in New England will spend time in deeper biblical reflection this year...to experience it as a means of grace. I challenge every congregation to make bible study for everyone a priority, including youth and young adults. May we dig deeper in the Bible as we grow deeper in our Christian discipleship. Let us engage ourselves in fully understanding and embracing what the Word of God means to us in our context, sharing our experiences with one another, as we apply it through our Christian witness.

In my final year as your episcopal leader, I look forward to the expressions of faith that will emerge as we seek to frame, focus and follow God together in mission and ministry. We have a wealth of resources in our leadership and congregations, and I encourage you to work together, so we will faithfully honor God in all we do.

As a church that is always growing and learning how to be the church in these anxious times, I request that all clergy and laity read the book, Piloting Church: Helping your church take flight. Pastor Cameron Trimble draws upon her experience and lessons learned as a pilot to help churches that feel grounded by shrinking membership and resources to take off, making the changes needed to be a vital faith community.

Later this week, we will hear the recommendations of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) through our Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) regarding the right sizing of our districts. As your Bishop, I fully understand that we can only act on these recommendations if you agree as an Annual Conference. Whatever you decide, we will take as the will of God for our journey forward as a Conference.

Also, as we continue to apply the recommendations of GCFA to strengthen our personnel policies and restructure our staffing, may we give our fullest cooperation and trust to our Conference Personnel Committee, understanding that the Personnel Committee will work in consultation with other leaders, and does not need to seek our blessing on every step as long as they work within the limits of the budget approved by the Annual Conference.

During this session, we will also witness the work of Parliamentarian Dr. Leonard Young, who is here to train members of this conference as parliamentarians. It is important that we raise up new leaders into these ministries of order and discipline, even as we strengthen our ministries of justice and mercy.

I am grateful to those of you who have joined me as coffee/tea/prayer partners through your generous donations and prayers. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Your donations have helped us create innovative ministries and develop leaders, including this new initiative. If you are interested in knowing more about it or would like to participate, please let your District Superintendent know.

One of my hopes and prayers for our conference as we seek new ways to reach new people is to begin to envision what cyber churches might look like here. Our statistician, Joy Mueller, shared with me that online worship attendance is up from last year – from 644 people in 2017 to 1143 people in 2018. With your assistance — clergy and laity — we can not only think outside the box, we can leave the box behind entirely.

Finally, may we pray faithfully and diligently for God to lead us, guide us, and mold us as we envision the new thing God has in store for us. As we do, I hope, no matter where you stand theologically, politically or sociologically, you will allow me to be your temporal and spiritual leader and know that I care deeply for each of you. It is my earnest prayer that we will journey together for the glory of God, filled with the love of Christ, and depending upon the Holy Spirit to guide us.

The vision I have for our life together as Christians and as people called Methodists, is that we look upon our siblings—every one of them—as beloved children of God.

My vision for us is to strive to be the presence of God with and for each person.

My vision is that we heed Micah’s words and act justly toward our beloved siblings, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, economic status, family status, ethnicity, mental ability, or physical ability because God loves everyone unconditionally.

My vision is for every one of our churches to be the Presence of God in and for their communities, extending the love of God and the God of love to all people. All means all.

God loves you; I love you.

Let us join together in this corporate prayer:
God of us All,
You created
all things
from love
in love, and
only for love . . .

All that you
have made,
are making,
and will make—
every one, and
every thing,
is connected.

every one, and
every thing,
is related;

every one, and
every thing,
is woven together.

every one, and
every thing,
is made in your image.

Love is
your way,
your design,
your choice;

Love is
the very essence
of your being,
the very soul
of what you have made.

God of Love, we confess—
we have wandered from your way;
we have disregarded your design;
we have formed images of you
to fit frames of our own making;
and we are left bereft of spirit.

In your mercy, heal us.
Push out our small frames—
from the paltry pictures we have made
of who you are.
Propel us toward your dream of
justice and mercy and love
for what you have made.

Re-turn,
Re-frame,
Re-focus,
Re-deem
US
by your love,
in your love, and
only for your love; and . . .
we shall be healed; and
we shall walk humbly; and
we shall act justly.

We pray this
with Christ,
through Christ,
and in Christ,
who lives in communion with you,
and the Holy Spirit,
just as you would have us live
with you, and
with one another,
and with all
that you have made.

Amen.

**ADDENDUM #2**

Dr. Elaine Heath’s message “Letting Go,” which was proclaimed at the Memorial Service on Friday is not available in print. The video of the sermon can be found at [https://youtube/AV3q cepkPVI](https://youtube/AV3q cepkPVI). Bishop Devadhar’s introduction of Dr. Heath begins at 3:05:46.

**ADDENDUM #3**

State of the Conference Report 2019

“It’s time to mend and build!”

Good morning New England Conference! My name is René Perez. At the end of June, I will have completed my 8-year term as district superintendent of the Central Massachusetts District. Both Jim McPhee, who is retiring from the Tri-State district, and I thank God for your trust and that of Bishop Devadhar during our time as district superintendents. Although it has been a humbling and awakening
experience, in the words of the apostle Paul, we say to you, “forgetting the things behind us, we are reaching out for the things ahead of us.” Philippians 3:13. In other words, it’s been good but it’s time to go!

Every year, as dean of cabinet, it is my privilege and responsibility to share with all of you what we as cabinet perceive to be the state of the annual conference. With everything going on in the life of the United Methodist Church, we know these are challenging times for all of us, so before I continue, let me say a couple of things:

1. I intend to be brief but as comprehensive as I possibly can. Even though we have done everything we can to include everyone, we may still show some of our blind spots. If that’s the case, we ask for your grace and understanding.
2. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to acknowledge the pain, devastation, disappointment, anger, and anxiety that General Conference’s decision has inflicted in so many, especially to our siblings in the LGBTQIA community.
3. For our complicity, whether silent or voiced, we ask for your forgiveness.

Using the words of Salvadoran Martyr Archbishop Oscar Romero, who penned these words during the beginning of the civil war in El Salvador, let me share this with you “our church is in a difficult situation because it has to live out its prophetic mission in a sinful society of social injustice, which causes problems when it denounces sin and proclaims how to live as Christians. The church’s mission is “subversive” ... so let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world. Let us not tire of preaching love. Though we see that waves of violence succeed in drowning the fire of Christian love, love must win out; it is the only thing that can.”

We will not ignore the truth, we are divided. As a denomination and as an Annual Conference, although we are one with Christ and one in ministry to all the world, we are not one with one another. We wish it wasn’t so. However, our brothers and sisters from Africa and Asia did not do that to us. We were already there. We have been struggling to understand each other for years. If anything can be said it is that General Conference failed to maintain the unity of the church and failed once again to offer justice in helping us become a fully inclusive church. I will be the first one to admit that we have come to previous Annual Conferences ready to either fight change or fight for change. Yes!

It is as if there was an 800-pound gorilla in the room, sitting on our chests, crushing us and asphyxiating us with fear of the other, ignorance and retribution. It is in these times when we should remind ourselves of the words Paul shares with the church in Ephesus (6:12 - NIRV) “Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world.” We ask you. Let’s not blame each other. Instead, let us forgive one another. In the name of Jesus Christ.

Even though we KNOW we are not all of the same mind, we all have the same spiritual, biblical, theological and moral, inward and outward, responsibility to resist evil in whatever ways it presents itself, and to choose courage over comfort in demonstrating Jesus’ love to all people, regardless of who they are, but especially because of who they are, a beautiful creation of an amazing God.

Our goal should be to live as people of grace, for the sake of those watching us, judging us, and praying for us, as well as for the sake of shepherding the Kingdom of God into this world. A present and
future God-led, Holy Spirit-filled community, that although may appear invisible to many, it is incarnational, and can only become a visible reality through our Christian witness.

If as a conference, we feel led to fight for something… which we should

- Let us fight to affect the effectiveness and spirituality to empower our churches
- Let us continue fighting the evil that is corrupting our society which makes it unjust, racist, sexist, heterosexist, unfair, greedy, fearmongering, violent and apathetic to human need
- Let us take on the political and religious systems that continue to perpetuate all kinds of inherent discrimination and racial privilege but, together, LET US join the Holy Spirit in creating a world that is just for all, unbiased and more ethically prepared, where people of all nations, places, genders, theological leanings, languages, cultures, ages and abilities can feel and have peace, hope and love.
- We celebrate those of you who are already on the front lines doing this work. Religion and Race. Church and Society. Congregational Development. Individual people and churches, and many of others who have felt led to following Jesus into the wilderness of uncertainty.

We can also choose a different course, but like Archbishop Romero, “I don’t want to be an anti-against anybody, I simply want to be the builder of a great affirmation: the affirmation of God, who loves us and who wants to save us.”

We, your cabinet, believe that the people of the New England Conference can stand united, from Groton, CT to Caribou, ME. From St. Albans, VT to the tip of Cape Cod, MA, we can be strong and can stand united, facing the great responsibility to change our church into a church of justice, truth, solidarity and human dignity…for all people, especially for those who have been marginalized, wounded and excluded by years of flawed church polity and policy.

As Brené Brown says in her book Braving the Wilderness, “We are going to need to intentionally be with people who are different from us. We are going to have to sign up, join, and take a seat at the table. We are going to have to learn how to listen, have hard conversations, look for joy, share pain, and be more curious than defensive, all while seeking moments of togetherness.”

We have a lot of work to do. We believe we can be strong and resilient. Our churches are already faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ in mission and ministry, but many of us are struggling, trying to survive this era of nones and dones. In the same spirit that God spoke through the prophet Isaiah when he said to the Jewish people who had faced obstacles in their journey towards liberation with the promising words, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,... because He has sent me to provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair...they will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated.” (61:1a, 3-4). We want to invite you to mend and build.

It is time to build and mend what has been broken and devastated...
  - The binding of our covenantal relationship
  - Our trust and love for one another
  - The dignity and full inclusion of our beloved LGBTQIA siblings
  - The stories and current realities of people of color
A hope that what is coming is better and greater than what is.

- The vitality, mission and purpose of our churches
- The missional nature of our pastoral calls and appointments
- A peace and harmony which best resembles the true and whole body of Christ
- And a compelling Christian and Wesleyan witness to the world

We cannot be discouraged! Crises can help us clarify the ideal and the depth of our commitment to Christ. After reflecting on how the story when Jesus calms the storm relates to the UMC, someone told Bishop Bickerton of NYAC, “We have been assigned this storm in order to show others it can be navigated.” we would agree that the people of this Annual Conference are also on a boat crossing to the other side in the middle of a furious and life-threatening storm, and Jesus asks us the same questions he asked his disciples, “why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40). If God has entrusted us with this great burden, God will give us the grace to overcome it.

