

June 2022



# HAVEN CHIMES!



## ***A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR – by Juhee Lee***

My beloved Haven family,

Recently, we heard the tragic news about mass shootings around the United States. On May 14th, 10 people were killed in an indiscriminate shooting at a supermarket in a Albany, NY. Ten days later, 19 children and two teachers were shot and killed at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX. We were shocked that two mass shootings took place in less than two weeks.

To honor the innocent victims, many churches in our conference set up memorials to provide a space for mourning and praying for victims, as well as to encourage people to take an action against gun violence. As you see in the pictures, some churches expressed their sorrow by setting up memorial chairs to represent the victims from Uvalde.



The first picture is from Asbury UMC. People from town sit on chairs and take a moment of prayer. Some people leave a thank you note to the church where Asbury created this memorial place. However, the church received a call complaining about the memorial and demanding it be removed because the person believed that local children should not see this memorial.

As you see, there was no harmful message or horrific graphics. Of course, there is an implicit message that the church joins with those who mourn in the sorrow of loss and stands for reforming gun laws.

Even though the complainer said she is a supporter of gun law reform, she called the church several times to object to the memorial and asked that all chairs be removed immediately. At the church council meeting, members decided to remain firm and keep the memorial.

As Christians, what should we do after learning of such tragedies?

Remember the words of Jesus saying, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

My hope is that our church is aware of and ready to resist the unjust systems in our society and take action boldly with those who mourn.

*Peace,*

*Pastor Juhee Lee*

### **Mission Statement:**

We are a haven for those who would seek to know God better while spreading the love of Jesus Christ.

June, 2022

Beloved in Christ:



Greetings in the precious and matchless name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As I was getting ready to write my letter for June, I came across an interesting article in the Bangor Daily News about rowing. Writer Abigail Curtis quotes Susan Cutting: "When you are rowing, it's about being in sync with other people, as well as working out and being on the water."

This struck me as particularly poignant as we prepare to gather for our first hybrid session of Holy Conferencing/Christian Conferencing in and from Manchester, NH. Even our traditional opening hymn "Are We Yet Alive," is meaningful as some of us anticipate seeing one another in person after the COVID-19 isolation.

As we all know, things have changed rapidly in our world, nation, and church. As we row the boat as disciples of Jesus Christ, we are faced with waves and storms challenging us, threatening us, causing us to question what may be coming next and what our future holds.

Beloved in Christ, as we come to our Holy Conferencing, let us not forget that the boat we are rowing is not our boat! Our boat belongs to our Triune God. God is the captain, Christ is the guide, and the Holy Spirit is the mover!

Realizing this, we need to be in sync with one another when we meet. Interestingly, when I Googled the meaning of sync, I discovered that it functions as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, "synchronization" is the coordination of events to operate a system in unison. As a verb, "synchronize" means to cause something to happen in a planned way at an exact time.

As disciples of Jesus Christ rowing the boat of God, we need to make sure the music we sing and the words we say in our individual and corporate lives as Christians are in sync with our Godly intentions. We need to refocus our cameras so the images we display to the world clearly show the role of the church in making a meaningful impact wherever we are. We must demonstrate, with sound and image, we are a church committed to extending the Kingdom of God.

Beloved in Christ, we gather for our Holy/Christian Conferencing during one of the most hopeful times in Christian history. We row together, despite our personal and theological understandings, knowing that the boat we are rowing is the boat of hope!

St. Augustine said it beautifully: "Hope has two daughters: Anger and Courage." We cannot bring hope to the world unless and until we as a church are angry about the killing of innocent children and gun violence in all forms, about human greed, racism, the continued invasion of the rights of the innocent, and about the destruction of God's creation through our neglect and failure as caretakers of our earth.

As we come to our Holy Conferencing/Christian Conferencing may the entire Conference be in prayer for the members of the Annual Conference that they may make courageous decisions to bring about God's shalom, God's peace, so a new Easter, a new Pentecost, may be birthed in our Conference, nation and world — hopefully through us, but even in spite of us.

As we row the boat of God, may we remember as Susan Cutting said, "[Rowing is about] being in sync with other people, as well as working out and being on the water." Yes, the water on which we row our boat may be turbulent, but to take the boat to the other side, we need to work together at it.

May God show us the way to be rowers for such a time as this, so the world may see in us true discipleship of Christ and the living out of our Christian baptism.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sudarshana Devadhar", written over a light blue rectangular background.

Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

**Transformed by the Holy Spirit, united in trust, we  
will boldly proclaim Christ to the world.**



## Giving Out of Love By: Kirsten Holmberg

**June 1, 2022**

*Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. **Matthew 6:4***

### **Today's Scripture: Matthew 6:1-4 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup> “Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Every day, Glen purchases his morning coffee at a nearby drive-through. And every day he also pays for the order of the person in the car behind him, asking the cashier to wish that person a good day. Glen has no connection to them. He’s not aware of their reactions; he simply believes this small gesture is “the least he can do.” On one occasion, however, he learned of the impact of his actions when he read an anonymous letter to the editor of his local newspaper. He discovered that the kindness of his gift on July 18, 2017, caused the person in the car behind him to reconsider their plans to take their own life later that day.

Glen gives daily to the people in the car behind him without receiving credit for it. Only on this single occasion did he get a glimpse of the impact of his small gift. When Jesus says we should “not let [our] left hand know what [our] right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3), He’s urging us to give—as Glen does—without need for recognition.

When we give out of our love for God, without concern for receiving the praise of others, we can trust that our gifts—large or small—will be used by Him to help meet the needs of those receiving them.

### **Reflect & Pray**

How have you benefited from someone’s anonymous giving? How can you give more “in secret”?

*Father, thank You for using me to meet the needs of others and for meeting my needs through them. Help me not to seek credit when I give but to do so in a way that gives You the glory. Amen.*

### **SCRIPTURE INSIGHT**

After Jesus performed a series of physical healings that showed His goodness and credibility (Matthew 4:23–25), He described a life worth living (5:1–16). In the process, He raised questions about religious leaders whose goodness only went skin deep (v. 20). But like many other Scriptures, the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7) was never meant to stand on its own.

Rooted deeply in the words of Moses and the prophets, this sermon was Jesus’ preamble to all that was about to happen. In life and death, He would personify the principles of His kingdom and bear the ultimate consequence of the deception and rebellion that began in Eden. By His resurrection, He’d break the universally feared power of the grave. By the gift of His Spirit, He’d enable all who receive Him to live in the presence and likeness of our Father in heaven (5:43–6:9). **By: Mart DeHaan**

# The Holy Spirit at work in your life

By Ryan Dunn

*The Holy Spirit is shown in our lives in myriad ways.  
When serving neighbors, doing no harm, and gathering  
for worship, the Spirit is alive within us.*

*File photo Kathleen Barry, United Methodist Communications.*



What is the evidence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Many faith traditions emphasize demonstrative acts of the Spirit's presence: speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, and the ability to prophesy. But what if that's not your experience?

When a young John Wesley saw no such witness in his own life, he struggled with this question. Did that mean that the Spirit was not present—and by extension, that he was not saved?

Wesley, a founder of the Methodist movement, later understood that the Spirit can manifest in much subtler ways. In that tradition, United Methodists believe the Holy Spirit may bear witness through a demonstrative act like speaking in tongues, but might also be known in a myriad of other expressions, too.

## **The Holy Spirit represents peace**

During his now-famous moment on Aldersgate Street in London back in 1738, when Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed” by an inexplicable love, he also experienced the calming reassurance that the Holy Spirit was present within him. An inward testimony revealed to Wesley that, “I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God” (“The Witness of the Spirit: 1” 1.7).

The Holy Spirit eased the questioning turmoil of John's soul and delivered an inner peace.

