

Health Faith, Healthy Church

Bishop Sally Dyck gave the nearly 800 members of 2011 Minnesota Annual Conference (June 1-3, Saint Cloud) a simple challenge: to interview someone, preferably a young adult, who is not a church participant. “Increasingly, younger people are not joining churches,” Bishop Dyck said in her episcopal address during the opening banquet on June 1 in Saint Cloud, Minn. “They are joining the fastest growing religious group in the country: the ‘nones.’” By “nones,” Bishop Dyck means those who indicate “none” when asked their religious affiliation. Bishop Dyck also invited members to write on a card the name of a “none” among their family or friends and submit the name to the bishop for her prayers over the next year. “Of course, I ask that you pray, too,” Bishop Dyck said. This brings full circle the bishop’s pledge of seven years ago (when beginning her ministry in Minnesota) to be the bishop of the “nones.” Members examined how to keep the faith community vital and strong through the practices of “Healthy Faith, Healthy Church.”

Debunking myths about youth

Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean, professor of youth, church and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary and guest speaker at the conference, told members that they “need to stand in the way of grace and stay close enough to God’s source of grace and close to the people who need that grace so it overflows onto them. That’s what mission is.” She added, “What makes youth young is not age, but the belief that they are not limited by age. They have hope.” The theme was continued at lay session, where panels of college students talked about their perspectives on church and their own faith.

Saving young lives

“You have the power to save lives,” Leia Williams, Imagine No Malaria field coordinator; told members in a rousing presentation on June 2. The United Methodist Church intends to eliminate deaths from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015. Williams is spending the next ten months showing Minnesota United Methodists how they can raise \$1.8 million in the next three years to save 180,000 lives. A generous donor has already pledged \$600,000, so the conference has already met a third of its goal.

Legislation

Members passed a 2012 budget of \$6,367,332 which is \$175,000 lower than the 2011 budget. Members endorsed petitions that will be sent to General Conference 2012 for consideration. These request changes that would:

- amend ¶267 of *The Book of Discipline* by changing the name “Lay Speaking Ministries” to “Lay Servant Ministries.”
- amend ¶214 to change congregational membership and participation eligibility from “All people may” to “All people are welcomed to” attend its worship services, participate in its programs,” etc.
- amend ¶215 to change the definition of professing membership in a congregation to include “all people who choose membership” rather than “all people who have come into membership.”
- amend *The Book of Discipline* ¶258.2 (e) to guarantee lay staff (full- or part-time) prior notification of any Staff-Parish Relations Committee meeting at which her or his continued employment will be discussed and immediate consultation thereafter—a right guaranteed to clergy (and guaranteed to lay people in the 2000 Book of Discipline).
- ask General Conference to resolve to support the Kairos group of annual conferences in aligning United Methodist investments with past resolutions about the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories in solidarity with our Christian sisters and brothers in Palestine.

General & Jurisdictional Conference

UMC General Conference takes place April 24-May 43, 2012, in Tampa, Fla. Lay delegates elected to General Conference, in order of election: MaryJo Dahlberg (North Branch, Minn.; head of delegation), Sara Ann Swenson (Brainerd, Minn.), and Jerad Morey (Brooklyn Center, Minn.). Clergy elected to General Conference delegation: David Bard (Duluth, Minn.), Judy Zabel (Minneapolis, Minn.), and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis, Minn.).

North Central Jurisdictional Conference takes place July 17-21 in Akron, Ohio. Lay delegates elected to North Central Jurisdictional Conference: Jean Edin (Saint Louis Park, Minn.), Faye Christensen (McGregor, Minn.), and Gary

Vanderwerf (Windom, Minn.). Clergy elected are Amy Jo Bur (Saint Peter, Minn.), Cindy Gregorson (Rosemount, Minn.), and Alan Bolte (Alexandria, Minn.). Lay alternates are Dave Nuckols (Minnetonka, Minn.) and Derek Harvey (Owatonna, Minn.). Clergy alternates are Tyler Christiansen (Minneapolis, Minn.) and Paula Colton (Hamel, Minn.).

Choirs, marshals, and pages are sought for General Conference. Apply/inquire online. [General Conference web site.](#)

70 clergy sign statement

In a moment of personal privilege during clergy session, an elder invited clergy to join him and about 12 others in pledging to conduct marriages requested by same-sex couples. About 70 clergy had signed the statement by the adjournment of conference. Paragraph 341.6 of the *Discipline* states, “Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.” Bishop Dyck clarified that simply to make the statement (as opposed to actually officiating a same-sex union) was not a chargeable offense according to *The Book of Discipline*.

People & Churches

Rev. Jim and Janet Beard (New Day UMC, Big Lake) received the Denman Evangelism Awards. . . . **Wells UMC** received the Rural Church Award. . . . Conference preacher for 2012: **Rev. Marci Jamison** (Gethsemane UMC, Lino Lakes).

Data

- Love Offering receipts: \$68,000
- Ministerial Education Fund offering (ordination service): \$3,800
- Two deacons and four elders were ordained.
- Eighteen clergy retired.
- Membership stands at 72,284,
- down 2,435 from the previous year.
- Worship attendance stands at 34,032, down 1,686.
- Church school attendance stands at 9,486 down 1,195.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN DELVING DEEPER: Go online to www.minnesotaumc.org Click Conference Session tab and then release on Post-Conference Resources.