

**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**V. THE BUSINESS OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The Minutes of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference  
 Held Virtually, Pennsylvania  
 From (date) October 3, 2020  
 Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi Presiding  
 Date When Organized 1825 Number of This Session One Hundred Ninety-Fifth

**PART I ORGANIZATION AND GENERAL BUSINESS**

1. Who are elected for the quadrennium (¶¶603.7, 619)?
 

<b>Secretary?</b>	John R. Wilson
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The annual conference was unable to act upon the 2020 Business of the Annual Conference document and all the required decisions contained within due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restriction against large-scale public gatherings. State laws and the By-Laws of the annual conference did not allow electronic voting. Therefore, the 2020 BAC document will be presented at the next in-person annual conference for retroactive ratification and will be included in the *Official Journal* of that session of the annual conference.

**IV. Daily Proceedings**  
**WPA Chic**  
**Clothed in Trust**  
**VIRTUAL SESSION**  
**Saturday, October 3, 2020**  
**9:00 am – 12:00 Noon**

**CALL TO ORDER** – Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi called the Annual Conference to order online from the Conference Center at 9:00. Today’s virtual gathering of the annual conference was necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the social distancing guidelines, which meant that there was no venue available to host in person sessions. She also explained that this would be an Annual Conference session without voting, because our conference rules and by-laws only allow for in person voting. (By-Laws Article III, Section 2 and Article IV, Section 3)

**WELCOME** – Alan Morrison, Chair of the Sessions Team gave a brief explanation of the way the virtual session would be structured.

**SCRIPTURE FOCUS: JEREMIAH 17:7-8** – “Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.” (NIV)

**STATE OF THE CHURCH** – Following the reading of Jeremiah 17:7-8, using prerecorded praise, prayer, and Scriptures, the Bishop highlighted ways our churches and charges have been clothed in trust and are still bearing fruit, even in the midst of the global pandemic. The presentation also demonstrated ways that these ministries are also working on the annual conference’s five areas of focus.

The Bishop also acknowledged that “the racial injustice in this country, the coronavirus, and rumors of a denominational split have caused fear and anxiety. And whenever there is fear and anxiety, people, including clergy, sometimes act below their Christian witness.” In response, the Bishop encouraged all to not put their trust in any political parties, nor in any candidates, nor in any possible actions of General Conference.

“We cannot put our trust or our hope into people or systems” she said. “The only remedy for fear and anxiety is to put our trust and hope in the Lord and to stay focused on our mission and our ministry. When we do that, we will endure the heat and the drought as God transplants us by the river. I do not know when the pandemic will end..., I do not know what the postponed session of the 2020 General Conference will decide..., I do not know when the sin of racism will be eradicated in the world..., I do not know what this annual conference will look like two years from now..., but this is what I do know: I know it because I believe in Scripture, I know it because I trust in God, and I believe God is who God says God is and that God will do what God has said God will do. Do you trust? Do you believe? Are you convinced? I am convinced that if we will continue to be ‘WPA Chic

Clothed in Trust,' if we continue to put our trust and hope in the Lord, we will continue to be planted by the river, drinking from the coolness of the river, and we will continue to have green leaves and to bear fruit. That is where my hope is... It is in the Lord."

**QUESTION IN RESPONSE TO BISHOP'S COMMENT ABOUT NOT KNOWING WHEN THE "SIN OF RACISM WILL BE ERADICATED FROM THIS WORLD..."**  
**ONE QUESTIONER ASKED "HAS ANY SIN EVER BEEN ERADICATED? CAN WE EVER REMOVE ANY SIN FROM THE HUMAN CONDITION?"**

**ANSWER:** The Bishop responded theologically, that "as long as we are human, we will always be under the threat of falling prey to sin... even the sin of racism. But we as United Methodists we believe that there are moments when we are perfected in love, moments when we can glimpse what our heavenly communion will be like... when we act solely out of love of God and love of neighbor. That there will be glimpses of those moments here on earth, even before Jesus returns. And so, while sin will undoubtedly always be around and among us until Jesus does come again, we live for those moments when we can experience being perfected in love. In fact, that is what we so strive for; what we ask our clergy to strive for during their ordination. Those moments when we can have a foretaste of glory divine. So, I still trust and hope that we will have those glimpses, those moments, those foretastes of glory divine, when we act purely out of our love of God and love of one another."

**PRAYER** – The Sung Shik Chung, Johnstown District Superintendent, led the conference in prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer.

**CLOTHED IN TRUST** – Video reports from the Five Areas of Focus: Creating New and Renewed Congregations; Dismantling Racism; Engaging in Ministry with the Poor; Developing Principled Christian Leaders. People from throughout the annual conference shared examples of trust in God despite difficult times in their lives.

**"I SHALL NOT BE MOVED"** – Bishop Moore-Koikoi shared the origins of the spiritual "I Shall Not Be Moved," noting that it was a declaration of the trust in God by the slaves of America, no matter what happened to them or around them. The Bishop invited the conference to let God write those words of Jeremiah 17:7-8 upon our hearts, and thus find that we too will be planted like the tree by the water and find that we too "will not be moved."