Wesley later noted other marks of the Spirit, all of them made present in the lives of every believer. In his sermon, “Marks of the New Birth,” Wesley suggested individuals displayed a witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit whenever they display faith, hope and love. 1 John 4 notes the evidence of God in our love for one another. When we put that love on display we are taking on God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit is active in us and through us according to our love.

## **Where is the Holy Spirit today?**

When we recognize the Spirit evident in love, we begin to see a witness to the Spirit across our United Methodist connection. We observe evidence of the Spirit in our practice of the three General Rules: To do no harm, do good, and attend to the ordinances of God.

Often, the Spirit prompts us to do something. When we feel a pull to check-in on a neighbor, we might attribute that to the work of the Spirit. Or when we spontaneously lift our voices in prayer for a hurting loved one, we call that a movement of the Spirit. But the Holy Spirit might also call us into inaction: inviting us to love by not participating in systems of harm.

In this way, we might attribute that urge we feel to hold our tongues while others are gossiping as the work of the Spirit. The child who holds back a funny but biting comment at the expense of her classmate is empowered by the Spirit. When United Methodists refuse to use mascots and names demeaning to Native Americans, they are reacting to the shared movement of the Spirit. The Spirit guides us into refraining from participation in systems and actions of harm.

In the same way, we witness the Spirit moving us towards acts of goodness. The compulsion we feel to feed a stranger's expired parking meter might be evidence of the Spirit. So, too, is the shared support received by United Methodist disaster relief workers at work in hurricane-ravaged areas.

## Communion of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit inhabits us individually, but is often evidenced in community. Our invitation to the Lord's Supper is a movement of the Spirit—as this invitation represents the extension of God's grace. The Spirit moves us towards sharing this special meal together.

The fact that United Methodists observe an open table—a communion table where all who are willing are invited to participate—carries notes of the Spirit's work. We believe that communion is a means for experiencing God's grace together. An invitation to all to come and share in the meal of remembrance shows the Spirit's marks of hope and love.

We observe evidence of the Spirit in our pursuit of justice, as well. Much like school spirit unites students to fanatically root for their hometown team, the Holy Spirit unites the faithful in working towards the establishment of God's good, fair and equal human order. The pull we feel as United Methodists (and humans) to stand against racism is a Spirit-inspired feeling. So, too, is the Spirit working through our call for a living wage model. The moments when we seek to address injustice because it “feels like the right thing to do” can be attributed to movements of the Spirit. The Spirit enables us to capture God's vision for the world as it should be, it then provides ideas for how we participate in God's good vision.

With this in mind, might you recall some of the visions the Holy Spirit has provided to you? You are always invited to share in the Spirit-driven work of the church: through worship and attending to the ordinances, through joining her good work in seeking justice, or in refraining from contributing to harm.

*Ryan Dunn is a Minister of Online Engagement for United Methodist Communications. He is an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church. [rdunn@umcom.org](mailto:rdunn@umcom.org)*



## HOLY SPIRIT MOMENTS: LEARNING FROM WESLEY AT ALDERSGATE

BY JOE IOVINO

*John Wesley, a founder of The United Methodist Church, had a special Holy Spirit moment. Photo by Joe Iovino, United Methodist Communications.*

Many have experienced a moment when the Spirit of God came upon them in a powerful way. For some, it happened on a retreat as a youth, or a mission trip later in life. Others had an experience during a Sunday morning worship service or a Wednesday night Bible study. Some have felt Christ especially present while praying from the top of a mountain or crying out over the sound of crashing waves while standing on a beach.

Whatever the circumstances, these moments can be life changing. We look back upon them as times of conversion, renewal, and revelation. We may feel called to do something, experience healing and wholeness, or receive peace about a decision.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, rather famously had a Holy Spirit moment often referred to as his "Aldersgate experience." Wesley records in his journal what happened on May 24, 1738:

*“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading [Martin] Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”*

When read by itself, this one journal entry seems to suggest this God-moment happened unexpectedly. The same is true when we hear others report similar experiences. Most often, however, these special encounters with the Holy Spirit come to those who are seeking, those who have opened their hearts to receive something special from God.

*A commemorative plaque on Aldersgate Street in London contains the text of John Wesley's journal entry for May 24, 1738. Photo by Joe Iovino, United Methodist Communications.*

## A little background

When John Wesley and his brother Charles returned to England after their missionary journey to Georgia, their faith was a bit shaken. Their American mission didn't live up to expectations.

General James Oglethorpe invited John to come to Savannah as a chaplain, but he almost immediately came into conflict with colonists who didn't appreciate his zeal. Charles traveled to serve as Oglethorpe's secretary, a role for which he was poorly suited. Both thought they would have time to serve as missionaries to Native Americans, but that never really panned out.

During their travels, the brothers met Moravian Christians from Germany whose assurance of faith the Wesley brothers envied. In a storm at sea and during trying times on land, these Christians displayed a peace for which John and Charles longed.

Upon their return to England—Charles in July 1736 and John in February 1738—they sought out the Moravians, hoping to discover the secret to their faith.

In May 1738, Charles fell ill and was concerned for his survival. Lying in bed day after day, he focused on his spiritual well-being. If this illness were to take his life, was he ready to die? He prayed, studied, and spoke to friends who prayed for him to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit.

At about the same time, John was having conversations with a well-respected Moravian name Peter Böhler. Böhler was teaching Wesley about Moravian spirituality, which included the belief that Christians have an assurance of faith experienced as love, peace, and joy. Those emotions were in short supply for each of the Wesley brothers at the time. Between conversations, John pored through the Bible for evidence of Böhler's claims.

## Spiritual encounters

On Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738, something amazing happened. Between visits from his brother, his doctor, and those who were taking care of him, Charles had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit.

In his journal entry for that day, he reports experiencing "a strange palpitation of heart" that caused him to exclaim, "I believe, I believe!" Several sentences later he continues, "I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ."

When John visited the next day, Charles shared what had happened for him and together they prayed for John to have a similar experience. Charles writes, "I almost believed the Holy Ghost was coming upon him."

Later that week, John "went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street" where his heart became "strangely warmed." It was a moment for which he had prayed, studied, and prepared.

## Preparing our hearts

The same is often true for us. While God can come to us at any time and any place, it is often helpful to prepare our hearts to be receptive to the Holy Spirit stirring within us.

Throughout his ministry, John Wesley taught about the means of grace, things we do regularly to put ourselves in a place where we are open to receiving the grace of God. Those practices include individual





While staying at the home of a friend during a difficult illness, Charles Wesley had a special encounter with the Holy Spirit three days before his brother. Photo by Joe Iovino, United Methodist Communications.

and communal works of piety and works of mercy, like private devotions, sharing in the sacraments, visiting the sick, and standing up for justice.

As you and I long to hear from God, it is good to follow the examples of John and Charles Wesley who prayed, studied, and sought the counsel of others. We cannot control when or where God will speak to us—it often seems to happen unexpectedly—but we can put ourselves in a place where we will be ready to

hear when it happens.

*This story was first published on May 18, 2017. Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. [jiovino@umcom.org](mailto:jiovino@umcom.org).*

## Ways United Methodists can take a stand against gun violence

by Joe Iovino

*Photo by Kathleen Barry, illustration by Cindy Caldwell; United Methodist Communications.*



When we hear the tragic news of a shooting, United Methodists mourn with the victims and families of those wounded or killed. We turn to God in prayer, longing for a day when violence will cease.

In addition, many consider what actions we might take to prevent something similar from happening in the future. So, what can we do as people of God?

The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church contains our official positions on many issues, including gun violence. Resolution 3428 in the 2016 Book of Resolutions, "Our Call to End Gun Violence," calls upon The United Methodist Church—which means you, me, and every member of our denomination—to do several things.

### 1. Conversations and prayer

The Book of Resolutions calls congregations "to make preventing gun violence a regular part of our conversations and prayer times." In order to be part of the solution, we need to talk and pray. Congregations are encouraged to use resources such as Kingdom Dreams, Violent Realities, a free, downloadable resource from United Methodist Church and Society to facilitate these conversations.