Many of you are already engaged in this great work of mending, building and reimagining. What happened hasn’t stopped us. Instead, it has put a fire in our bellies. It has already thrusted us to new possibilities. For the vast majority of our congregations who have been engaged in meaningful and life-transforming ministry and missions, this has not deterred us from continuing. As Cabinet, we even went to Presque Isle, ME to glean potatoes to provide for local food banks. As an Annual Conference, we have partnered with agencies like GBGM, GCORR and GCFA to help us align ourselves more faithfully to our vision and mission.

In Vermont, they are already letting go of the ways of being church that no longer serve God and God’s people well. They are reclaiming the ancient ways of the early Wesleyan movement and rebuilding the earliest fellowship of the Acts church. Congregations are now small groups in their small communities, chapels for anyone who needs a sacred space. Lay leaders, lay servants, and certified lay ministers are being raised up for local church ministry. Retired pastors and sacramental ministers are working side by side with laity. Clergy are leading congregations in leaving buildings that hinder discipleship and mission in reimagining how long devastated spaces can be rebuilt and used in new ways in ministering without buildings in cities longing for renewal.

The RISEM district has been intentional about reconnecting with each other in fellowship by resurrecting three of their defunct clergy clusters. New Hampshire has also focused on holistic small groups and regional clergy gatherings. Many mid-Maine churches have moved from being inwardly focused on survival to a more dynamic movement of the Spirit inward and outward connecting faith and work in community. In Central Massachusetts, a couple of youth who had been wanting to go to Taize, but their families did not have the financial resources to do it. Three churches provided for two full scholarships.

Across the CTWMA district, there is a renewed sense of hope. Northern Maine continues to be committed to making disciples of Jesus Christ and have found that they are relying more and more on laity to lead churches. The CMA district is starting new churches in Southbridge, MA, and Marlboro, MA. Through JFON, we are in ministry with asylum seekers and refugees in Portland, ME, in Woodburn, Lowell, and Springfield, MA. Through the work of the conference commission on religion and race and other individual churches, we are dealing with racism and white privilege. In Manchester, NH, we have regional gatherings of UMM and UMW which continue to grow.
Although there is much work to be done, we have much more to celebrate...

- The transformational ministry of our camps
- The involvement of Certified Lay Ministers
- The fact that we have growing youth ministries
- Suppers and free meal programs that build participation into a sacred community
- Spiritual pilgrimages to South Korea, the Holy Land, and Taize
- Our spiritual directors
- Mission U and Mission of Peace

We are all envisioning a future with possibilities. Let us continue to promote what is right with the church. Let us take a stand for missions and remind ourselves of our common purpose. “We stand on the edge of a precipice of possibility, ready to rebuild, restore, and renew whatever God has planned through the power of the Holy Spirit for the people called Methodist for such a time as this.”

We cannot remain silent. As Archbishop Romero reminded Salvadorans, “Each of us has to become God’s microphone.” I leave us with these words... 7-12 “If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. You know for yourselves that we’re not much to look at. We’ve been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we’re not demoralized; we’re not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we’ve been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn’t left our side; we’ve been thrown down, but we haven’t broken... Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus’ sake, which makes Jesus’ life all the more evident in us. While we’re going through the worst, you’re getting in on the best!” 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

ADDENDUM #4

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar
New England Annual Conference
United Methodist Church
Ordination Sermon – God Called You
June 14, 2019

Beloved in Christ: I greet you all in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A Faith Story

While Bishop Forrest C. Stith was my bishop, he told me this powerful story:

In the early 1950s, Bishop Stith attended the University of Nebraska, which was 95% white. Nebraska was officially integrated with laws forbidding segregation; however, people of color were still never sure how they would be received.

During Bishop Stith’s first year, all Methodist students were invited to a social gathering and welcomed to the Wesley Foundation. For the next four years, the Wesley Foundation became his second home and an oasis against racism. He was elected president of both the Wesley Foundation and the State Methodist Student Movement. He was later elected vice president of an organization encompassing five Wesley Foundations from schools in contiguous states. There were only a handful of people of color in the regional organization, and he was the only African American officer.

The organization’s by-laws stated the vice president would succeed the president at the next conference. Anticipating this high honor, Bishop Stith had told his parents and friends. However, on the
eve of the election, his friend pulled him aside to advise him that the executive committee was recommending an exception to the rule and continuing the current president for another year.

This was Bishop Stith’s first experience with racism by “changing the rules.” Since he would graduate the following year, he would never be president. His friend explained the real problem was that some of the parents/sponsors were leery of a black man being so close to their white daughters.

As you would imagine, Bishop Stith was devastated. That evening he took a long walk and finally sat down on the beach. He noticed a small plant that was being overwhelmed by the incoming tide and watched it until it disappeared from view. As he walked away, he thought. “That’s the way life is. When all seems well, tragedy enters and takes away the joy.” That night he prayed long and hard asking God what it all meant.

The next morning, he went back to the same spot. The tide had receded, and the seemingly vulnerable plant was not only alive; it was stronger than ever and glistened in the piercing sunlight as if to say, “Nothing will keep me down.”

Bishop Stith immediately thought, “Jesus Christ is my sun, my light, and my redeemer, and no man (whatever the color or power) can hinder me. Like Wesley’s hymn [‘And Can It Be’] “my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed Thee.” With this renewed spirit, he continued his responsibilities as program chairman to assure it was the best program ever.

Bishop Stith, reflecting on the valuable lesson he had learned, said, “From that moment until the present, whatever comes that seeks to destroy me, like that small vulnerable plant, I look up to Jesus who is my light, my fortress, and my redeemer, and sing with the old slave, ‘This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine...’”

A Church in Exile

Friends, we are a church in exile. When I speak about the church, I am not talking about the church as the people of God or the Church of Jesus Christ; I am talking about the church as an institution. I am talking about a church that has lost its passion to be the movement of God and a pilgrim church. I am talking about a church that seeks to control and program the Holy Spirit through rules and regulations. I am talking about a church that acts like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, who, rather than demonstrate divine love and grace, tried to block and confine Jesus with their legalism and trap him with their questions about the law. Like the people of Israel in Babylon, we, the institutional church, are in exile. We, the institutional church, are like the Pharisees who have traded grace for law.

Whenever I get into a cab or Uber, it is my natural tendency to talk about faith with the driver. Sometimes we have interesting conversations; sometimes we don’t. A few years ago, I was visiting a colleague in England, and as we got into a cab, she whispered to me not to tell the driver that I am a

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6 Taken from personal email sent by Bishop Stith to Bishop Devadhar on May 11, 2019.
minister. Later, I asked my friend why she made that request. She told me, “Clergy have lost respect in British society.” What a sad commentary!

We are a church in exile. Our witness is neither believed or appreciated. In many places, our neighbors do not even know we exist! We have lost our saltiness and light because our witness inside the church is being weakened by racism, sexism, classism and every other kind of “ism.”

Outside the church, we have lost respect and our reputation for being an alternative community with values different from the prevailing culture. We know that the perception others have of us is true. Our tormentors ask us to sing, and we find ourselves asking with pain and confession, “How can we sing the LORD’s song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4).

Called to Faithfulness in Exile

The scripture text from Isaiah recalls the powerful prophesy during the end of the Babylonian exile. It is a Word of judgment and a Word of hope for the church in our day.

In Chapter One, we hear God’s message of judgment to a sinful people— a people who are laden with iniquity, deal corruptly, have forsaken God, and are utterly estranged from the Holy One.

“Hear the word of the Lord...” , Isaiah says. “Listen to the teaching of our God...I've had enough of your burnt offerings...I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. [Your festivals] have become a burden to me. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.” (Isaiah 1:10-15)

Here is what I want you to do, says the Lord: “Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; [And by that, I mean] seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:16-17)

THEN, though your sins (namely, your injustice, bribery, murder, and lack of concern and defense for the widow and the orphan; not your correct doctrines and right thinking; not your piety, not your morality). . . “thougs your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow...If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land...Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.” (Isaiah 1:18-27)

Come, Let Us Go

Commissioners and Ordinands: I give thanks for your willingness and determination to join in navigating the ship called The United Methodist Church in such a time as this!

I commend the local churches that saw your gifts and confirmed your call, the Provisional Academy that guided you in your discernment and reflection of your practice of ministry; the District Committees and Board of Ordained Ministry that examined you; and the laity who formed and nurtured you in your first appointments. I commend the Clergy Session of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church which gave its assent to all of it.

You are becoming part of an Annual Conference in which 268 of our United Methodist churches (or 51% of all non-federated churches) received no new members through confirmation, profession of faith, or
transfer in 2018. You are saying, “yes,” to a call to ministry in a time when the church is in exile. You are committing yourself to lead through a period in the church’s history that is both challenging and exciting. The sea is rough now. You will need to have excellent navigational skills - to be anchored by deep spiritual disciplines; to have courage to act in the midst of uncertainty; and to be willing to take risks for the sake of the gospel. I know in my heart and mind that you can do it! I saw your enthusiasm and witnessed your ability to ask good questions when we met together in retreat.

Bishop C. Dale White, whose life and ministry we recently celebrated, said these words: “Like those who enjoy the festivities in the plush ballroom of a great sinking ship while the holds slowly fill with water, we might enjoy the party a while longer. But not for long, because those below the decks who manned the pumps to keep the great ship afloat are already drowning.” This is a description of the church to which you have been called and have agreed to serve.

The church needs you...not simply to keep us afloat or to keep the ship upright. We need you to help us fix our eyes on Jesus. We need you to help discern and proclaim the new direction to which we are being called. We need you to help us change our course, and if necessary, to abandon ship, so we can move into a new future - to a place of biblical and theological integrity; to a way that changes and forms us into the whole people of God. We need you to help us create a church that is righteous, true, and trustworthy - both inside and out.

On another occasion, Bishop White said: "There is no substitute for prophetic preaching! Neither is there any merit in it as an exercise in the bouncing of sound waves off the four cozy walls of lovely churches. Its real strength is in its potential for mobilizing the community to witness, work, and pray for Shalom, the health and wholeness of the family of humankind."

The Church needs you and has called you for this ministry! God has called you to be priest and prophet, or, as you read in Rev. Patricia Farris’ book: you are called to be “pastor, parson, healer, prophet and a pilgrim” and to witness, work, and pray for God’s Shalom.

Laity, as these beloved people come to be a part of your lives as pastors and teachers, allow them to celebrate their gifts even as they encourage you to fulfill the ministry to which you have been called through your baptism. Become partners with them in ministry; learn and grow with each other; encourage one another; hold one another accountable for the covenants that you make together. The power of God, the love of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit will abide in you and among you, and you will bear good fruit in this world.

