



Daily Journal

A Summary of the West Virginia Annual Conference Session - wvumc.org

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Do Not Pass By Those Who Grieve

By Rev. Amy Shanholtzer

Rev. Charles Wilson, pastor of the Earl Charge near Summersville preached Thursday evening's Memorial Service in Wesley Chapel. His message centered around the language of grief.

Using the story of the priest and the Levite from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10, Wilson noted both characters stepped away from grief when taking the long way around the man lying on the Damascus road.

"Grief is something we all encounter in life.

It can be an opportunity to connect with others who are grieving. It has its own language," said Rev. Wilson.

The language of grief is something that is learned over a lifetime of experiences. Early experiences often catch us unprepared, learning a foreign language in unfamiliar terrain. Wilson described the loss of a parishioner early in his ministry,

and the inadequacy he felt to care for the family in their grief.

"I did not understand that grief presents an opportunity to connect, to minister, to grieve with

them. I had no knowledge of the language of grief. The only thing that I saw was that I was terrified. All of my thoughts were on me."

Jesus gives us an example of combining the opportunities of compassion and grief. He grieved with his friends Mary and Martha.

And he wept. He visibly showed his love for those who were experiencing loss. "I thank God that Jesus Christ was willing to push aside his own crisis when he sweated blood for you and me," Wilson said. Jesus was able to focus on the hurts and wounds of humanity, much like the Good Samaritan.

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Conference Business Highlights

Conference session adopted a resolution proposed by the Justice and Advocacy Team supporting comprehensive immigration reform. "Immigration is a difficult issue, but the church should speak on behalf of those affected by these policies," said Justice and Advocacy Chair Rev. Jay Parkins.

In other business, Board of Pensions and Health Benefits chair, Rev. Joe Kenaston, said the economy has impacted conference investments, pensions, and health benefits.

The pre-1982 retirement account has gone from being 121% funded in the beginning of 2008 to an estimated 85% funding level by 2011. The shortfall is projected despite doubling the Conference's contribution to the pre-'82 plan – from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per year.

"It's our hope that the economy will turn around and help with the situation some," said Rev. Kenaston. "In 2008 and 2009 we have endured what many economists have called the worst economic recession since the Great Depression."

Local churches will also see an increase from 15% to

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There is no reason to pass by those who grieve – to go to the other side of the road. “Sometimes what is incompatible with Christian teaching is our love, or the lack thereof,” Rev. Wilson declared. “God help us when we look at our own fears and insecurities rather than focusing on hurting people. When we don’t we are the poorer. We are the ones who lose. We are the ones who fail. Who is going to remember? Or who is even going to care if we can’t even get to first base in learning that the opportunities are there to learn the language of grief?”

'Business' from front page

17% in their contribution in the Defined Benefit (DP) to the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP).

All recommendations and an annual resolution relating to rental/housing allowances for clergy were adopted by Conference.



Great Outdoors Centers Youths' Call

By Laura Allen, DJ Editor

“Holy Communion at a campfire, with trees and stars as a sanctuary – this is life at Spring Heights,” said Mark Evans, a 16-year-old member of Lewisburg United Methodist Church. “Out of all the voices God has used in my life, none have been as constant and recurring as the outdoors.”

journey.

But, it’s the experience at Spring Height that has centered his calling to ministry. “What camping ministry offers is not just a time of fun and fellowship outdoors, but also a guaranteed opportunity to experience God and have a life-changing moment,” he said.



Above: Mark Evans with Rev. Don Keller, Director of Camping Ministries. Spring Heights is the place where Mark has felt his calling to ministry. “Out of all the voices God has used in my life none has been as constant as the great outdoors.” Photo: Laura Allen

Evans gave the annual laity address in the Chapel at West Virginia Wesleyan College yesterday morning. He spoke of the power of three communities that have impacted his life – beginning with his school – Seneca Trail Christian Academy.

“It was here I learned my first bible verses and accepted Christ into my heart,” he said. About two years later, he heard his youth minister talking about total commitment to God, and took another step in his faith

The three building blocks of camping ministry make those moments happen, says Evans: “Through Christian community, faith formation and biblical grounding, campers and staff build life-long relationships.

Evans concluded his address by saying that he wasn’t sure where his call would lead him. “But I follow in Christ’s light knowing God is with me,” he said.

Scripture and Witness Focus of Bible Study

By Krysta Rexrode

Ms. Harriet Olson, deputy general secretary of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church led bible study Friday morning in Wesley Chapel.

Bishop Ernest Lyght introduced Ms. Olson as a women who would appear in his autobiography for not only nominating him into Episcopacy, but also for her devotion, work and intelligence.