### 2. Assist those affected

Congregations are also called to "assist those affected by gun violence through prayer, pastoral care, creating space, and encouraging survivors to share their stories, financial assistance, and through identifying other resources in their communities." Together and individually, we walk with others through the processes of grief and healing.

### **3. Promote gun safety**

United Methodist gun owners are called upon to help prevent gun violence by safely storing and securing guns, and by teaching and practicing gun safety.

### **4. & 5. Join together**

United Methodist congregations that have not experienced gun violence are called to join with communities of other denominations and faiths who have experienced gun violence "in order to support them and learn from their experiences."

All United Methodist congregations are also called upon to lead or join "gatherings for public prayer at sites where gun violence has occurred and partner with law enforcement to help prevent gun violence."

### **6. Encourage legal sales**

The Book of Resolutions suggests United Methodists "partner with law-enforcement and community groups" to encourage "full legal compliance with appropriate standards and laws" to the sale and ownership of guns.

### **7. Prohibit guns on church property**

To help prevent gun violence United Methodist congregations are "to display signs that prohibit carrying guns onto church property."

### **8. Advocate for regulation**

Finally, we are called "to advocate at the local and national levels for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence." Some of these measures include:

- Universal background checks on all gun purchases, ensuring that all guns are sold through licensed retailers, and establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession.
- Ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty.
- Prohibiting those convicted of violent crimes, those under restraining order due to the threat of violence, and those with serious mental illness that may be a danger to themselves or others from purchasing a gun.
- Ensuring greater access to services for those suffering from mental illness.
- Banning magazine and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled.
- Promoting technologies that help law-enforcement agencies trace crime guns and promote public safety.

### **Our prayers should lead us to action.**

We read in 2 Thessalonians 1:11, "We are constantly praying for you for this: that our God will make you worthy of his calling and accomplish every good desire and faithful work by his power" (CEB). We too pray for God to give us the wisdom and strength needed to fulfill the desires he has put within us for a world that is free from the violence of mass killings.

As United Methodists, this means getting involved in issues of gun violence and working to prevent these events.

*Note: This story originally appeared October 2, 2015, and is periodically updated. The latest update was on May 25, 2022.*

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June 2022



**New England Conference**  
The United Methodist Church

Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at [www.neumc.org](http://www.neumc.org).



**AC 2022**

**Watch the live stream**

The 2022 Annual Conference session— which is June 9-11— will be streamed live on the Conference YouTube channel.

Find the tentative schedule and a link to our channel, as well as all the latest on the upcoming Annual Conference on our website at [www.neumc.org/acsessions](http://www.neumc.org/acsessions)

**The Pre-Conference Materials** include proposed legislation, the proposed 2023 Conference Budget, and Reports from Conference boards and agencies and others as well as other information about the Annual Conference session. It is available as a free PDF on our website along with videos. Use the link above.



seminario web/webinar

Más allá del plato de ofrenda  
Além do prato de oferendas  
Beyond the offering plate

**6/4/22**

[www.neumc.org/events](http://www.neumc.org/events)

## ***Beyond the Offering Plate***

Creating healthy, vital churches is no easy task. So many aspects require time and intention: — inspiring worship, passionate spirituality, empowered leadership — we must attend to all of these and so much more.

Financial matters require no less attention. Developing a system of giving, donor development, monetizing space and resources are all vitally important.

In this webinar, 9-11 am on Saturday June 4, Conference Congregational Development Director Rev. Rick McKinley and Pastor David Alexandre of Connection Church in Lynn, MA,

will use material developed by [Mark DeYmaz](#), founding pastor of the multi-ethnic and economically diverse Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas, to help you explore ways to strengthen the financial life of your congregation.

All are welcome. This training has been created especially for leaders in our Hispanic/Latino congregations, so we will offer live interpretation into Portuguese and Spanish. This webinar will NOT be recorded.

Find the event on our Conference website calendar (address below) to register and get the attendance link.



FIND THIS EVENT AND MORE AT  
[www.neumc.org/events](http://www.neumc.org/events)



## Get new resources from the Disability Ministries Committee

The Disability Ministries Committee (DMC) of The UMC believes all people, including those with disabilities, are created in God's image and have sacred worth.

## Resources

We believe that it is vital to the body of Christ to celebrate the spiritual gifts of people with disabilities and incorporate them into the life of the church.

Through advocacy, education, and empowerment, we strive to fully include

people with disabilities in worship, missions, leadership and ministry – throughout The United Methodist Church. We invite individuals and local congregations to join us in this vital ministry.

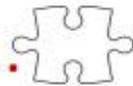
The DMC is highlighting some of its newest resources designed to engage UMC members through understanding **Disability Theology**, empower our churches to work to achieve **Disability Justice**, and equip all levels of the Church to provide radical **Disability Hospitality**.

Find more on their website [umcdmc.org](http://umcdmc.org)



of the United Methodist Church

## Training ...



The New England Conference Office of Congregational Development is offering a new webinar each month (typically the first Monday of the month) to help congregations use digital/online technology in all aspects of church life: from powerful transformative worship experiences and spiritual formation to study, meetings, small

groups, discipleship, evangelism, and more.

Find recordings of past webinars at <https://www.neumc.org/digital-ministry>

Find news about upcoming Digital Ministry and other online training events at [www.neumc.org/training](http://www.neumc.org/training) or in our weekly e-newsletter UMCatalyst.

## Special Sunday

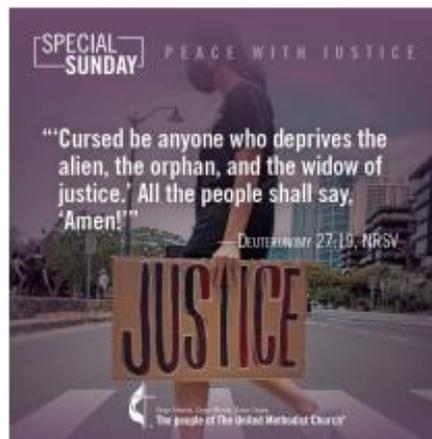
# Peace with Justice Sunday is June 12

United Methodists relate to this special Sunday by seeking peaceful solutions, creating and supporting peace-related ministries in their conference and learning about peaceful, just efforts around the world.

Our Social Principles call us to love our enemies, seek justice, and serve as reconcilers of conflict. We insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to work together to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them.

Peace with Justice Sunday is June 12, 2022.

Donations for this special Sunday support programs and minis-



tries to educate, equip and mobilize actions in support of identified Economic, Health, and Gender Justice Priorities. Fifty percent of the offering remains in your annual conference to support this ministry.

We achieve peace with justice efforts by working with the World Council of Churches, interfaith and ecumenical bodies, and secular organizations for social-justice policies and programs that seek the wholeness of shalom for all of God's people. Your gift, joined with the gifts of others makes a significant impact in the lives of individuals and communities.