**PRAYER** – Bishop Moore-Koikoi led the conference in prayer for President Donald Trump, his wife Melania, and all in the White House, and throughout our world be healed of the effects of the coronavirus.

**FINANCIAL UPDATE & BUDGET PROCESS** – Roger White, Conference Treasurer, shared highlights of the cost saving measures taken during the pandemic so far. Apportionment giving in 2020 thus far has been tracking in the 75-80% of what was expected at this point in the year from apportionments.

#### IV. Daily Proceedings

Seth McClymonds, Chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), shared the budget process that was followed for the 2021 budget. The budget, in its current form is some \$400,000 less than last year, and is a 15% decrease from the recent high budget of 2015. As is usual for the Fall months, the CFA has begun to look at the budget that will be proposed for the following conference year (2022).

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS VENUE CHANGE** – Bishop Moore-Koikoi and Alan Morrison, Chair of the Sessions Team, shared information on the decision to change the venue of the regular Annual Conference Sessions in June, from the Grove City College (GCC) to the Erie Bayfront Convention Center. The Annual Conference spends tens of thousands of dollars to rent bathrooms, air conditioning units, golf carts, and other workarounds to make GCC work for our needs. The Bishop shared that just the air conditioning alone costs were \$24,000 each year... Renting the Erie Bayfront Convention Center will only cost us \$25,000 for the entire facility. She also shared that the members of Annual Conference have been voting by their actions over the past few years as well. Each year we were using fewer and fewer beds in the GCC dormitories as members rented their own hotel rooms in the Grove City area. Further, apparently many have chosen to find other places to eat their meals, rather than on campus, because last year alone the conference had to pay over \$13,000 for uneaten meals.

The search for other venues has happened repeatedly over the past four bishops. Few places across the annual conference area are large enough for plenary sessions or do not have enough breakout spaces for the various smaller groups and legislative sections. Food and housing availability are also limiting factors for many possible venues.

In this past year’s search, the list was down to three possible sites. One, realizing it did not have the breakout spaces available removed themselves from the list. One of the remaining two could only provide breakout spaces by subdividing one large room with pipe and drape, but it would still have limited visibility because it, like GCC, still had columns in the room that would have been used for plenary sessions.

The one remaining venue was the Erie Bayfront Convention Center, which is a single floor facility, connected to two adjacent hotels for greater accessibility. The conference will include lunch on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, as well as dinner on Thursday and Friday.

**QUESTION & ANSWERS** – Time was given to taking questions from viewers during the live presentation of the Virtual Session of the 2020 Annual Conference.

**QUESTION (FOR BISHOP):** “WHY DO YOU REFER TO THE POTENTIAL AMICABLE SEPARATION LEGISLATION, CALLED THE ‘PROTOCOL OF RECONCILIATION AND GRACE THROUGH SEPARATION’ AS ONLY A RUMOR?”

**ANSWER:** Bishop Moore-Koikoi reminded the body that while the ‘Protocol’ has been proposed, so have many other plans for possible separations, as well as other potential structural changes to the Church... but none has yet been accepted, and cannot be accepted, until General Conference convenes. “We don’t know what General Conference will do.

We don't know what that (result) will look like. I've been a part of this denomination long enough to know that you can't bank on what the General Conference might do. They could accept the Protocol or other pieces of legislation. Or they could decide not to accept any of those processes."

QUESTION: "HAS ANYONE RECOMMENDED A CHANGE IN THE CONFERENCE BY-LAWS TO ALLOW FOR VOTING BY REMOTE MEANS?"

ANSWER: (Bishop Moore-Koikoi) "Absolutely! ... The rules committee is already working on how that will be cared for!"

QUESTION: "WHO APPOINTS THE BUDGET TASK FORCE?"

ANSWER: (Conference Treasurer Roger White) "It is a subset of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) and some members of the Connectional Leadership Team." He then explained that when that group is discussing a part of the budget that concerns one of those members' ministry team, that person recuses themselves for that part of the discussions.

QUESTION: IN 2021, THE COSTS OF MOVING PASTORS SHIFTS FROM THE LOCAL CHURCH TO THE DISTRICTS, COULD YOU SPEAK TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF THIS CHANGE AND WHETHER THE BUDGETED AMOUNTS WILL BE ADAQUATE, AND HOW THIS NEW PROCESS WILL WORK?"

ANSWER: (Conference Treasurer Roger White) "The philosophy of this change was one grounded more in justice and fairness rather than dollars and cents. We found over time that a lot of the appointment changes and pastoral moves were occurring in the smaller churches that may have been more economically challenged and they are bearing a cost that was kind of incongruent with the entire conference. When we think of our itinerancy system and our connection, it is more a cost that should be borne by the entire connection. So that is the rationale behind shifting it into the conference budget." He further explained that the dollar amounts used to calculate the amount needed was based on looking back at previous year's moving expenses. Further, the Tax Law has changed and moving expenses are now considered as taxable income. This new process will allow a centralized payment, monitoring, and reporting for those tax purposes.