He said her characer comes from the 'camp meeting atmosphere' of her upbringing.

She proved him right after speaking about the nature of both Acts and Luke as narratives and letters that provide a framework for the evangelism the church is called to today.

Drawing from her background in law, she outlined evangelism through questions. "If you were asked to be an eye witness for Christ what would

you say? If you were asked for convincing proofs, what would you share? Are you an expert witness?"

Ms. Olson, according to the theme of Annual Conference this year, focused on the verses of Acts and Luke that draw forth authority

and power. "In Acts it says that when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will recieve power... You have power and you are a credible witness because you have seen the acts of Christ in your own life," she said. She continued by encouraging people to relate their stories, not in conteplative prayer and meditation, but in reflective action.

She closed with a quotation

from Mark Twain, "It is not the parts of the Bible that I don't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do." She left her audience by commenting, "If we live the parts that we do understand, and we live them through power, our stories can be given meaning."



Harriet Olson, deputy general secretary of the Women's Division at GBGM.

North Alabama Conference Summary

The North Alabama Conference met at ClearBranch United Methodist Church with Bishop William H. Willimon presiding. The theme for the 2009 Annual Conference was – Empowering a New Generation of Christians.

The conference also announced a new fifth priority. Missions was added to the priorities of New Congregations, Natural Church Development, Effective Leadership for the 21st Century and Empowering a New Generation of Christians.

The session began with a sense of fellowship and focus on the theme with a Family Picnic followed by a discussion of the 32 proposed United Methodist Constitutional Amendments. Delegates also participated in a June 4 memorial service at Huffman United Methodist Church during which 31 clergy and spouses who have died since last annual conference were remembered. Mickey Morgan gave a sermon titled "Passing on to a New Generation."

Conference delegates voted on the 32 proposed Constitutional Amendments, giving a negative response to all amendments related to the worldwide nature of the church. Delegates approved amendments IX, XV, XVII, XIX and XXII.

Membership stands at 149,473 down 852 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 72,106, down by 5. Total Christian Formation and other small groups participation stands at 129,196 up by 7,165.

- Danette Clifton, North Alabama Conference

Daily Journal Team

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The Africa University Choir performed during yesterday's ministry fair in the John D. Rockefeller Gymnasium. Their singing inspired this picture from Adam Cunningham.

Rethink Church at Ministry Fair

By Adam Cunningham

The ministry fair was held in the gymnasium of West Virginia Wesleyan College's campus yesterday. The annual event is a chance for organizations related to the Annual Conference to display information and talk to Conference attendees.

United Methodist Communications of Nashville, TN is hosting a booth this year featuring the ReThink Church campaign. ReThink Church is the latest installment in the Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors campaign.

It encourages United Methodists to think of church as a verb rather than a noun. The campaign includes a micro-site targeted at seekers. <http://www.10thousanddoors.org> showcases opportunities for people to get involved with mission projects in their community. Churches can visit the campaign's website at <http://www.rethinkchurch.org> for ideas and resources on how to implement ReThink Church into their services.

The Africa University Choir also stopped by the ministry fair and performed a few songs. They will give a full performance at Conference on Saturday night in Wesley Chapel. The show kicks off their state-wide tour of the Conference, performing in all seven districts. Please see <http://www.wvumc.org> for a full schedule.

Foundation Grant Helping Fund A.U. Choir Tour

A generous grant from the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia is helping to underwrite the costs associated with the Africa University Choir Tour of our Conference.

The grant is part of a new ministry of support initiated this year by the Foundation. According to Jeff Taylor, President of the Foundation, the grant program is the Foundation's grateful response to the Conference for years of support. "Last year, Rev. David Peters retired as the President of the Foundation after 17 years of service," Taylor said. "As part of the celebration of his ministry, the Foundation paid the balance of the loan made by the Conference during the inception of the

Foundation. David Peters retired, and the debt was retired. At a time when the economic downturn has many charitable organizations decreasing the level of their support, perhaps the satisfaction of the Foundation's debt to the Conference has equipped us for such as time as this."

Taylor added that underwriting part of the expenses of the Africa University Choir Tour is a natural extension of the Foundation's mission – to distribute funds in support of ministries of the United Methodist Church. "By providing a base level of funding support for transportation and Clay Center rental, more of the dollars raised will go directly toward the scholarship goal of \$160,000."

If you are using Twitter during Conference, tag your tweets with #WVAc09 so your conference experience can be shared with others.

Check out the Annual Conference Session online! We're streaming Conference live this year at [wvumc.org](http://www.wvumc.org)