[www.ResourceUMC.org](http://www.ResourceUMC.org)

## Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at [communicate@neumc.org](mailto:communicate@neumc.org) or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150

## Quiz: Kings of the Bible



**1. Which king was killed by two of his sons as he was worshipping?**

- Cyrus
- Shalmaneser
- Sennacherib
- Zedekiah

**2. Which king dreamed of a tree that was cut down?**

- Nebuchadnezzar
- Jeroboam
- Omri
- Darius

**3. Which king saw the writing on the wall?**

- Benhadad
- Herod Antipas
- Belshazzar
- Nebuchadnezzar

**4. Which king had his life extended by fifteen years?**

- David
- Jehoshaphat
- Jehoiachin
- Hezekiah

**5. Which king became leprous?**

- Zedekiah
- Uzziah
- Reba
- Tiglathpileser

**6. Which king had children under two years old killed?**

- Shishak
- Baasha
- Herod the Great
- Nebuchadnezzar

**7. Which king gave Abram bread and wine?**

- Melchizedek
- Piram
- Abimelech
- Hoshea

**8. Which king had Daniel thrown into the lion's den?**

- Eglon
- Og
- Saul
- Darius

**9. Which king wanted Naboth's vineyard?**

- Ahab
- Arioeh
- Jehoram
- Zimri

**10. Which king was hidden by a priest?**

- Jareb
- Joash
- Jobab
- Josiah

**11. Which king was diseased in his feet?**

- Chushanrishathiam
- Japhia
- Hazael
- Asa

**12. Which king used a pen knife to destroy God's word?**

- Hezekiah
- Saul
- Jehoiakim
- Rehoboam

**13. Which king wanted Balaam to curse the children of Israel?**

- David
- Hadad
- Balak
- Debir

**14. Which king of Judah was married to the daughter of the king of Israel?**

- Azariah
- Ahaz
- Jehoram
- Manasseh

**15. Which king told David that he was "as an angel of God"?**

- Agag
- Achish
- Ahaziah
- Abia

**16. Which king gave Haman permission to destroy the Jews?**

- Sennacherib
- Ahab
- Abimelech
- Ahasuerus

*Answers can be found on the next to the last page. Quiz taken from <https://biblequizzes.org.uk/quiz.php?whichbook>*

**17. Which King told Paul that he almost persuaded him to be a Christian?**

- Jareb
- Necho
- Tirhakah
- Herod Agrippa

**18. Which king of Israel became a servant to Shalmaneser, king of Assyria?**

- Pekahiah
- Menahem
- Shallum
- Hoshea

**19. Which king was head and shoulders taller than the people?**

- Saul
- Amon
- David
- Rehoboam

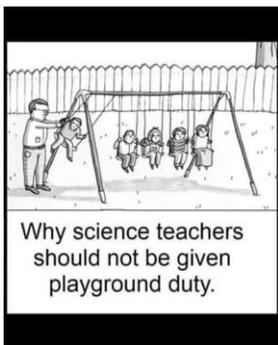
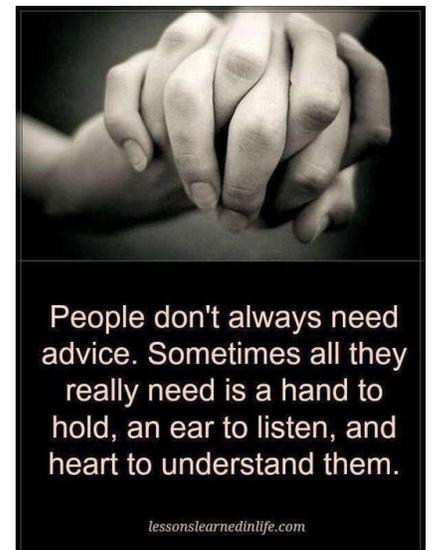
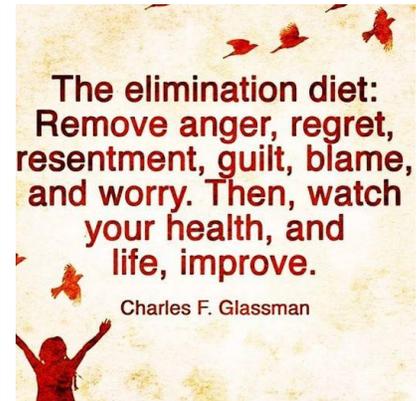
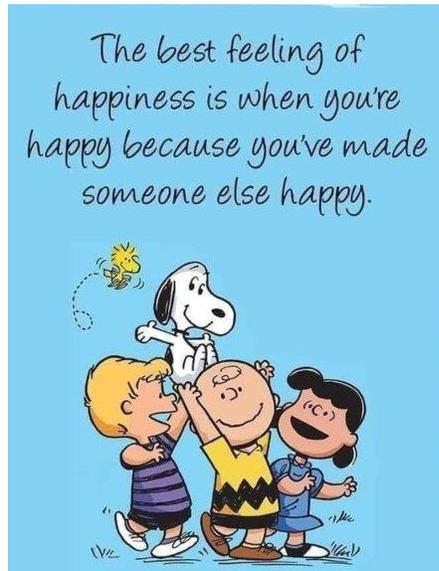
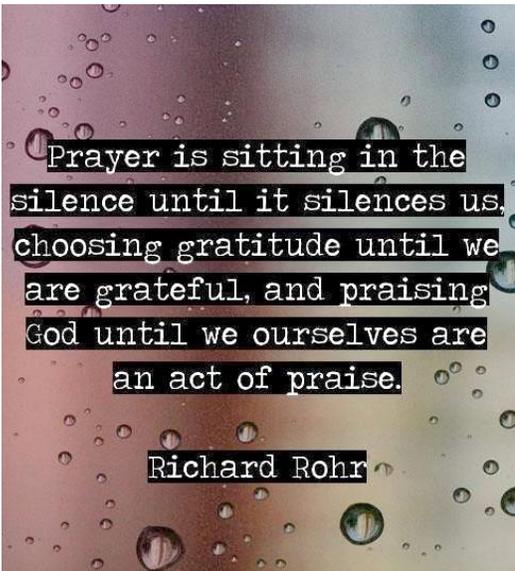
**20. Which king was Nehemiah sad in the presence of?**

- Abijam
- Darius
- Artaxerxes
- Balak



“A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word 'darkness' on the walls of his cell.”

— C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*



A doctor and a taxi driver are both in love with the same attractive woman named Mary.

The taxi driver had to go on a long trip that would last a week.



Before he left, he gave Mary seven apples. Why?



## Multilateralism

*Caring for the world is our duty. Multilateralism is about finding solutions to our shared problems.*

We live in an interdependent world. To live out our faith, seek justice and pursue peace, we must collaborate with people around the world. Multilateralism is, simply, the collaboration and cooperation among peoples and nations.

Multilateralism is an expression of our shared longing to secure peace and justice, promote human dignity and protect human rights, and prosper the world and its resources through just and sustainable development means and methods.

Multilateralism is about sharing the cost and burden of protecting the global commons, which we in the church call protecting of the integrity of God's creation.

### What The Bible And The United Methodist Church Say

The Bible speaks about the virtue of taking counsel from each other. The prophet Isaiah reminds us of what he said: "Come now, let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18a)

**"We, as United Methodists, must build the conditions for peace through development of confidence and trust between peoples and governments."**

— United Methodist Book of Resolutions, 6129

The Bible also speaks of human security: "but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken." (Micah 4:4)

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

As United Methodists, we say in our Social Principles that we regard "the United Nations...as the best instrument now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law." (Social Principles, ¶165.D)

In the same vein, we say, "We endorse international aid and cooperation in all matters of need and conflict," urging the United Nations to "take a more aggressive role in the development of international arbitration of disputes and actual conflicts among nations." (Social Principles, ¶165.D)

The United Methodist Church says, "We, as United Methodists, must build the conditions for peace through development of confidence and trust between peoples and governments...Peace and societal harmony are greatly enhanced when peoples and nations cooperate to address global concerns ..." (Book of Resolutions, 6129)

### Three Things You Can Do

- Inform yourself about global issues and act. How about starting with the Sustainable Development Goals? Urge your governments to meet the goal's 169 targets. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>)
- Organize a discussion group in your church. Identify an issue in your area and discuss how such an issue connects to bigger issues in your region (like Asia, Africa or North America) or in the world. Discover how different groups are finding solutions to these issues.
- Connect with the United Nations Office of Church and Society and find ways to be involved. Write to the Rev. Liberato C. Bautista, Church Center for the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, Suite 8G, New York, NY 10017 USA; or email him at [Lbautista@umcjustice.org](mailto:Lbautista@umcjustice.org).

# Recent rulings shape annual conference season

By Heather Hahn May 26, 2022 | UM News

Under our constitutional polity of connectionalism, the question of annual conference separation from The United Methodist Church is a distinctly connectional matter.