QUESTION: "WHERE HAS CFA BEEN LOOKING TO ECONOMIZE IN THESE TIMES OF DECLINING BUDGETS?"

ANSWER: (Conference Treasurer Roger White) "We've really looked broadly, at all kinds of budget line items..." He then listed a few of the areas that have been under review: personnel, programs, vendor services, printers, copiers, mail room equipment, renegotiation of contracts. "there's really nothing that's off the table, and those areas will be explored further as part of the financial stability working group."

QUESTON: WILL THE BISHOP BE ABLE TO REPEL INTO THE FLOOR OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN THE ERIE BAYFRONT CONVENTION CENTER?"

ANSWER: (Sessions Team Chair Alan Morrison) "Convention centers do have hanging points so we ought to be able to work something out to make her fly."

#### IV. Daily Proceedings

The Bishop laughingly responded as well: “I did not know that was part of the deal!”

**CONFERENCE LAY LEADER** – Sharon Gregory, Conference Lay Leader, building on the song “And Are We Yet Alive?” shared thoughts and Scripture from Ephesians 1:15-18.

**RECOGNITION OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION AND COMMISSIONING** – Kelly Schanely, representing the Board of Ministry: “We cannot gather together in person this year to celebrate ordination and commissioning to vocational ministry, but persons called and gifted by God continue to offer faithful service. Our laity have recommended candidates for ministry and presented them with prayers and support. Our Board of Ministry has examined these candidates according to the standards of our *Discipline* and this Annual Conference. Our Cabinet has appointed them to leadership with the duties and responsibilities of clergy.” Schanely read the names of those recommended by the Board of Ministry for the various types of pastoral ministry and shared that each of these would be brought to Clergy Session for election and then ordination, commissioning, and membership when we next gather.

**RECOMMENDED FOR ORDINATION AS FULL ELDERS:** Robert V. Ellson, Paul A. Harman III, Randolph K. Landman, Loren A. McQueen, and Luke A. Whipple.

**RECOMMENDED FOR COMMISSIONING AS PROVISIONAL ELDERS:** Joshua P. Demi, Jacob G. Judy, and Grace E. Killian.

**RECOMMENDED FOR COMMISSIONING AS PROVISIONAL DEACONS:** Natalie A. Marionneaux and Mathew C. Scott.

**RECOMMENDED FOR RECOGNITION OF ORDERS:** Roseanne D. Oliver.

**RECOMMENDED FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:** Jeffrey Canter.

**RECOGNITION OF RETIRED PASTORS** – Kelly Schanely, representing the Board of Ministry, recognized those pastors who have entered the Retired Membership of the Annual Conference: Gary B. Atkinson, Denny R. Belknap, Sr., Harold W. Blair, Richard E. Bowser, Dean P. Cooney, Ralph P. Cotten, Bruce K. Davis, Paul G. Fields, David C. Frantz, Edmond C. Gresick, Kenneth A. Haines, John K. Jefferis, Karen A. Kostur, Bradford L. Lauster, David R. Lewis, Maryann J. Long, James L. Miller, Elizabeth G. Murphy, Beth L. Nelson, Robert L. Rabenstein, II, Russel W. Shuluga, Nancy K. Shute, Barbara J. Stoehr, E. David Streets, and Terry R. Trudgen.

**MEMORIAL OBSERVANCE** – Dale Reese, read the roll of the Honored Dead. Active Clergy: Valerie Conrad-Dembinsky, Thomas Kennedy, and Kimberly King. Retired Clergy: J. Leroy Baker, Jacqueline Bish, Arlene Bobrowicz, Robert Getschman, Walter Hehman, Howard Hess, Harold Kelly, Bonnie King, Robert Lash, Edwin McElroy, Gail McQueen, James Mowrey, Donald Myers, Herbert Phar, Robert Richards, Lionel Sayers,

Paul Scruton, Timothy Shindledecker, Paul Taylor, and George Tutwiler. Clergy Spouses: Marjorie McGhee, Mildred Huntsman, Pamela Myers, Alberta Osborne, Susan Solida, Nancy Hankey, Mary Jo Oldham, Emma Naugle, Betty Ellenberger, Geraldine Schultz, Shirley Shipley, Margaret Karns, and Gladys Beal. Honored Laity: Eileen Gray. Missionaries: Joan Fogg Sanchez. Others Who Have Served: Lee Dinsel. Diaconal Minister: Carolyn Hartley.

**SETTING OF APPOINTMENTS** – Bishop Moore-Koikoi announced that all pastoral appointments for the 2020-2021 year are set and led the conference in prayer for those pastors who have moved to new places and also for the congregations who have welcomed those new pastors.

**ADJOURNMENT** – At the Noon hour, Bishop Moore-Koikoi declared this virtual session of Annual Conference to be adjourned, thanking all who worked to make it such a success.

### **CERTIFICATION OF MINUTES**

  
Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi  
President



**Rev. John R. Wilson**  
Secretary