To All - Laity and Clergy, you will surely encounter suffering and opposition in ministry; you may become discouraged; you may want to give up. It has happened to me. I have been there. I told my bishop I

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7 Taken from Bishop C. Dale White’s 1980 ordination sermon in the Northern New Jersey Annual Conference.

8 ibid
wanted to give up. I went to my DS within a few months of an appointment and asked for a change the following year. I have experienced racism. I have been called names. I've had letters written about me.

I am grateful for those who encouraged me, advised me, and supported me in those times when I was overwhelmed. (One of those persons is here with us today.)

Do Not Fear
In the second Isaiah, we hear this Word of the Lord spoken to the people of God in the midst of their anxiety, fear, sinfulness, and uncertainty: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God...you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you...Do not fear, for I am with you..." (Isaiah 43:1-5)

People of God, the church is in exile! The church, like the people of Israel, is in exile in order to be made new! It is God’s doing! And we, laity and clergy alike, are called for such a time as this, not simply to serve, but to be redeemed. God, the Creator, who makes a path through mighty waters and fire; God, the Redeemer, who blots out our transgressions; God, the Holy One of Israel; is doing a new thing! God is redeeming us! God is changing us! God is showing us a new way of being the Church. Just as the butterfly goes through stages of transition before it spreads its wings, so God works in and through us to birth a beautiful creation. God is making all things new. It is springing forth! Do you not perceive it? The Lord has spoken and will bring it to pass.

Let us go forth remembering who we are, whose we are, and what we were made to be. Let us pray together:

O God, we are a church in exile!
Our failure to be faithful, and
your immense love,
   have brought us to this place.

You knew no other way
   to save us from—
      our accommodation to a seductive culture,
      our addiction to the sound of our own voices,
      our presumption that our way is your way, and
      our limited view of salvation history as
         the work of our hands, and
         the span of our life time.

We are a church in exile, O God!
Our failure to trust in you and
your unfailing mercy and compassion
   have brought us to this place.

You knew no other way—
   to restore our sight,
   to unstop our ears,
   to give us new hearts,
to bring us home.

God, we are a church in exile!
Our failure to be just in our assumptions and actions, and
your vision of a peaceable realm have
brought us to this place.

You knew no other way—
to show us how far we had strayed;
to cause us to remember that we are yours;
and to return us to our first love.

We are in exile, O God!
You have brought us to this place, and
you are with us in this place
from which we want to run.

But it is here,
in this place,
of exile that—
we will be chastened
we will learn justice;
we will be made perfect in love;
we will be saved from false pride;
we will die to what we must;
we will receive what you long to give us;
we will hear what you want us to do;
we will follow where you go;
we will love whom you love;
we will claim you as our hope; and
you will make us
and all things
new!

Thanks be to you, O God of our salvation!
We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

ADDENDUM #5

Ophelia Hu Kinney
2019 New England Annual Conference Laity Address

Between my mother and me, there’s a sliver of language in the middle where we understand each other. We each speak the different languages in which we were brought up along with a little of the
others. But between us, and in my family in general, food is our common tongue. It’s how we do relationship best.

A meal is worth a thousand words to my mother - it’s a declaration of love, a passing down of culture, and sometimes, an act of reconciliation.

I grew up in a world of words, but neither my mother nor I learned to speak the other’s language with fluency. Apologies aren’t easy when the only way I know how to say, “I’m sorry” in her language loosely translates to, “It’s a wrong that can’t be righted.”

Once, as a child, I apologized for something I’d done wrong. My mother continued to ignore me for hours until I asked what more she wanted; I’d already apologized.

“I never asked you to apologize,” she replied. It didn’t make sense to me until much later that she wasn’t asking me to refrain from saying that I was sorry. She wanted me to start making things right, and she wanted us to be in relationship again after I’d done her wrong.

Food will always mean reconciliation between us. My mother cooked heritage and story and deep love into every meal. If there were three mushrooms left at the table, she’d put two on my plate and one on hers. If there are two mushrooms left, she’ll put two on my plate... even - or rather, especially - when our relationship was breaking.

A thousand times our relationship broke when I was younger: when we misunderstood each other, when I didn’t want to bring her food for lunch anymore, when I became a Christian in my agnostic household, when I came out to her, when I married my wife.

My mother never did apologize for forgoing my wedding. But I never asked her to. Half a year after the wedding, she invited my wife and me to Thanksgiving dinner. And since then, we’ve broken bread together time and again.

Whenever she was ready to repair this relationship once more, it was food that said what words could not. She measured, folded, steamed, and plated the work of reparation and set it before me and said, “Come, eat.”

I’m learning from my mother’s example that being in relationship requires something of us - something more than just a proclamation. And while I don’t always know the recipe for a relationship rooted in love, I know it looks like reconciliation. It means that we cleave to each other, are grafted to one another, and that takes work.

I don’t have a queer-affirming mother, but I have a mother who is doing the work, who is on the journey, reaching for love even when she does not understand it, because we are in relationship.

In the book of Micah, the namesake prophet weaves for us an imagined conversation between God and Israel. Micah calls out tyrannical rule, and he gives Israel a vision of justice. In the verses just before his famed prescription, Micah puts Israel in the stand for the people’s transgressions and their misrepresentation of their relationship with God.
So, what, asks Micah, does the Lord require of you? His question addresses those who profess to already be in relationship with God. To already have committed to a life of personal and communal holiness.

Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Friends, we who call ourselves followers of the God of reconciliation, the God of reparations, are called - required - to do justice. We are not called only to profess, because being in relationship requires something of us. Expressing relationship takes our whole being, not just our words or beliefs.

And justice takes our whole being, not just our words or beliefs. Words and beliefs - these form the basis of our justice-doing, but they cannot be the whole of the edifice in which we house the kin-dom of God.

The kin-dom of God is here, spoken into existence, yes; but until our declarations are matched by courageous action, the kin-dom remains far. We will save no lives by just believing the right beliefs. We will heal no souls with a bumper sticker faith.

Because around the United States, lesbian, gay, and bisexual children seriously contemplate suicide at almost three times the rate of heterosexual youth and attempt suicide at five times the rate of their heterosexual peers. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth who come from highly rejecting families are over eight times as likely to have attempted suicide as lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection. Forty percent of transgender adults have made a suicide attempt, and 92% of these individuals attempted suicide before the age of 25.

LGBTQ young adults have a 120% higher risk of reporting homelessness compared to cisgender, heterosexual youth. Almost 80% of LGBTQ adults see the Catholic Church as unfriendly, and over 70% said the same of evangelical churches.

In the aftermath of General Conference 2019, LGBTQ persons found themselves in the epicenter of the Church’s pain and exclusion. In my role at Reconciling Ministries Network, we were particularly aware of the fear and betrayal experienced by LGBTQ youth in non-affirming local churches, unsure what their future could look like, unsure whether their homes and communities still had a place for them, whether their gifts or personhood would be accepted - if a creative and loving God really created and loved them.

We were told to leave information for suicide hotlines everywhere and all the time. And, knowing the statistics, you’ll understand that we weren’t overreacting.

In truth, it took some time for me to come around and feel what I felt: the memory of rejection by my own Christian community and my own family. The awkward weight of an uncertain future, and the worry that what is might never end.

But in my own story, I have a mother who did not understand but who agreed to be in relationship with me, and who therefore put in the work to do justice: to reconcile, to listen, to put down one’s presuppositions in the face of sure and ripening fruit.

And let me just say that what I love about what the prophet Micah has to say here - do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God - is that each phrase informs the others. How do we go about doing justice? By loving mercy and walking humbly with God. And how do we show that we love mercy? By
doing justice and walking humbly with God. And how do we know we are walking humbly with God? By whether we are doing justice and loving mercy. So, we are not without a guide.

And in our denomination’s story, I’ve seen examples of people around the connection - and outside of it, too - doing justice in the aftermath. Giving their time and resources. Offering free pastoral counseling from ecumenical and interfaith leaders who knew that United Methodist leadership in the crosshairs was drained of its capacity to shepherd its own people. Marrying LGBTQ couples in nations where it is even more dangerous to be LGBTQ, to be your very soul. Raising thousands of dollars at a one-night church-hosted drag show to support an LGBTQ youth group. Showing up for immigrants detained at the U.S. southern border. Empowering youth to organize their own affirming Methodist gatherings. Collecting formal-wear at a local church so LGBTQ youth experiencing housing insecurity can go to a prom where they feel safe. Demonstrating outside of annual conference offices in places where the tide has not yet turned toward justice - where the waters are still low, still rising, and stretched thin.

We in New England are not people of a low tide. We are not a people stretched too thin. By nature of who we are, by nature of where we’ve been, what we do sends a strong message to the connection: what we do, even more than what we say.

To my allies, my cisgender, straight advocates for justice and inclusion of LGBTQ people in the full life and ministry of God’s Church: what you do now sends a strong message even more than what you say.

We are, after all, bound in relationship, and being in relationship requires something of us. And I don’t always know the next steps for a relationship rooted in love, but I know it looks like reconciliation. It looks like movement in the direction in which our courage leads us. Like a banquet over a set table where each of us has a place, where we make room for those who’ve been outcasted, saying, “Come, eat.”

Lest we forget, for many LGBTQ persons in The United Methodist Church, and especially for young LGBTQ folks without strong forces for affirmation in their lives, the pain of General Conference 2019 remains. And the harm that our Church has already done cannot be undone. Nor will it cease to be done if we do not instead change course from a status quo of dehumanization and choose instead to do justice.

In the coming months, before May of 2020, we have the opportunity in our midst to do justice: to put our whole backs against this stone and roll it away from the tomb.

I don’t know if that means that we must remain in the mire to fight for justice within this current structure, or if that means we are to birth something new - but what we cannot do is sit on the sidelines and let our words be the end of our co-conspiracy with the Holy Spirit. What we cannot do is abdicate this rich, deep history of justice-doing, mercy-loving, and walking humbly with God.

And so, as we pray into the steps before us, let’s keep the eyes of our hearts open, scanning the horizon for resurrection. Let’s move in the direction that our courage takes us. Move against the sealing stone, united in our strength and resolve.

Let this be a reminder: the lives of LGBTQ persons in The United Methodist Church and in our world will not be saved by our believing the right thing. And, let this be a point of relief and liberation: neither will the Church! We cannot be the Church by parsing who is or is not a Christian, who belongs to which
movement, whether our ideologies are pure enough, whether we have crafted the perfect vision or cultivated the right credentials - because justice still remains to be done.