Judicial Council Decision 1444

*The Judicial Council's Decision 1444 released May 10 rules that U.S. annual conference cannot separate from The United Methodist Church under current church law. The decision and other recent rulings by The United Methodist Church's top court are affecting the current annual conference season. Graphic by Laurens Glass, UM News.*

As U.S. annual conferences start gathering this week, recent decisions by The United Methodist Church's top court are influencing their agendas.

The Judicial Council has ruled that for now, individual churches — if they meet certain conditions — can leave the denomination while entire U.S. annual conferences cannot.

The recent church court decisions have left some United Methodists relieved and others frustrated.

But no matter where they stand, many United Methodists agree that annual conferences — regional church bodies that meet each year — will need to deal with the rulings' ramifications.

Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton, who leads the New York Conference, expressed gratitude for the continued work of the denomination's top court, which in the past few months has taken up multiple questions from the bishops on an expedited basis.

Bishops preside at annual conferences and often face questions of church law during those sessions. The bishops, in turn, often look to Judicial Council precedent for guidance.

Bickerton said in a press statement that the church court's decision about U.S. annual conferences "provided clarity and direction as we move forward through these unprecedented days of challenge and change."

The Judicial Council determined that annual conferences are a key part of The United Methodist Church's connectional system of governance. Because of that, the church court ruled that only General Conference — the denomination's top lawmaking body with authority over connectional matters — can establish the process by which an annual conference can leave the connection. But at this point, General Conference has not approved such a process for U.S. annual conferences.

After two years of adapting to the COVID pandemic, many annual conferences are meeting together in person this year for the first time since 2019.

However, along with these reunions come discussions of disunion.

On May 1, some theological conservatives launched the breakaway Global Methodist Church — no longer waiting for the COVID-postponed General Conference to take up a proposed protocol for separation. After struggling with a lack of visa availability, General Conference organizers postponed the international legislative assembly to 2024.

That leaves annual conferences adjusting to a new challenge: providing a path for potential departures from The United Methodist Church with no formal separation plan in place.

The Rev. Rebekah Miles is among those who are thrilled that the Judicial Council decided annual conferences do not have the authority to exit under current church law.

Miles, who contributed to a brief in the case, is the Susanna Wesley Professor of Practical Theology and Ethics at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

"This Judicial Council decision made our upcoming annual conferences sessions simpler," said Miles, an Arkansas Annual Conference member. "With this ruling, the focus has shifted decisively to local church disaffiliation."

The Rev. C. Chappell Temple — lead pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Sugar Land, Texas — submitted a brief arguing that annual conferences should be able to set their own rules for disaffiliation. While he was disappointed in the outcome, he agreed with Miles that the focus now moves to the local churches.

"It's clear that disallowing conferences to consider disaffiliation now puts a heavy burden upon congregations to have that discussion and vote," he said. He said he does not yet know what that means for Christ United Methodist, but the congregation has set up a task force to look at what it should do in response.

Temple had submitted a resolution that would set up a process for his home Texas Annual Conference to vote to leave, and Texas Conference Bishop Scott J. Jones was open to that possibility.

But in light of the Judicial Council's ruling, the bishop said no such vote can take place.

"Now that the Judicial Council has been clear that we're not allowed to disaffiliate, a motion to disaffiliate is out of order," he said during a conference webinar.

Already withdrawn are resolutions calling for votes on the disaffiliation of the Alabama-West Florida, Northwest Texas and South Georgia conferences.

At the same time, a number of annual conferences already have planned special sessions for the fall that will exclusively deal with the disaffiliations of individual churches.

Wespath Benefits and Investment also was an interested party on the question of annual conference disaffiliation. The agency manages investments for pensions and other retirement-plan assets for United Methodist clergy and lay employees on behalf of annual conferences. U.S. annual conferences are pension plan sponsors and thus legally responsible for paying benefits.

"We understand the Judicial Council's rationale and appreciate their thoughtful analysis," said Dale Jones, Wespath's managing director of church relations. "We understand the decision has likely been welcomed by some in the church and has been disappointing to others. It is our desire to work with and support all annual conferences and conference leadership."

Still, Temple and others acknowledge that with no protocol in place, an individual church's disaffiliation can come with a hefty price tag — including costs related to pensions.

The same 2019 special General Conference that strengthened church bans against same-sex weddings and "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy also passed the church law that is now the Book of Discipline's Paragraph 2553. That provision allows congregations to exit with property if they meet certain financial and procedural obligations. The church law expires on Dec. 31, 2023, adding urgency for congregations that hope to use it.

Under Paragraph 2553, a departing church must pay:

- Two years of apportionments — shares of church giving.
- Cost for the transfer of title or other legal work.
- Any outstanding loans or debts.
- A fair share of its annual conference's unfunded clergy pension liability — that is, what

conferences will owe retirees. An annual conference determines what a local church's share is.

The Judicial Council also has ruled that a majority of annual conference voters must ratify a church's disaffiliation before it can be finalized.

Paragraph 2553 also says annual conferences "may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph."

Earlier this year, the Judicial Council affirmed additional requirements made by two annual conferences. Since then, a handful of conferences have added the requirement that a disaffiliating church must pay some share of its overall assets. The Judicial Council has not received — and thus has not ruled on — any questions about these new asset requirements.

Some theological conservatives are pushing for annual conferences to use another church law, Paragraph 2548.2, to allow churches to move to the Global Methodist Church. That paragraph allows the transfer of church property to another denomination.

The Council of Bishops sent multiple questions to the Judicial Council about the meaning and application of the paragraph. The church court has now added those questions to its docket. Church law requires the Judicial Council to accept briefs for at least 30 days before rendering any rulings. Briefs are due June 23, and reply briefs are due June 30.

In the meantime, the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference, which meets June 2-4, is among those trying to navigate a way forward while acknowledging that many in the conference are likely to go in different directions. For example, two Western Pennsylvania Conference members filed briefs on the question of annual conference disaffiliation, each offering opposing arguments.

John R. Wilson, conference secretary, argued that conferences should not be allowed to depart.

"I wanted to remind the Judicial Council that the annual conference according to the constitution is the basic body of The United Methodist Church," he said. "The words 'basic body' can have no other meaning than that an annual conference is organic, integral and cannot divide. I believe this Judicial Council decision reaffirmed that position."

The Rev. Robert Zilhaver, a district superintendent in the conference, was among those who argued for permitting conference disaffiliations. Zilhaver, who has long experience submitting briefs in Judicial Council cases, also helped Wilson file his brief.

While disappointed in the ruling, Zilhaver said the outcome would have no impact on the Western Pennsylvania Conference.

"This annual conference, we are looking at three different pathways to facilitate ministry from different theological perspectives, none of which was to have the WPA Conference separate from The United Methodist Church," he said.

In this time of transition, many of those involved in planning the Global Methodist Church also expect to remain part of The United Methodist Church.

The Wesleyan Covenant Association, the main organizing force behind the new denomination, has made clear it will stick around to help congregations that want to leave The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Jay Therrell, who will become the WCA's president on June 1, said the group is disappointed the Judicial Council ruled against annual conferences leaving under current church law.

"We will continue in our work of helping theologically conservative churches and clergy to find their way to a church that better aligns, missionally and theologically, with their beliefs," he said. "We look

forward to the day when they will be free of conflict and able to focus entirely on the Great Commission of making disciples of Jesus.”

Bickerton, the Council of Bishops president, said those who plan to remain United Methodist also are just as committed to following the teachings of Jesus. He said bishops have pledged to lead the church in the days ahead with a Wesleyan understanding of God’s grace, anchored in Scripture.

“While we understand that some of our siblings will leave The United Methodist Church, our prayer is that we will continue to provide a spirit of welcome for everyone,” he said in a statement.

“Let us work hard each day to have hearts, minds and spirits that extend the love of God even when we disagree.”

*Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Sam Hodges, a UM News writer based in Dallas, contributed to this report. Contact them at [newsdesk@umcom.org](mailto:newsdesk@umcom.org).*

## AC22: Service of Ordination and Commissioning June 13, 2022

The events of the Annual Conference session ended in celebration on Saturday afternoon with the 2022 Service of Ordination and Commissioning as New England welcomed its newest class of clergy — four full elders, a provisional deacon, and two provisional elders. The service also welcomed Rev. Kai Chur into full membership from another denomination.

In his sermon, Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, preaching on Ezekiel 33: 1-9 and John 10: 1-16, called on clergy to understand what it means to “Take thou authority.”

Telling the story of a pastor who insisted on being called “reverend,” the bishop said:

“Our titles do not grant us any authority. God gives the authority for ministry through the actions of the church. We gain authority in the eyes of those we serve by how we function as servants of Jesus Christ.”

The scripture passages he selected offer two other possible titles for clergy: Sentry and Shepherd.

The bishop defined the roles this way:

The task of the sentry is to be alert and to warn people of what is coming: opportunities, dangers, and consequences. This is prophetic work, keeping watch over what is and looking out for what is coming.

The task of shepherd is to keep the sheep together, to care for their security, renewal, and nourishment.

“It is a delicate balance to be both sentry and shepherd, the bishop said, “but both roles are required.” Being either one without the other, he said, “is to fall short of the ministry that has been entrusted to us.”

“If people are destroyed because of the sentry’s failure to warn the people or failure to preach the word of God in all seasons with hope of salvation, the sentry is accountable for that failure,” Bishop Devadhar said. “In other words, we are responsible for the prophetic voice. If we fail to call our people to justice, righteousness, and mercy, we are held responsible for their sin.”

“... when we go into our churches as shepherds, we are called to work together in unity with the laity who are also ministers of the gospel,” he said, “In truly caring for the flock to which we are



appointed, we gently prepare them for ministry in the world. ... as shepherds who empower and equip the laity for the ministries to which they are called.”

The bishop cited the late Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Jr. as a model of the sentry-shepherd.

Bishop Devadhar recounted the story of Dr. Coffin’s response when he was asked how he deals with those who are upset by the stands he takes in his prophetic sermons. Dr. Coffin said, he offered to take them out for coffee and a talk.

“When you are truly pastoral,” Dr. Coffin purportedly said, “you can be prophetic as well.”

“May we always respond as a shepherd and a sentry — performing the ministry of servanthood, whether washing one another’s feet with humility, caring, and love, or confronting evil and injustice in whatever forms they present themselves,” the bishop said.

## 2022 CLERGY CLASS

### Ordained as elders

Sara Taylor Garrard  
Jennifer Larson Mihok  
Adam Paul Randazzo  
Nami Yu

### Welcomed from another denomination

Rev. Kai Chur

### Commissioned as elders

Lisa Marie McColgan  
Nikki Young

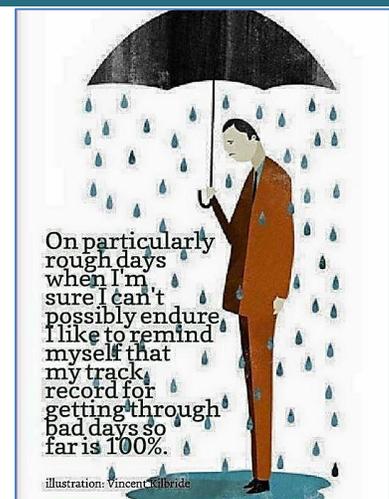
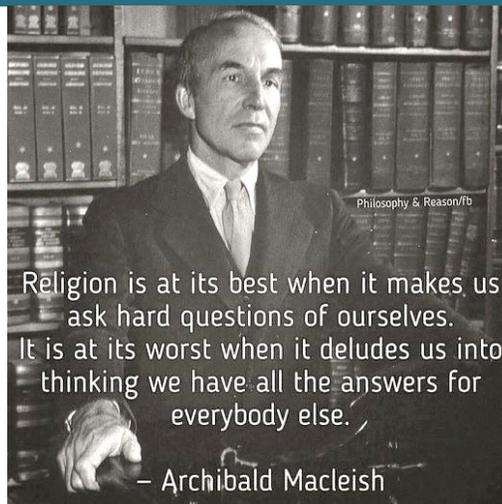
### Commissioned as a deacon

Sarah Brooks Laflamme

The 2022 clergy class with Bishop Devadhar



**BLESSED**  
ARE THE  
WEIRD PEOPLE  
The Poets & Misfits  
THE ARTISTS  
the Writers  
& MUSIC MAKERS  
the DREAMERS the  
OUTSIDERS  
for they force us to see  
THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY



# Ruling opens door for bishop elections in 2022

By Heather Hahn May 20, 2022 | UM News

*The Holston Conference's Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor embraces the Rev. David Graves following his election as United Methodist bishop at the 2016 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. Taylor is among the 11 U.S. bishops who retired last year, and Graves is among the bishops now taking on extra work because of the retirements. The Judicial Council issued a decision May 20, addressing the question of whether jurisdictional conference can meet to elect new bishops. File photo by Annette Spence, Holston Conference.*



The United Methodist Council of Bishops has the authority to call jurisdictional conferences this year to elect and assign new episcopal leaders in the U.S.

However, that authority does not extend to changing the Sept. 1 date when church law says newly elected U.S. bishops officially take office, the denomination's top court ruled in Decision 1445.

Usually jurisdictional conferences meet to elect bishops in mid-July every four years following General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking assembly.

But amid General Conference's continued pandemic-caused delay, the Judicial Council said the bishops can call jurisdictional conferences "for the limited purpose of effectuating the continuance of an episcopacy in The United Methodist Church" as required by the denomination's constitution.

Put another way, the Judicial Council says new bishop elections can occur off their usual schedule to fulfill the United Methodist constitutional mandate that bishops provide continuing supervision.

The Council of Bishops tentatively had set Nov. 2-5 for jurisdictional conferences if the Judicial Council ruled in favor of holding the regional meetings.

To comply with the requirement that new bishops take office on Sept. 1, the Judicial Council decision said the Council of Bishops must either reschedule the jurisdictional conferences so they occur before Sept. 1 this year or assign the newly elected bishops on an interim basis until they officially begin their assignments on Sept. 1, 2023.

The Judicial Council released Decision 1445 on May 20, just as U.S. annual conferences — church regional bodies — begin their spring and summer meetings. Annual conferences frequently nominate one of their clergy members to be a bishop candidate at jurisdictional conferences.

Judicial Council member Beth Capen issued a separate opinion that concurs in part and dissents in part.

Capen concurred with the ultimate holding but dissented that newly elected bishops must assume office on Sept. 1 "because it serves no purpose in these circumstances."

"Rather, I would suggest that it is much more logical, for the limited purpose of this current situation and for Jurisdictional Conferences held in 2022 only, that just as we had done prior to 1976, we permit the newly-elected bishops to begin their duties immediately following their assignment," she wrote.

Decision 1445 responded to questions raised by the Council of Bishops following the third postponement of General Conference, originally scheduled in 2020 and now set for 2024.

Last year, U.S. bishops who initially postponed their retirements after General Conference's first delay stepped down because they were taking on new roles with the Council of Bishops or were bumping up against the denomination's mandated retirement age for bishops.

To continue episcopal coverage, 13 U.S. bishops have since taken on expanded assignments. Five bishops who planned to retire also agreed to stay on.

In asking the Judicial Council to rule in favor of holding jurisdictional conferences for the purpose of elections, the bishops said the current situation of bishops covering multiple episcopal areas was unsustainable. “The threat to the continuance of the episcopacy and the sustainability of effective episcopal leadership will increase as more retirements are expected,” the bishops added.

