

2019 Annual Conference Report – St John’s UMC

The 2019 Louisiana Annual Conference was held at the Shreveport Conference Center from June 9th through the 12th. Bobbi Marino and John Toney served as the Lay Delegates for St Johns while Danielle Blackwood and Mari Walker were BR District Lay Delegates. Pastor Lane and Pastor Deirdre as well as our Ministry Intern, Morgan Dynes were also in attendance.

Two of our retired Clergy, Rev Marie Williams & Rev Larry Norman were there and finally, Catherine LeBlanc was there as a lay delegate for Centenary College. In addition, Pastor Lane led the Design Team which was responsible for all of the setups and logistics for the main conference meetings and worship services.

The overarching theme of this year’s Annual Conference (as well as the 2018 and 2020 Conferences) was “Making Disciples – Transforming the World” while the focus sub-theme for 2019 was “in Love...” based on the Scriptures found in Romans 13:8-10. “All the Commandments are summed up in one word: You must LOVE your neighbor as yourself.” Many other Scriptures were quoted during the opening session as Love is one of the most discussed topics covered by Jesus as well as other New Testament writers.

The opening event for the Laity this year was led by our Conference Lay Leader, Dr. Terrel Deville. The laity received several reports during the meeting, but the main focus that Louisiana Methodist continue to be focused on is the needs and issues faced by the children in the foster care system. A major milestone of this focus occurred on April 24th with the ground-breaking in Robert, Louisiana of the new Methodist’s Children’s Home of Southeast Louisiana and Greater New Orleans. Dormitory, Clinic and Admin Buildings are slated to open in late 2020.

The Conference speaker this year was Rev. Dr. Gil Rendle. He is the author of 8 books and has made presentations at numerous Annual Conferences as well as to other denominations. His main focus dealt with the major shift in the dominant culture in this country. He noted that we have moved from a culture that was “community oriented” to one that is now focused on the individual. His main points were that each church needs to define “why it exists” and “what its mission is” and then to focus relentlessly on that instead of looking back at how it used to be.

The Opening Service of Worship and Communion was led by Bishop Cynthia Harvey. In her Episcopal Address, she spent some time preaching about the Conference Theme and what it means to be “In Love” as a disciple of Jesus Christ. She also addressed the issues that the Church continues to face based on the outcome of the Special General Conference that voted to approve the Traditional Plan.

During the Business Sessions, a number of reports and recommendations were presented and these were all passed by the Annual Conference Delegates.

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There was a resolution from the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits which dealt with major changes in the way Retiree Health Benefits would be handled. It is expected that the Conference and the Retirees would see reduced costs and improvements to the Health Benefit coverage. This resolution was accepted.

There were 3 Petitions submitted to the Annual Conference as follows:

+ Petition 1 asked that the Annual Conference “Disavow the Traditional Plan” that came out of the called Special General Conference back in Feb 2019. This Petition was voted down by a slim majority of 51% to 49%.

+ Petition 2 dealt with submitting a petition to the 2020 General Conference to allow Local Pastors to have the right to vote on Constitutional amendments. This passed by a large majority.

+ Petition 3 dealt with submitting a petition to the 2020 General Conference to allow Associate Members to have the right to vote on Constitutional amendments. This passed by a large majority.

A total of 8 Laity and 8 Clergy were elected to serve as our Conference representatives for the upcoming 2020 Conferences:

+ The Laity and Clergy Delegates elected to serve at the 2020 General Conference which will be held on May 5th - 15th of 2020 were:

Laity:

Sarah Kreutziger
Ronald Helaire
Michelle DeRouen

Clergy:

Brady Whitton
Karli Pidgeon
Katie McKay Simpson

+ The Laity and Clergy Delegates elected to serve at the 2020 Jurisdictional Conference which will be held on July 15th - 18th of 2020 were:

Laity:

Sarah Kreutziger
Ronald Helaire
Michelle DeRouen
Jennifer Swann
Lesh Nettles Brown
Margaret Washington

Clergy:

Brady Whitton
Karli Pidgeon
Katie McKay Simpson
John Cannon
Matt Rawle
Simon Chigumira

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+ Two Laity and two Clergy Delegates were also elected to serve as Alternate Delegates for both the General and the Jurisdictional Conferences:

Laity:

Adam Philley
Deborah Todd

Clergy:

Marissa Teauseau
Ellen Alston

On Monday evening a “Celebration of Ministry” was held at First UMC in Shreveport. This service was led by Bishop Harvey and focused on the Licensing of new Local Pastors, the Commissioning of deacons and provisional Elders and the ordination of Elders.

Pastor Deirdre Halliburton was commissioned as a provisional Elder

A report will be presented to the Church Council in August. In the near-term, additional information will be posted to our WEB site. If you would like more detail information, please contact myself or Bobbi Marino. Finally, Bobbi and I want to thank you all for supporting us as your Lay Delegates.

Sincerely, john toney