And I say this as someone whose livelihood is language but also as someone who remembers what it’s like to wait on the other side of the stone, unsure if it will ever be rolled away. To profess to love means nothing if we aren’t to follow our words and do justice fueled by those beliefs.

Our relationship with a living, dynamic God - our relationships with one another, require us to live an active love. By the power of the Spirit dwelling in us and the charge of our baptism, what choice do we have if we want to remain in relationship with God and with the marginalized but to go forward guided by signs of resurrection?

In our Church, the fields of justice lie fallow, but here in New England, our wells aren’t shallow. Whatever comes next, for the sake of the Church, for the sake of Christian witness, for the sake of the lives and safety and sanctity of LGBTQ persons: let us move in the direction that our courage leads us. Speak boldly. And then do justice. Set the table. Call in the others. And look along the way for signs of resurrection.

ADDENDUM #6

New England Conference Laity Statement: A Response to General Conference 2019

We, the undersigned laity of the New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church,

denounce the harmful results of the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference and commit ourselves to a reborn Wesleyan movement, firm in its full affirmation of LGBTQIA+ persons. Not content to merely reject the actions of that Conference, we breathe in the spirit of the God of Love. And, in this Eastertide, led by the Holy Spirit, we yearn to hear New England United Methodists speak with one voice in calling for a reborn church which throws off the shackles of an unjust and oppressive decision—a reborn Church that unconditionally opens to LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity the doors, pulpits and administrative offices of this emergent and revitalized communion of faith. We call for complete inclusion, with full access to membership, leadership, marriage, ordination and administration in the revitalized United Methodist Church.

We start with a simple truth:

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ embody God’s love for all. We know that Jesus welcomed all; indeed, he chose to be with the marginalized and despised. It is with profound sorrow that we acknowledge those very institutions which are meant to be Christ’s body in the world have too often chosen to reject rather than welcome. We understand that the language of the Discipline regarding LGBTQIA+ persons and the added language of the Traditional Plan directly contradict the affirmation of love at the very heart of our faith. We reject those contradictions, and we affirm once again the power of God’s love to transform even damaged institutions into sacred places that are made richer by the presence of LGBTQIA+ laity and clergy. The recent decisions of the Judicial Council only strengthen our understanding that Christ is calling us to a new creation.

We commit ourselves to preserving the parts of our Wesleyan Methodist tradition that give life:
our passion for reaching people with the healing love of Jesus Christ, the primacy of God's grace, and a faith rooted in scripture and informed by tradition, experience, and reason. We commit ourselves to a revitalized sense of discipleship, with both personal piety and social justice at its heart. Most of all, we recommit ourselves to live fully in God's love.

**A transformed Church, infused with the Wesleyan vision of a faith community overflowing with God's love,**

will be a beacon to the world announcing that all recipients of that love are welcome into truly open sacred spaces. We understand that not all who share the Methodist heritage are of one mind; however, we recognize the clarion call of God's love to act now, to embrace those in our midst who are LGBTQIA+ and together, arm-in-arm, to carry that love into a hurting world. While we do not wish to exclude and are open to dialogue with those who do not share our vision for a transformed church, we will not be deterred from responding to God's call to be a reborn body of Christ in this place and time.

**We trust in the transformative power of the Holy Spirit**

to bring about the change we so fervently seek, and we mobilize to collaborate in the Spirit’s scheming. In a spirit of love, repentance, and compassion, we support and seek the full and active inclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons in the ministry and mission of a movement into which God breathes new life. With LGBTQIA+ members—both clergy and lay—we long to share in the celebration of same gender weddings in United Methodist sanctuaries and the ordination of LGBTQIA+ persons. All of God's people have unique gifts and graces, and when all people are able to share their gifts within a transformed Church, heaven and earth will rejoice.

**In partnership with all who sense it is time for something new,**

we move forward with hearts filled with the love of Jesus Christ. We will not rest as we seek an expression of Methodism that is fully inclusive of our LGBTQIA+ family in Christ and people of all colors, ages, abilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, citizenship or socio-economic status.

**Signed, New England Conference Laity:**

1. Bert Whittier First UMC, Melrose, MA  
2. Meredith Smith Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
3. Richard J. Morris Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA  
4. Caryl Walsh Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA  
5. Linda Lombardo Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA  
6. Adama Brown-Hathaway Union UMC, Boston, MA  
7. Eric Lind Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA  
8. Robert Kelsey Union UMC, Boston, MA  
9. Marcia Hoyt Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA  
10. Sharon C. Parker Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH  
12. Laurie King Rutland UMC, Rutland, VT  
13. Thomas Stewart First UMC, Melrose, MA  
14. Cally Lavigne Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH  
15. Christine Topolewski Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH  
16. Ruth (Ruthie) Bedor Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH  
17. Jolene Coombs Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH  
18. Jean Lind Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA  
19. Caroline Grindrod Union UMC, Boston, MA  
20. Sarah Huber Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA  
21. Miranda Rooney HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
22. Martin Turnidge HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
23. Jane K. Miller Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
24. Cassie Moon HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
25. Dot Pelkey Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
26. Deborah Hermann Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
27. Darcy Prouty Wesley UMC, Concord, NH  
28. Thomas Leach St. John’s UMC, Dover, NH  
29. Matthew Crane Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME  
30. James Bennett First UMC, Melrose, MA  
31. Alice Collins Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA  
32. Lucinda Clark Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
33. Lori Fulton Cutillo Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA  
34. Betty Hartley HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
35. Randy Cathcart HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
36. Tally Reeverts United Parish of Upton Federated, Upton, MA  
37. Marion Austin Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
38. Susan L. Smart Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
39. Hilary Koch Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME  
40. Geoffrey Gross Calvary UMC, Lewiston, ME  
41. Jennifer Dimond HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
42. Valerie Black Grant Memorial UMC, Presque Isle, ME  
42. William Bows Union UMC, Boston, MA  
43. Sandy Gallup Vernon UMC, Vernon, CT  
44. Beth Comeau Dresden Richmond UMC, Richmond, ME  
45. Ophelia Kinney HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME  
46. Cory Allen First UMC, Melrose, MA  
47. Gary Symonds First UMC, Stafford Springs, CT  
48. Marilyn Stinson Dresden Richmond UMC, Richmond, ME  
49. Sonya Coleman Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA  
50. Denise Ranger Dresden Richmond UMC, Richmond, ME  
51. Susan Varney St. Luke’s UMC, Derry, NH  
52. Bill Hartford First UMC, Rochester, NH  
53. Jean Boobar John Street UMC, Camden, ME  
54. Carol Myers West Cumberland UMC, West Cumberland, ME  
55. Linda Keniston Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME  
56. Randall Martin & John Kane St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT  
57. Susan Varney St. Luke’s UMC, Derry, NH  
58. Emma Burke Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT  
59. Joshua Partlow St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT  
60. Betsy Comstock St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Church/Parish</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>William Broadrick</td>
<td>Wesley UMC</td>
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<td>Karen Turino</td>
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<td>Rhonda Pilla</td>
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<td>Susan White</td>
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<td>Andrew Linton</td>
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<td>Hannah Bell-Lombardo</td>
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197. Andrea E. K. Vannett  First UMC, North Andover, MA
199. Jessica Smith  North UMC, Manchester, CT
201. Barbara Reilly  First UMC, Stafford Springs, CT
203. Elaine Menard  First UMC, Rochester, NH
205. Harriet Loring  Church Hill UMC, Norwell, MA
207. Linda L. Abel  York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
209. Wanda Winnicki  St. John’s UMC, Dover, NH
211. Kelly Forrest  Center Conway UMC, Center Conway, NH
213. Jane P. Ives  HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME
215. Jane Isaac  East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
217. Fully Support  Christ UMC, Lawrence, MA
219. Charles & Anne Grassie  First UMC, Rochester, NH
221. Nora Almond  Sheffield Village, OH
223. Peggy Weaver  Living Faith UMC, Putnam, CT
225. Dayna Cantone  East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
227. Karen C. Valentine  Bath UMC, Bath, ME
229. Susan Milliron  York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
231. Marian Wilmot  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
233. Donna Berube  St. John’s UMC, Dover, NH
235. Thomas Wlodek  Union UMC, Boston, MA
237. Jane Hopkins  North UMC, Manchester, CT
239. Mari Grover  Union UMC, Rockland, ME
241. Rich Hughen  Thornton Heights UMC, South Portland, ME
243. Merrill C. Kaiser  Peoples UMC, South Portland, ME
245. Virginia B. Link  Thornton Heights UMC, South Portland, ME
247. Amanda Bonnette-Kim  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
249. Danielle Lucy  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
251. Kim Serna  Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
253. Albert Meyer  East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
255. William P. Aldrich  Open Table of Christ UMC, Providence, RI
257. Janice DiTullio  Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
259. Judith Rachdorf  Old South UMC, Reading, MA
261. Deanna & Gordon Anderson  Old South UMC, Reading, MA
263. Mona Stephens  Church Hill UMC, Norwell, MA
265. Steven DiTullio  Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
267. Renata Kukoski  Church Hill UMC, Norwell, MA
269. Donna Kirby Milley  Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
271. Donna Bishop  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
273. Donald Grantham  St. James UMC, Merrimack, NH
275. Valerie Delaney  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
277. Nina Osier  Cox Memorial UMC, Hallowell, ME
279. Michael Lane  Aldersgate UMC, Rockland, ME
281. Linda VanDine  North UMC, Manchester, CT
283. Amy Delaney  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
285. Robin Hyde  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
287. Betsey Driscoll  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
289. Lisa Alson  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
291. Deborah Benson  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
293. Jennifer van Buren  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
295. Betsy Campbell  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
297. Allan Davis  Christ Church Federated, Kennebunk, ME
299. Gloria Mendez  Calvary UMC, Lisbon, ME
301. Nadine Wright  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
303. Cynthia Geiger  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
305. Colleen Carter  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
307. Dawn Jones  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
309. Rebecca Heath  Old South UMC, Reading, MA
311. Tanya Bouwman-Wozencraft  Franklin UMC, Franklin, MA
313. Ann Merrill  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
315. Diana Palmer  First UMC, Framingham, MA
317. Angela Nelson  Union UMC, Boston, MA
319. Kim Ward  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
321. Stephanie Cyr  Gales Ferry UMC, Gales Ferry, CT
323. David Driscoll  Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
325. Caryl Leslie Fox  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
325. Eileen Stramaglia   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
327. Lynn T. Stroud   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
329. Linda A. Smith   Orleans UMC, Orleans, MA
331. Beth A. Travers   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
333. Thomas Young   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
335. Lisa Marciak   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
337. Janet C. Johnson   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
339. Norma Cahill   Ballardvale United Federated, Andover, MA
341. Ryan Harrison   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
343. Margaret Morris   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
345. Judy Auferdaar   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
347. Linda Stathopoulos   Christ Church Federated, Kennebunk, ME
349. Jay O'Connor   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
351. Eugene Lucarelli   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
353. Lisa Pellegrino   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
355. Elizabeth W. Bohara   Gales Ferry UMC, Gales Ferry, CT
357. Crystal Brown   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
359. Henry Marcy   Old South UMC, Reading, MA
361. Tyler Krone   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
363. Beth Arnold   West Chelmsford UMC, North Chelmsford, MA
365. Evelyn Duffy   Ballardvale United Federated, Andover, MA
367. Dorothy Hollenbeck   Ballardvale United Federated, Andover, MA
369. Benjiman Durfee   First UMC, Westbrook, MA
371. Brian Wolcott   Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
373. Elizabeth Harriman   Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
375. Robert C. Parker   Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
377. Judith Toth   Gales Ferry UMC, Gales Ferry, CT
379. Sandra Goolden   Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
381. Sarah Hicks   Weston UMC, Weston, MA
383. Donna Charlap   St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
385. Kristin Morin   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
387. Nancy Hammerton   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
389. Bonnie Gray   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
391. Judy Crawford   Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
393. Gabrielle Lopez   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
395. Judy Aufderhaar   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
397. Sally Dunning   Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
399. Laura Bagnall   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
401. Kathy Wright   Gales Ferry UMC, Gales Ferry, CT
403. Mary E. Parker   Buxton UMC, Buxton, ME
405. Suzanne Hevelone   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
407. Carrie Chandler   First UMC, Gilford, NH
409. Ashley Dubois   Williston Federated, Williston, VT
411. Joa Carpenter   Somerset UMC, Somerset, MA
413. William (Trey) Burns   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
415. Sandra Burns   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
417. Steven Rafter   Milford UMC, Milford, NH
419. Paula Forsythe   Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
421. Kimberly Prendergast   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
423. Tim Hess   Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
425. Nancy Morley   First UMC, Gilford, NH
427. Jennifer Rockwell   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
429. Brad Jenkins   St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT
431. Taylor Barnes   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
433. Peggy McLeod   Ballardvale United Federated, Andover, MA
435. Marie MacDougall   Hingham UMC, Barnstable, MA
437. Ginger Phelps   Grace UMC, Essex Junction, VT
439. Brian Rogers   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
441. Joyce Cummings   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
443. Donna Grant   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
445. Lily Mittington   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
447. Rollin Jeglum   Weston UMC, Weston, MA
449. Kristin Murphy   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
451. Diane Tobeck Covault   Wilmington, UMC, Wilmington, MA
453. Audrey Kohl   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
455. Faren Thorson   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH

326. Rebecca Unubun   Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
328. Janice Carvalho   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
330. Theodore Carvalho   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
332. Sherry Miller   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
334. Cassandra Marsh   First Church of Winthrop UMC, Winthrop, MA
336. Michael Brown   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
338. Alan McCall   St. Nicholas UMC, Hull, MA
340. Susan Goetchieus   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
342. Ri Romano   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
344. Jeannie LeSueur   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
346. Stephen Lubric   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
348. Sarah Laffamme   W. Chelmsford UMC, North Chelmsford, MA
350. Barbara Bicknell   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
352. Karen Bosch   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
354. Judy Dow   Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
356. Joyce Keyser   First UMC, Gilford, NH
358. Karen Krone   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
360. Gerri August   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
362. Lauren Angeline   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
364. Susan Shayne   Christ Church Federated, Kennebunk, ME
366. Daniel Allen   Aldersgate UMC, Rockland, ME
368. Stephen Ide   North UMC, Manchester, CT
370. Kristin Hayes-Leite   Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Hope, RI
372. Nancy Hammerton   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
374. Karen Jordan   First UMC, Gilford, NH
376. Kathi Campbell   Cotuit Federated Church, Cotuit, MA
378. James Tucker Krone   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
380. Marlene & David Witham   First UMC, Gilford, NH
382. Margaret Wilde   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
384. Ruby Blake   Union UMC, Boston, MA
386. Kelly Higgins   UMC of Auburn, Auburn, ME
388. Lynn A. Powers   Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
390. Josh Powers   Wilmington UMC, Wilmington, MA
392. Bovine Gray   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
394. Kate Jenkins   Old South UMC, Reading, MA
396. Kathryn G. Khanya   Parkway UMC, Milton, MA
398. Helen Einstein   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
400. Ellen Stickney   First UMC, Gilford, NH
402. Polly Wentworth   Chebeague Island, ME
404. Wendy Gatchell-Lacey   New Covenant UMC, East Hartford, CT
406. Clewis Howe   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
408. Jane E. Sample   Tilton-Northfield UMC, Tilton, NH
410. Kathleen Keenan   Weston UMC, Weston, MA
412. Lauren Norford   Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT
414. Nancy Scarcello   Church of the Wildwood, Chittenden, VT
416. Robert Baker   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
418. Charles Hamlin   , Waltham, MA
420. Debbie Smyton   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
422. Ed Heller   Weston UMC, Weston, MA
424. Lisa Threlane   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
426. Deborah Venator   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
428. Rene Wilbur   Tilton Community Church, Tilton, NH
430. Pam Reeve   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
432. Tiffany Hutchins   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
434. Rolf Seichter   First UMC, Gilford, NH
436. Cliff Roberts   First UMC, Hudson, MA
438. Bradley Brewer   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
440. Howard Chandler   First UMC, Gilford, NH
442. Susan Anderson   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
444. Judith Attorri   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
446. Jo-Anne McCoy   St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT
448. Jay Krone   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
450. Barb Sifcar   Crawford Memorial UMC, Winchester, MA
452. Kolya Shields   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
454. Catherine Willwerth   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
456. Marcia McGee   Brunswick UMC, Brunswick, ME
721. Jeff Toothaker   Winthrop UMC, Winthrop, ME
722. Roberta Weymouth   Winthrop UMC, Winthrop, ME
723. Lois Pare   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
724. JoAnne Evans   Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
725. Jude Chisom Erondu   Poultney UMC, Poultney, VT
726. Sarah Krenicki   Poultney UMC, Poultney, VT
727. Paula Pickering   Essex UMC, Essex, VT
728. Al James   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
729. Angela Scott   Essex UMC, Essex, VT
730. Kelly Brown   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
731. Patricia Kerrigan   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
732. Joe Davison   St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT
733. Carol Wheeler   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
734. Sarah Krenicki   Poultney UMC, Poultney, VT
735. Sara Wagg
736. Scott Christensen   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
737. Paul Pedezzani   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
738. Sarah Sanders   Harvard-Epworth UMC, Cambridge, MA
739. Morgan DeChene   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
740. Jason Tockey   Wesley UMC, Worcester, MA
741. Bonnie Weston   First UMC, Gilford, NH
742. Bridget Bedard   Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
743. Linda Ratoff   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
744. Charlotte Bair   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
745. Susan Thurston   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
746. Mark Morrissey   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
747. Susan Christensen   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
748. Tara Partlow   St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT
749. Alice H. Vannerson   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
750. Lisa Buterbaugh   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
751. Stephen McKenzie   St. Pauls UMC, St Albans, VT
752. Pam Gordon   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
753. Dorothy (Allen) Brown   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
754. Karin Greaves   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
755. Julia (Link) Gibson   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
756. Melissa Murray   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
757. Karen Burns   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
758. Ben Newton   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
759. Benjamin Turner   Calvary UMC, Lewiston, ME
760. Bonnie Weston   First UMC, Gilford, NH
761. Emily Fisher   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
762. Robert Peterson   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
763. Sally Burke   East Saugus UMC, Saugus, MA
764. Susan Randall   Oakland-Sidney UMC, Oakland, ME
765. Lora Lutz-Blackburn   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
766. Charlotte Bair   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
767. Susan Damren   Oakland-Sidney UMC, Oakland, MA
768. Rosemary Fairchild   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
769. Ivallee Dunbar-Link   Holy Trinity UMC, Danvers, MA
770. Allyson Taber   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
771. Janice England   Wesley UMC, Worcester, MA
772. Diane Moore   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
773. Kate Devlin   Wesley UMC, Worcester, MA
774. Karen Pehrson   Community UMC - Wayland, Wayland, MA
775. Chris Krebs   Old South UMC, Reading, MA
776. Anne Harper   Harvard-Epworth UMC, Cambridge, MA
777. Karen Schilling   First UMC, Stafford Springs, CT
778. Cara Ammon   Milford UMC, Milford, NH
779. Heidi Prior   St. Paul's UMC, Manchester, NH
780. Janet Hromjak   Milford UMC, Milford, NH
781. Richard Cruse   St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
782. Roberta Weymouth   Winthrop UMC, Winthrop, ME
783. John Sponaugle   St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
784. Kelly DeFelice   Hedding UMC, Barre, VT
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786. Michelle Knapp   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
787. Lynn Dee Linderman   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
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789. Kathleen Gibson   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
790. Diane Moore   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
791. Rosanne Driscoll   Faith Fellowship UMC, North Attleboro, MA
792. Amy Hart   St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
793. Ruth Gammons   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
794. Chari Burdick   Brunswick UMC, Brunswick, ME
795. Lucy Klein   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
796. Peter Parshall   Aldersgate UMC, Chelmsford, MA
797. Ann Ludlow   North UMC, Manchester, CT
798. Karen Pehrson   Community UMC - Wayland, Wayland, MA
799. Donna McAdam   St. John's UMC, Dover, NH
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801. Elsa Bengel   Old West UMC, Boston, MA
802. Elsa Bengel   Old West UMC, Boston, MA
803. Joan Marzoni   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
804. John Bessette   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
805. Mark Morrissey   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
806. Cathy Lord   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
807. Holly Zedler   Wesley UMC, Cambridge, MA
808. Bruce Dennis   Oxford UMC, Oxford, MA
809. Donald Banton   Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME
810. Dan Banton   Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME
811. Nancy Mack   Weston UMC, Weston, MA
812. Debby Whidden   Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
813. Gloria Ripley   Oakham-Sidney UMC, Oakham, MA
814. Susan Lutz-Blackburn   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
815. Kent Somers   Oakland-Sidney UMC, Oakland, ME
816. Nathaniel Spence   St. John's UMC, Dover, NH
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819. Barbara and Collins Judd   North UMC, Manchester, CT
820. Bethany A. Vannerson   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
821. Rosa Kline   North UMC, Manchester, CT
822. Jamie Ladabouche   North UMC, Manchester, CT
823. Luci Flaherty   Main Street UMC, Nashua, NH
824. Marcia Rasmussen   St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
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826. Tanya Lombard   Essex UMC, Essex, VT
827. Amanda Baker   East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
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850. Sarah Pehrson   Community UMC - Wayland, Wayland, MA
851. Elaine Smulling   Open Table of Christ UMC, Providence, RI
852. Deborah A. Bowman   Chebeague Island UMC, Chebeague Island, ME
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<th>Church Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beth Yerger</td>
<td>East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI</td>
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<td>Justin Yerger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Gallagher</td>
<td>Green Street UMC, Augusta, ME</td>
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<td>Ed Angilly</td>
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<td>Judith Custer</td>
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<td>Mary Schmidt</td>
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<td>Sue Paro</td>
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<td>Kaitlyn Threhan</td>
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<td>Heather Wolfe</td>
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<td>Betty Anne Bevis</td>
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<td>Sarah Chavis</td>
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<td>Paula Riley</td>
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<td>Pamela Breniser</td>
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<td>Randall Smith</td>
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<td>David/Linda Benn</td>
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<td>Stan Wilbur</td>
<td>Tinmouth Community Church, Tinmouth, VT</td>
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1117. Garth Kinney-Lombard  Ft Fairfield UP, Fort Fairfield, ME
1119. Rose Potar  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1121. Paul Kniskern  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1123. Marla Marcum  Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
1125. Kristin Parks  St. Nicholas UMC, Hull, MA
1127. David Dunham  Living Faith UMC, Putnam, CT
1129. Jane Schneeloch  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1131. Duane Clinker  Nantucket UMC, Nantucket, MA
1133. Jarod Bakum  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1135. Camille Twining  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1137. Debbie Day  Bridgewater UMC, Bridgewater, MA
1139. Wendy Regan  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1141. Steven Chandler  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1143. John Ketcham  Thornton Heights UMC, South Portland, ME
1145. Gail Renaud  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1147. Sherry Culver  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1149. Paul Rabs  First UMC, North Andover, MA
1151. Scott French  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1153. David Hastings  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1155. David Snyder  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1157. Barbara Wheeler  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1159. Joy Mueller  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1161. Robert McMahen  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1163. Richard MacGovern  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1165. Nyssa Gatcombe  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
1167. Ken Guerin  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1169. Claire Healy  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1171. Jeremy Sharrard  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1173. Nancy Sawyer  Good Shepherd UMC, Gray, ME
1175. Cynthia Farrell-Starbuck  Harwich UMC, East Harwich, MA
1177. Chris Evanchick  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1179. Marie Machacek  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1181. Steven Chandler  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1183. Carol Dunlop  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1185. Theda Cornbower  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1187. Grace Chavis  Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME
1189. Thomas Havers  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1191. Sue Weber  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1193. Mark Jacobson  Trinity UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1195. Barbara Martino  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1197. John Hurlburt  St. Matthew’s UMC, Concord, NH
1199. Ana Flitcroft  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1201. Borys Bakum  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1203. Carol Dunlop  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1205. Stephen Chandler  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1207. Gilberto Vasquez  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1209. Betty Havers  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1211. Peter Alexander  United Church of Newport, Newport, VT
1213. Parker Hall  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
1215. Jennifer Casperson  Trinity UMC, South Burlington, VT
1217. Diane Hemingway  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1219. Anita Lee  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1221. Marilyn Huttunen  Aldersgate UMC, North Reading, MA
1223. Kathleen Zambello  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
1225. Carolyn Colby  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1227. Corrina Roman-Kreuz  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1229. Sue Triggs-Rhuda  First UMC, Melrose, MA
1231. Kristin Parks  St. Nicholas UMC, Hull, MA
1233. Jennifer LaPlume  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Ctr, ME
1235. Diane Hemingway  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1237. Brittany Fox  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1239. Peter Alexander  United Church of Newport, Newport, VT
1241. Pam Rabs  First UMC, North Andover, MA
1243. Steve Oakland  First UMC, Burlington, VT
1245. Randy Norris  First UMC, Burlington, VT
1247. Garth Kinney-Lombard  Ft Fairfield UP, Fort Fairfield, ME
1118. Denise Evans  East Longmeadow UMC, East Longmeadow, MA
1120. Deborah Weekeley  St. Nicholas UMC, Hull, MA
1122. Devon Bakum  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1124. Christopher Cook  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1126. Tammy Coop  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1128. Nicole Baker  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1130. Mark Jacobson  Willbraham Federated Church, Wilbraham, MA