The United Methodist Church has five jurisdictions — each encompassing multiple episcopal areas in a geographical region of the United States. Each episcopal area includes one or more annual conferences. Each U.S. annual conference elects delegates to both General Conference and jurisdictional conferences. Half of the delegates are laity and half are clergy. The delegates to the coming jurisdictional conferences were elected in 2018 and 2019.

The United Methodist constitution mandates that the Council of Bishops schedule all five jurisdictional conferences to convene at the same time.

“Apart from this stipulation, the constitutional grant of authority is unrestricted,” the Judicial Council said.

The Council of Bishops is “therefore, authorized to call jurisdictional conferences, notwithstanding that the General Conference has not convened since the last election of bishops in the jurisdictional conferences,” the church court continued.

The Judicial Council also noted that the United Methodist constitution lists the election of bishops among a jurisdictional conference’s powers.

The church court said the bishops’ intended purpose for the jurisdictional conferences “is essential” to fulfilling the constitutional mandates in Paragraph 45 of “a unified superintendency and episcopacy” and “the continuance of an episcopacy in The United Methodist Church.”

However, the Judicial Council disagreed with the Council of Bishops that new bishops should assume their duties immediately after election and consecration. Another part of the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, states: “The date of assignment for all bishops is September 1 following the jurisdictional conference.”

That means the Council of Bishops must either reschedule the jurisdictional conferences or make use of the provisions for interim bishops, the church court said.

The Judicial Council put it this way: “the Council of Bishops must reschedule the jurisdictional conferences to a date prior to September 1, 2022, or proceed with jurisdictional conferences in November 2022 as scheduled and assign newly elected bishops on an interim basis under the provisions of ¶ 407 until they begin their assignment on September 1, 2023.”

Paragraph 407 spells out a process for filling bishop vacancies on an interim basis.

The Judicial Council also addressed concerns about the formula and number of bishops allotted to each jurisdiction.

In a decision last year, the Judicial Council ruled that the budget adopted by the 2016 General Conference remains in effect. That same logic applies to the question of the number of bishops assigned in each jurisdiction, the church court said.

The 2016 General Conference approved supporting 46 bishops in the United States — 13 in the Southeastern Jurisdiction; 10 in the South Central Jurisdiction; nine in the Northeastern Jurisdiction; nine in the North Central Jurisdiction and five in the Western Jurisdiction.

“Absent General Conference action, the formula and number of bishops for each jurisdiction approved by the 2016 General Conference remain legally binding and effective until replaced by a new formula,” the Judicial Council said.

*Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or [newsdesk@umcom.org](mailto:newsdesk@umcom.org).*

**UPDATE: The United Methodist Church’s top court has set Jan. 1, 2023, as the date when U.S. bishops facing mandatory retirement must step down and their newly elected successors take office.**

# Volunteers Celebrated at Haven UMC

June 12, 2022 By Joan Klein

*Volunteers and congregation members gathered to honor those who have generously shared their time to serve the community.*

On Sunday, June 12, 2022 the congregation at Haven UMC recognized and celebrated some of the many people that volunteer their time for various programs and activities serving the community.



Receiving recognition for his part in the “Healing Through Music” project, performing for those in need of healing for the heart and soul, was Ryan Marshall. Ryan has been taking piano lessons for two years at the Haven Free Music School.

As a certified organization for the President’s Volunteer Service Award (PVSA), Haven UMC is authorized to recognize those who have volunteered at least 100 hours in service to others. Andrew Song, Joshua Shin, and Edward Jung were recognized for their contributions to the “Healing Through Music” project, performing with the Haven Chamber Orchestra and assisting in the Haven Free Music School with young students.

For their countless hours helping with the Haven Thrift Store, Delores Tucker, Joyce Stevenson, and Maria Couto received a PVSA. In recognizing their service, Program Committee chair Delores Tucker said, “I just want to let you know that Joyce has a history at this church. But Maria, she lives down the street and she comes into this church to help us out. And I just want this congregation to know she is a dedicated worker, both of them are and you guys know that. We’re down there to make good money for the homeless. It comes from my (our) heart(s). We donate so much time to this church and I want to let this congregation know.”

Receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award, for over 10,000 volunteer hours, was Jim Hibbert. In speaking about Jim, Pastor Juhee stated that Jim had coached basketball at Haven for over 40 years. Jim was quick to correct her, saying it was actually 57 years of coaching!

In accepting his award, Jim said, “I’d like to thank the church. When they built the church, somebody had the vision to put a gymnasium and a stage and a kitchen downstairs. They didn’t have to, but they did. And since then this church has been open to the community. In the last 57 years I’ve coached more than 400 kids. We’ve had games of basketball since 1931. We can’t calculate how many people have played in this gym. The key to our program is that it is for the kids and they have fun.”

Jim also said that, even after 57 years, he hasn’t even begun thanking the church.

Haven UMC, like most churches, relies on volunteers for the programs and activities that are a part of the church and community. We gratefully acknowledge those volunteers.

If you are interested in sharing your gifts and talents by volunteering at Haven UMC, contact our office at 401-438-4911 or email [havenumchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:havenumchurch@yahoo.com).

Enjoy some pictures from the celebration on the next page.



# Conference, megachurch reach legal settlement

By Heather Hahn

June 14, 2022 | UM News



*A lawsuit and countersuit between the North Georgia Conference and Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in Marietta, Ga., has concluded with the megachurch agreeing to pay about \$13.1 million to leave the denomination with property. Image courtesy of Google Maps.*

The North Georgia Conference and its largest-membership church have reached a multimillion-dollar settlement to end a high-profile legal battle.

Under the mediated settlement, Mt. Bethel Church in Marietta, Georgia, has agreed to pay \$13.1 million to the conference trustees to leave

The United Methodist Church with property and become independent. Mt. Bethel must pay that amount within 120 days and has embarked on a fundraising campaign to do so.

The settlement not only promises to resolve months-long litigation but also includes a pledge from both sides to cease a war of words that placed Mt. Bethel at the center of a widening denominational divide.

Both the conference and church, in the preamble of their agreement, covenanted to “honor the mission and ministry of each other as Christians.” The parties in the case also agreed to refrain from comments that “could reasonably be expected to adversely affect the reputation of the other.”

Cobb County Superior Court Chief Judge Robert D. Leonard II signed the consent decree finalizing the settlement on June 7.

“The North Georgia Conference is appreciative of the Cobb County Superior Court, which has given approval of the mediated settlement agreement between the trustees of the North Georgia Conference and Mt. Bethel,” the conference said in a statement to UM News.

“As stated in the agreement, we are all part of one universal church and look forward to moving ahead in service to Jesus Christ.”

Once the church completes the payment, the conference trustees will release the title to property. Mt. Bethel, in turn, will no longer be able to use “United” or “United Methodist” in its name or the denomination’s Cross and Flame logo.

“In effect, Mt. Bethel Church will continue operating — with all rights and access to its property and assets, but it will no longer be associated with the United Methodist Church,” the church said on its website in explaining the settlement. The church did not immediately respond to a request from UM News for further comment.

However, at least some Mt. Bethel members have expressed disappointment that because of the agreement, departure from The United Methodist Church will not be up for a congregational vote.

The North Georgia Conference is the largest such regional body in the U.S. in terms of membership — encompassing more than 700 churches and nearly 340,000 United Methodists.

The conference is home to multiple large congregations. Mt. Bethel — founded over 175 years ago — is the conference’s largest with nearly 10,270 members as of last year. The church operates two campuses and a kindergarten-12th grade Christian academy. According to records the church

submitted to the conference, the market value of the church land, buildings and equipment is about \$34.6 million.

The feud between the conference and congregation first became public last year, when Mt. Bethel's leaders refused the reappointment of their senior pastor to a new conference position.

The United Methodist Church operates on a system of itinerancy — meaning clergy go where their bishop appoints them. The tradition goes back to Methodism's founder, John Wesley.