1132. Borys Bakum  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1134. Lily Cook  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1136. Jacki Barden  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1138. Judith Gehrig  Living Faith UMC, Putnam, CT
1140. Erin Snyder  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1142. Candi Foren-Smith  Danielson UMC, Danielson, CT
1144. Gail Page  Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
1146. Kerri Bove  West Kennebunk UMC, West Kennebunk, ME
1148. Beatrice Anderson  Bridgewater UMC, Bridgewater, MA
1150. Cameron Cook  St. John’s UMC, Dover, NH
1152. Betsy Lindsey  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1154. Dwayne Bilingsley  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1156. Stacey Parikh  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1158. B Lynn Havens  Connexion UMC, Somerville, MA
1160. Bunny Lawton  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1162. Debbie Friscino  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1164. Margaret Mikkola  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1166. Lauren Houckens  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1168. David Cail  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1170. Janis Cail  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1172. Jill Cail  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1174. Erica Weida  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
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1178. Ann Yawney  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1180. Beth Williams  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1182. Patricia Cook  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1184. Lynne Priest  Chebeague Island UMC, Chebeague Island, ME
1186. William Eddy  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1188. Donna Miller  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1190. Diane Mackie  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1192. Victoria Smith  North UMC, Manchester, CT
1194. Lois D’Arcangelo  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1196. Leah Rosenman  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1198. Christine Hutchinson  East Longmeadow UMC, E. Longmeadow, MA
1200. Ashley Parker  East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
1202. Ellen Lutz  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1204. John Isaac  East Greenwich UMC, East Greenwich, RI
1206. Cheryl Roberts  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
1208. Bonnie & R. Paul Weston  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1210. Betty Havers  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1212. Joan Clark  East Longmeadow UMC, East Longmeadow, MA
1214. Sandra Wolcott  Pleasant Street UMC, Waterville, ME
1216. Whitney Smith  North UMC, Manchester, CT
1218. Diane Samuelsson  Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
1220. Karen Richter-Hall  Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME
1222. Amelia Hays-Rivest  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1224. Denise Montenegro  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1226. April Allain  East Longmeadow UMC, East Longmeadow, MA
1228. Virginia Blake  Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1230. Kris Callahan  St. Matthew’s UMC, Acton, MA
1232. George Voland  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1234. Gayle Rives  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1236. Gail Renaud  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
1238. Mary Ellen Kendrick  Faith UMC, South Burlington, VT
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1244. Sally Grossnickle  First UMC, Burlington, VT
1246. Paul Rabs  First UMC, North Andover, MA
1248. Jonathan Paul  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1249. Linda Looney   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1251. Amy Vaughan   Williston Federated, Williston, VT
1253. Tim Looney   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1255. James Heininger   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1257. Elizabeth Uhler   Niantic Community Church, Niantic, CT
1259. Dana Gilbert Bow Mills UMC, Bow, NH
1261. Suzanne Whiting   Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
1263. Richard Whiting   Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
1265. Ocean Pellett   Niantic Community Church, Niantic, CT
1267. Margaret Holmberg   Niantic Community Church, Niantic, CT
1269. Laurie Hezekiah-Cox   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1271. Patricia Shute   Milan Community UMC, Milan, NH
1273. Samson Rajaiah   First UMC, North Andover, MA
1275. Barbara Madden   First UMC, Gilford, NH
1277. Barbara Barrett   Osterville UMC, Osterville, MA
1279. Kay Ghielmi Connexion UMC, Somerville, MA
1281. Rev. Phillip Winders (UCC-retired) York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1283. Maureen Clayton   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1285. Terry Poppleton   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1287. Tricia Boucher   Suncook UMC, Suncook, NH
1289. Judy Culy   Rockville UMC, Rockville, CT
1291. Margaret Fotakis   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1293. Ernst Stonebraker   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1295. Deborah J. Henson   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1297. Sherryf Stonebraker   Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1299. Michellea Tumbling   Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1301. Gerry Harvey   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1303. Beth James   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1305. Diane Mercombes   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1307. Marisa Hezekiah Connexion/Grace UMC, Somerville/Lynn, MA
1309. Georgia Iudiciani   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1311. Cynthia Fogarty   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1313. Brian Patten   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1315. Florence Hezekiah   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1317. Patricia A Hamilton   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1319. Daphne Winders   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1321. Alexander Patten   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1323. Linda Patten   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1325. Pamela Mavrelion   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1327. Robert Ryan   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1329. June Coombs   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1331. Kristan Davies   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1333. Cailyn Davies   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1335. Paula DelBonis-Platt   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
1337. Alice Beyrent   First UMC, Gilford, NH
1339. Sarah Goodloe   First UMC, Melrose, MA
1341. Judy King   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
1343. Robert Lewis   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
1345. Timothy Southern   Pearl Street UMC, Portland, ME
1347. Laura Spratt   Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
1349. Adam Hall   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1351. Karen Mannan   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1353. Douglas Johnson   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1355. David Rockwell   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1357. Paul Fritkis   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1359. Kelly Bubier   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1361. Lissa Olbeter   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1363. Joe Takewski   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1365. Kent French   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1367. Laurel Collins   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1369. Karen Mannan   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1371. Denise Chicoine   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1373. Edward Banzy   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1375. Ryan Birch   Union UMC, Boston, MA
1377. Debbie Ewing Hope UMC, Belchertown, MA
1379. Jennifer Clark   Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1250. Janice Condrey   Aldersgate UMC, North Reading, MA
1252. Gayle Bryant   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1254. Gail Watson   Cox Memorial UMC, Hallowell, ME
1256. Priscilla Heinkenger   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1258. Becky Gilbert   Bow Mills UMC, Bow, NH
1260. Elizabeth Gilbert Bow Mills UMC, Bow, NH
1262. Mary Albert   First UMC, Gilford, NH
1264. Judy Birtles   First UMC, North Andover, MA
1266. Linda Armstrong   Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
1268. Linda Watts   Aldersgate UMC, North Reading, MA
1270. Johanna Sharrard   Trinity UMC, Springfield, MA
1272. Sue Deppe   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1274. Scott Grabowski East Longmeadow UMC, E Longmeadow, MA
1276. Danielle Heln   Aldersgate UMC, North Reading, MA
1278. David Trumble   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1280. Gretchen Heilmann   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1282. Maryann Sutherland   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1284. Robert Taylor   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1286. Lynne McMahon   York Ogunquit UMC, York, ME
1288. Phoebe Blaisdell   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1290. Emma Taddeo   Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1292. Jaeok Lee Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1294. Jennifer French   Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1296. Doris Shirley Newton   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1298. Sarah Serwa Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1300. Harrison Zelberg   Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1302. Ann Dor Duskey Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1304. Abak Kayamba Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1306. Beverly Rhodes Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1308. Steven M. Brown Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1310. Joanne M. Ball Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1312. Carole Bannister Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1314. Ginda Neely Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1316. Virginia Kilmer Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1318. Barbara Moore Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1320. Marian Kinney Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1322. Katryn Barr Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1324. Belinda Emily Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1326. Margery Jenkins   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1328. Wayne Jenkins   Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1330. Janet Ryan   Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1332. Dot Peters Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1334. Leonard Davies Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1336. Jacquelyn Bernson Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1338. Ik kyun Kim St. John’s Korean UMC, Lexington, MA
1340. Michael McConnell St. Mark’s, Brookline, MA
1342. Robert Lewis   Wesley UMC, Concord, NH
1344. Adam Hall   First UMC, Burlington, VT
1346. Margaret Kloehn   Middlebury UMC, Middlebury, VT
1348. Maximino Batista Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1350. Jon Gallaher   Green Street UMC, Augusta, ME
1352. Walker Weatherly   Union UMC, Boston, MA
1354. Carolyn Johnson   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1356. Anne Auerbach   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1358. Donna Treece   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1360. Claire Bennett Connexion UMC, Somerville, MA
1362. Michelle Nwogu   Good Shepherd UMC, Malden, MA
1364. Pooja Samuel   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1366. Elizabeth Martin Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1368. Chuck Willwerth   Calvary UMC, Arlington, MA
1370. Mykela Bricka   Old West UMC, Boston, MA
1372. Allison Mack   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1374. Dorothy Gorenfluo United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1376. Ellen Bruce   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1378. Karina Thompson   United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1380. Jean J. Pfeifer   Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1381. Marsha Robinson  Old West UMC, Boston, MA
1383. Jody Chase  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1385. Carol Nason  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1387. Susan Carney  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1389. Terry Ames  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1391. Kate Carney  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1393. Dorothy J. Phillips  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1395. Michael Bruns  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1397. Zander Garrant  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1401. Crystal Mayo  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1403. Patricia Price  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1405. Janis Townsend  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1407. Rose Currie  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1409. George L. B. Freeman  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1411. Danny Jennings  Fisk Memorial UMC, Natick, MA
1413. Oleta Elaine Tripplett  Ch on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1415. Robert McLaughlin  Ch on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1417. Bruce Donath  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1419. Jennifer O'Sullivan  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1421. Patricia O'Hara  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1423. Tom Keegan  First UMC, Melrose, MA
1425. Andrew Reovan  Harvard-Epworth UMC, Cambridge, MA
1427. Sarah Fitth  United Church of Newport, Newport, VT
1429. Joel Young  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1431. Deanna Baker  United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1433. Amy Cardoso  Woburn UMC, Woburn, MA
1435. Sean Cady  United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1437. Pat Howkinson  United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1441. Mary McConnell  United Parish in Brookline, Brookline, MA
1445. Nicole Fernald  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1448. Jaime Woolcock  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1450. Nancy Fernald  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1452. Patrick Fernald  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1454. Nathan Woolcock  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1456. Karl Kreuze  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1458. Lina Abu-Abi  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1460. Grace Hart  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1461. Patricia O'Hara  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1463. Brad Stayton  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1465. Leslie McBrayer  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1467. Dean Jacobus  Sudbury UMC, Sudbury, MA
1469. Allison Roy  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1471. Julie Chalfant  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1473. June St. Pierre  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1475. Nicole Barrett Syler  Versailles UMC, Versailles, CT
1477. Joan Comeau  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1479. Patricia Larocque  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1481. Janell Hutchins  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1483. Edith Basora  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1485. John Woodward  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1487. Deborah Reeves  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1489. Bonnie Palmerini  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1491. Rosemary Vaughan  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1493. Elizabeth Bell  Wesley UMC, Hadley, MA
1495. Susan Abu-Abi  St. Matthew's UMC, Acton, MA
1497. Christopher Guido  HopeGateWay UMC, Portland, ME
1499. Bradley Libbey  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1501. Ellen Cosgrove  First UMC, Gilford, NH
1503. Julie Ann Chase  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1505. Ann Hand  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1507. Stephanie Boone  Lebanon UMC, Lebanon, NH
1509. Maurice Hutchins  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1511. Lynn Satrale  First UMC, North Andover, MA
1512. Judith Metcalf  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1513. Edith Mary Chase  Church on the Cape UMC, Cape Porpoise, ME
1514. Helen Mclaren  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
1516. Heather O'Connell  Grace UMC, Lynn, MA
The recipient of the award is invited to preach at the New England Annual Conference session to a person who demonstrates excellence in preaching the whole Gospel, addressing both personal and social salvation.

The Wilbur C. Ziegler Award for Excellence in Preaching

Isaiah 61:1

Rev. Jay Williams, Ph.D.

The Gospel of Liberation

New England Annual Conference — June 15, 2019

Conference Theme — Vital Conversations: Justice (Micah 6:8)


The Wilbur C. Ziegler Award for Excellence in Preaching

This award is presented each year at the New England Annual Conference session to a person who demonstrates excellence in preaching the whole Gospel, addressing both personal and social salvation.

The recipient of the award is invited to preach at the Annual Conference session.
Reading of Scripture — Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 (adjusted, The Inclusive Bible)

1."The Spirit of Exalted YHWH is upon me, for YHWH has anointed me: God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor; to heal broken hearts; to proclaim release to those held captive and liberation to those in prison; 2 to announce a year of favor from YHWH, and the day of God’s vindication; to comfort all who mourn, 3 to provide for those who grieve in Zion—to give them a wreath of flowers instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair. They will be known as trees of integrity, planted by YHWH to display God’s glory. 4 They will restore the ancient ruins, and rebuild sites long devastated; they will repair the ruined cities, and rebuild sites long devastated; they will repair the ruined cities, neglected for generations. 5 For I, YHWH, love justice; I hate robbery and sin. So I will faithfully compensate you, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you. 6 Your descendants will be renowned among the nations; and your offspring among the people; all who see you will acknowledge that you are a people blessed by YHWH. 7 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and a garden brings its seeds to blossom, so Exalted YHWH makes justice sprout, and praise spring up before all nations.

Ministry in Song — Praise Team of Union United Methodist Church (Boston, MA)

“Freedom” & “Pour Out Your Spirit”

Sermon Text

I. Gratitude

I am so grateful for my colleagues at Union: Minister Nikki, Minister Adama, Willie on keys, Crystal, and Corei. Can we bless God for their ministry?

I am Jay Williams. My pronouns are he, him, and his. I am a black, cisgender queer ordained Elder in The United Methodist Church—indeed as it were, “a self-avowed practicing homosexual.”

[cslide 1]

cisgender = I identify with the same gender that I was assigned at birth.

queer = The “q” in LGBTQIA+ refers to individuals who do not conform to simple binaries in describing sexual and affectional orientation.

I realize that the conference hour is late and my time is brief. And although I want to move quickly to my message, because my godmother Bishop Violet Fisher taught me better, first, I will take a moment to express some gratitude.

I do have mixed emotions on today, because today has been a rough day for me, for my family, as my mother-in-law Lolita transitioned to the church triumphant this morning. She had a brief but tough battle with cancer. I thank you for the prayers that you’ve already showered upon me and my partner Robert—on this day he would have been here, joining our Praise Team, but he needed to be elsewhere.
I feel my mother-in-law’s presence this afternoon—as well as the presence of my spiritual father, Bishop Martin McLee, who I called lovingly called “McBishop”—who, in fact, stood here in 2006 delivering this [Ziegler] sermon. I am truly honored that I get to stand in his pulpit at Union every Sunday, having once sat in the pews under his leadership, while he was my pastor during college.

I am deeply humbled by my selection for this Ziegler preaching award by the Board of Church and Society. I thank you Rev. Becca [Girrell] and Rev. Leigh [Dry].

And I am also so humbled that my colleagues in the clergy covenant have elected me to lead our General and Jurisdictional Conference delegations.

Perhaps Dorothy said it best: “There’s no place like home.” After serving a year in San Francisco, I am grateful to be back home here in New England. You see I’ve come to realize that sometimes you must leave home in order to return home to find home. So, I am grateful for the way in which you have welcomed this prodigal son back—back home with such prodigal love. You know, “prodigal” means extravagant...excessive...extraordinary. As Wesleyans, we know extravagance and excess and extraordinary love as “grace”—and in this place called New England I have truly experienced “grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

Finally, I must publicly thank you, Bishop—Bishop Suda [Devadhar]—for the manner in which you model and embody grace. And, did he not preach a message this conference with such Pentecost power? As the chief shepherd of this Conference, every time I am in your presence, Bishop Suda, you teach me how to be a better pastor. I am grateful for a bishop who knows the power of prayer—and that prayer changes things. And as it’s been said: No prayer, no power. Little prayer, little power. But much prayer, there is much power.

So, let us pray: Gracious and loving God, speak now; we listen. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be found acceptable, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. It’s in the matchless name of Jesus the Christ that we pray. Let all God’s people say, “Amen.”

II. Following Jesus, the Queer Radical

Here’s the thing, beloved: I love Jesus. So, this sermon is about Jesus and it’s about justice and it’s about the Gospel of Liberation.

You see, I grew up in Buffalo, New York and on Easter Sunday 1985, I joined my Granny—Inez Bass, a fierce United Methodist Woman who joined the church triumphant in 1998—I joined her on Easter
Sunday 1985 (which was my 4th birthday) at Metropolitan United Methodist Church. And it’s at this little church that I learned to love Jesus, because he first loved me.

At Metropolitan, we used to sing hymn #400 in the African American Heritage Hymnal, which is song #2129 in The Faith We Sing. Prema and Bishop Devadhar, this hymn was composed by Simon Marak and Sadhu Singh on the subcontinent of India—and at my black church in Buffalo, NY, it was one of those every-Sunday songs. Yeah, we loved to sing that song: “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.”

And guess what beloved: “There is no turning back / Because the world is behind us / And the cross is before us / Though none go with us / Still we will follow / And there is no turning back.”