In their ordination services, United Methodist elders pledge “to go wherever you are sent, to serve however you are called, to exercise your ministry within and on behalf of the whole Church, to love all among whom you are placed, and to love God above all.”

However, Jody Ray — the church's senior pastor since 2016 — accused the conference's Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson of moving him because of his conservative beliefs.

“I want you also to remember this day,” he said to his family during an April 18 sermon. “Your daddy did not bow the knee or kiss the ring of progressive theology.”

At a subsequent press conference, he announced that instead of changing appointments, he was surrendering his clergy credentials. Church lay leaders said Ray would stay on as lead preacher and chief executive officer.

At the same press conference, church leaders announced that the congregation's 50-member administrative council had voted for disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church.

However, exiting the denomination takes more than a vote by a leadership council and an announcement. The United Methodist Church and its predecessors have maintained a policy since 1797 that all congregations hold property “in trust” for the benefit of the entire denomination.

In practice, this means churches can acquire and sell property but only if in line with the denomination's mission and disciplinary procedures and safeguards. Often, conferences end up as enforcers of the denomination's trust clause.

The special General Conference in 2019 added a new process to the Book of Discipline, the church's law book, for conferences to release churches from the trust clause — if those congregations meet certain conditions and financial obligations including at least two-thirds of the congregation voting for disaffiliation.

The Discipline's disaffiliation process was not used in the case of Mt. Bethel. Instead, the dispute landed in civil court.

After a failed initial attempt at mediation, the North Georgia Conference trustees sued Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church in September — arguing that the church was violating the Book of Discipline and breaching its fiduciary duties.

Specifically, the suit took issue with the church leadership's refusal of office space and a full salary to the new pastor, the Rev. Steve Usry, appointed by the bishop. The conference trustees' lawsuit also argued the church was not following disciplinary procedures in its handling of the property for Mt. Bethel Christian Academy.

In October, Mt. Bethel countersued the conference. The church's counterclaim said that the conference was blocking the church's efforts to disaffiliate using the Discipline's procedures and had orchestrated the pastoral conflict.

By mid-March, Cobb County Superior Court Judge Mary Staley Clark had set a hearing to consider dueling motions in the lawsuit and countersuit. Instead, the parties asked the judge to mediate their settlement talks.

The settlement is the result of those discussions.

The dispute has become emblematic of an expected denominational separation.

Mt. Bethel long has been part of the theologically conservative advocacy group the Wesleyan Covenant Association and hosted its global gathering in 2018. The Wesleyan Covenant Association has overseen the formation of the Global Methodist Church, a new breakaway denomination that launched May 1 and seeks to recruit United Methodist churches.

Keith Boyette, a lawyer and the WCA's president at the time, signed on as one of Mt. Bethel's attorneys in the court case. Boyette, who has since surrendered his United Methodist clergy credentials, is now the top staff executive of the Global Methodist Church.

Robert Ingram, another attorney for Mt. Bethel, told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that it was too early to say if Mt. Bethel would join the Global Methodist Church.

Members of Mt. Bethel are not all on the same page. Since the appointment dispute with the conference became public, a group of Mt. Bethel members calling themselves "Friends of Mt. Bethel UMC" has also gone public. Nearly 650 Mt. Bethel members are now part of the group, said Donna LaChance, one of the group's members.

The group felt the appointment of Usry, a fellow theological conservative, was both lawful and should be allowed to take effect.

The group has been meeting with Usry for worship and fellowship events. Friends of Mt. Bethel held a special Easter service this year at a nearby United Methodist church with Usry as preacher.

LaChance said the group is "deeply disappointed in the outcome, as it effectively separated our church from the UMC without any membership vote." She also said the agreement is more expensive than it needed to be under the denomination's disaffiliation procedures.

For now, she said the group is meeting with Usry, whom the bishop has appointed for the coming year to provide pastoral care to United Methodist members of Mt. Bethel and help them discern God's next faithful step.

"It is possible that this work will lead to the development of a new church, but it seems more likely that people will join other local churches, some UMC and some not," LaChance said.

"Each family has to decide for themselves, and most are actively evaluating other church options or are already settled."

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**I asked my boss if I could leave early today and he said, "Only if you make up the time."  
I said, "OK, it's 35 past 50".**

When your pastor preaches on being friends to the people that nobody wants to be friends with and suddenly the whole congregation wants to shake your hand after the service

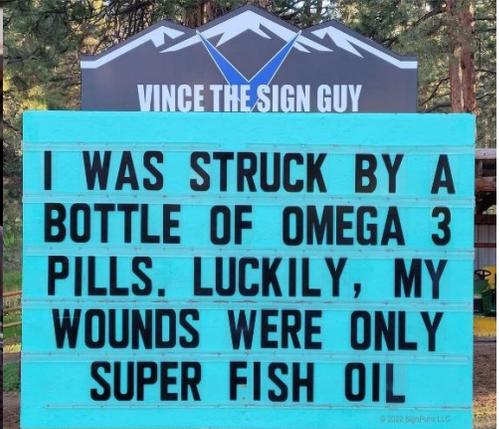
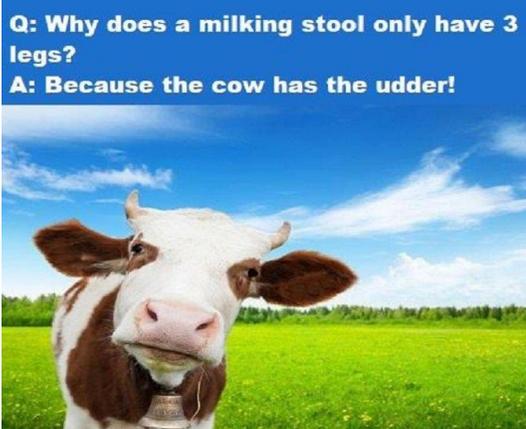
- Quiz Answers**
1. Sennacherib. 2 Kings 19:37
  2. Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:18
  3. Belshazzar. Daniel 5:5
  4. Hezekiah. 2 Kings 20:6
  5. Uzziah. 2 Chronicles 26:21
  6. Herod the Great. Matthew 2:16
  7. Melchizedek. Genesis 14:18
  8. Darius. Daniel 6:16
  9. Ahab. 1 Kings 21:2
  10. Joash. 2 Chronicles 22:11
  11. Asa. 2 Chronicles 16:12
  12. Jehoiakim. Jeremiah 36:23
  13. Balak. Numbers 22:5
  14. Jehoram. 2 Chronicles 21:6
  15. Achish. 1 Samuel 29:9
  16. Ahasuerus. Esther 3:9
  17. Herod Agrippa. Acts 26:28
  18. Hoshua. 2 Kings 17:3
  19. Saul. 1 Samuel 9:2
  20. Artaxerxes. Nehemiah 2:1



I told my kids that we are no longer saying "shut up" because it sounds mean and can hurt people's feelings. So my kids are getting creative with their use of words. My 9-year-old daughter was talking and talking, and my 6-year-old son couldn't take it anymore and said, "SILENCE YOU PEASANT!"

**Mowgli**  
@Holy\_Mowgli

mechanic: I'm tired  
drummer: I'm beat  
pipelayer: I'm drained  
gardener: I'm bushed  
chef: I'm fried  
tailor: I'm worn  
AC repairman: I'm exhausted  
window-washer: I'm wiped  
accountant: I'm spent  
soldier: I'm fatigued  
trash collector: I'm wasted  
plumber: I'm pooped  
undertaker: I'm dead



Do you remember the famous Olympic skier Picabo Street (pronounced Pee-Ka-Boo)? Well, Picabo is not just an athlete. She is now a nurse currently working at an Intensive Care Unit of a large metropolitan hospital. She is not permitted to answer the hospital telephones any longer. It caused too much confusion when she would answer the phone and say, "Picabo, I.C.U." A good clean joke is hard to find these days - pass it on!



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**"The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays." — Soren Kierkegaard**