I didn’t know it fully at the time, but when I was confirmed and I decided to follow Jesus—the Jesus of Nazareth and the Jesus Christ of the Gospels—I decided to follow a radical. Look, I’m not talking about the Jesus that some people want us to believe in: Not the docile, turn-the-other-cheek Jesus. Not the Kumbaya—let’s hold hands and can’t we all just get along Jesus. Not the everything’s gonna be alright Jesus. Not the “it’s gonna be better in the sweet-bye-and-bye” Jesus. Not the complicit and complacent Jesus. Not the just fast and pray Jesus. No, that’s not my Jesus. No, not the “sweet baby born in Bethlehem” Jesus.

Beloved, I’m talking about the Jesus born to an unwed mother who grew up—the Jesus who grew up poor. The Jesus who grew up living under the constant threat of terror in a nation occupied by the Roman Empire. The Jesus who was an immigrant refugee. The Jesus who was a brown Jewish rabbi, who came to comfort the comfortless. The Jesus who came that we “might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The Jesus who preached a Gospel of Love and Life and Liberation—the Jesus who came to set us free. I’m talking about the Jesus who embodied Isaiah’s prophecy: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

Yes, the Jesus who took a stand against injustice. The Jesus who did not play favorites. But yet the One who took sides and always stood on the side of the oppressed — that Jesus. The Jesus who came to love and to serve and to save everyone, but the same Jesus who didn’t shy away from calling out bigotry and selfishness and the self-centered, self-interested, self-preservation that circles the wagon and protects the insiders at the expense of outsiders.

[SLIDE 3]
I’m talking about the Jesus who lived on the margins with society’s rejects, misfits, castaways, sinners—the tax collectors, the lepers, and the homeless—that Jesus. The Jesus who got angry and turned over the tables in the temple, because the religious folk had defiled the house of God and made a mockery of the Gospel—that Jesus. The Jesus who made a whip of leather straps and chased out the loan sharks who took advantage of the weak and the poor—that Jesus.

The Jesus who said, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer’, not-a den of robbers” (Matthew 21:12-13)—oh yes, that Jesus. This is the Jesus who died on the cross at the hands of power and privilege. But still the same Jesus who was resurrected. And the same Jesus who ascended to heaven. The Jesus who is at the right hand of God the Mother. And the same Jesus who is coming back again.

Yes, we have decided to follow Jesus—and there’s no turning back.

You see, Jesus was not a centrist or a compatibilist or a moderate. Jesus was a radical—a radical who said: Love everybody and treat everybody right.

But the Jesus of the Gospel, seems to me, has been colonized and domesticated and diluted. And the power of the cross and the power of his Resurrection has practically been diminished.

Yet, the fact of the matter is this—and you don’t want to miss this, because this is my central point: Though Jesus was not gay, Jesus is Queer.

And because Jesus is Queer, the Gospel of Liberation requires the Queering of the Church.

Because we have decided to follow Jesus Christ, the Queer Radical who preached a Gospel of Liberation, we are called to Queer the Church.
So, what if the entire Christian project—you know the project of transforming the world and turning the world upside down—what if that is, by definition, a queer project?

Let me be abundantly clear: Queerness is an ethical orientation, and not simply a sexual orientation. Queerness is a way of thinking, a worldview, an approach. To be queer is to be non-complicit, non-conventional, and non-compromising, and non-conforming with injustice.

Is this not what we learn from Scripture in Romans 12:2: “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye trans-formed by the renewing of your minds.”

So following Jesus is a queer act, because when we answer the call of Jesus and are baptized into the church, we commit ourselves to be counter-cultural. When we make our vows “to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,” we choose to be queer.

Yes, some of us were born with a sexual orientation that is queer, but when we give our lives to Christ, all of us choose to ethical orientation that is queer.

Because to follow Jesus is to be different ...to follow Jesus is to be odd...to follow Jesus is to color outside the lines. And when we follow Jesus, we follow the non-conforming, non-complicit, non-conventional, and non-compromising queer Jesus of Nazareth.

[SLIDE 5]

To be Queer is to be
non-conforming
non-complicit
non-conventional &
non-compromising

Yes, we even follow Jesus to the cross, because Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it best: “when Christ calls us, he bids us come die.”

III. Follow Jesus to the Cross to the Death of The UMC

Here’s the thing:

Yes, to follow Jesus is to be queer and to preach a Gospel of Liberation, and when we preach that Gospel of Liberation and we follow Christ, we even die with Christ—just as The United Methodist Church was crucified on February 26, 2019 [at the special General Conference].

The United Methodist Church, beloved, as know it is dead.
So even while we gather today, in this place, flanked between Pentecost and Trinity Sundays—caught between breath and mystery—still we are in Holy Saturday. And we are awaiting resurrection, because The United Methodist Church was crucified on a Tuesday that was, in fact, Good Friday.

And get this: the architecture of oppression that killed Jesus is the same architecture of oppression that killed the UMC.

Here’s what I mean: Jesus was killed by an empire that hated his poor, colonized, brown immigrant body. And The United Methodist Church too was killed by intersecting systems of colonialism, classism, heterosexism, and white supremacy.

You see, intersectionality is a fancy way of saying that our oppressions are interconnected, and my struggle for liberation intersects with yours.

So mass incarceration is inextricably linked to the fact that women don’t get equal pay for equal work. Which is intimately connected to the fact that black men still get shot in the streets. Which is connected to the fact that brown immigrants are being detained and dehumanized at our borders. Which cannot be separated from the fact that trans women of color are vulnerable every time they step outside of their homes.

Some will try to seduce us with the lie that our struggles are separate. This, in fact, is how in the architecture of oppression is built: that divide-and-conquer story is as old as time itself. And we buy into the lie when we believe that the pending fracture of The United Methodist Church is only about human sexuality.

But, in reality, there has never been a Methodist Church that is not racist and sexist and classist and colonial and homophobic.

The UMC has always been rooted in white supremacy, sexism, cisgender heteronormative patriarchy—which is a fancy way of saying that the discrimination we experience today is embedded in our Wesleyan DNA.

Let me just take a moment to break it down a bit historically:
The 2019 General Conference is, in fact, rooted in 1972. And 1972, when the incompatibility language is introduced in the Book of Discipline, is rooted in 1968, when the Central Jurisdiction was eliminated. So, when formal discrimination against black people was removed in The United Methodist Church, we replaced it with discrimination against queer folk.

And 1968 is rooted in 1956, when women were granted full clergy rights. And 1956 is rooted in 1939 when the Central Jurisdiction was formed. And 1939 is rooted in 1844 when the Methodist Episcopal Church split over slavery. And this all goes back to 1784, when the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in the bosom of the United States, which did not acknowledge my ancestors as full human beings and did not acknowledge women as full citizens of the nation.

So, you see, there always been discrimination in the Methodist DNA. And, in fact, different Christianities have existed within the Methodist Church, which have allowed some to rationalize violence through terrible theologies—not solely different biblical interpretations, but entire Christianities; theologies that enslave other human beings—and still call themselves Christians.

The Methodist Church, in a way, rejected Isaiah 61 as a scriptural template for intersectional justice. Because in Isaiah 61, as we read and heard, Isaiah places alongside one another—intersecting with one another—the struggles of the poor with the struggles of the brokenhearted, which intersects with the captive and those who mourn.

Because of this—this rejection of prophetic and intersectional gospel to which we are called—the reality is that The United Methodist Church is rotten to the core. So, it actually needed to die.

And although the death was painful, and we are still in Holy Saturday, Resurrection is coming.

Resurrection is coming. And there is always Good News.

Because although we have been op-pressed, sup-pressed, com-pressed, re-pressed, and it’s even caused us to be a little be de-pressed. Even though didn’t get everything right, he did get this right: “even though we are pressed down on every side, we are not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

[SLIDE 8]
IV. Rebuilding and Reclaiming

So, New England, we are still here. And it’s time to rebuild the Church.

It’s time to rebuild the Church in the power of Pentecost, by dismantling the dead denomination.

It’s time to rebuild the Church by following the resurrected Christ into a Queer Church, by reclaiming the Gospel just like Maxine Waters reclaimed her time.

It’s time to reclaim the Gospel as Good News—and to reclaim the Bible. And to cut the nonsense...and to speak against the foolishness that talks about the Bible as being inerrant. Well, we know that it’s just not.

Because, I believe that everyone in here has eaten Maine lobster. Well, according to Leviticus 11:12, if we’ve eaten Maine lobster, then we are all abominations.

So, as we reclaim the Bible, we still claim that the Bible is not the Word of God — Jesus is the Word of God. And it is written in the Bible that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ...and the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:1,14).

Let me make it plain: Jesus did not read the Bible, because the Bible had not been written. So, the Bible that Jesus did not read cannot be the Word of God, because Jesus is the Word of God.

Yes, it’s time to reclaim our Wesleyan tradition, because it is written in our Book of Discipline—look it up, paragraph 104, page 73 of the 2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline—in the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church: “We believe that the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God.”

So, the Bible gives us clues to Jesus, who is God-consciousness, but the totality of Jesus, who is the Word of God, always transcends what we find written in human words.

[SLIDE 9]
V. Following the Resurrected Christ into a Queer Church

So, we must remember. And we must decide to follow Jesus, the Word of God.

Jesus, the Justice Radical—that brown, poor, anti-colonial, trouble-making, liberation-oriented Jesus—dare I even say, the queer Jesus who calls us to create that queer Church: a Church that is anointed and lives out the Wesleyan tension of grace and holiness. One that is “wrapped in the mantle of justice” as the prophet Isaiah declares in chapter 61.

The God of Justice wraps us in a mantle of justice and causes justice to sprout and praise to spring forth!

[SLIDE 10]

Let us follow the Resurrected Christ into the Queer Church – one that is anointed by the God of Justice, who wraps us in a mantle of justice and causes justice to sprout and praise to spring! (Isaiah 61:10-11)

So, we have a choice.

And to borrow the words of Michel Foucault, we have the opportunity to “become again what we never were” (Hermeneutics of the Subject, 20 January 1982, hour one).

This is the promise of God: that we do not have to remain who we were. In fact, to follow Jesus is to move from where we were to where God is calling us to be.

So, fear not, beloved, this is the Year of the Liberator’s favor. Let us walk boldly into the days ahead, making our faith rooted in the faith rooted in the Gospel of Liberation. Making our faith in the future in
which we envision so irresistible that the world cannot help but join us as we walk from here to there – following Jesus.

So, what if, on this day, when are flanked by Pentecost and Trinity Sunday—between breath and mystery—what if we are not just in a season after Pentecost, also known as Ordinary Time? What if Pentecost did not initiate liturgical ordinary time, but rather ignited an extraordinary pursuit of justice and liberation work?

What if we followed Jesus, and Pentecost might in/spire within us a justice-centered Jesus movement?

What if we followed Jesus the Queer Radical...and followed that Jesus, the resurrected Christ, into creating a Queer Church?

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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