

Dear Canton First Members-

It was again an honor to serve as one of the lay delegates for Canton First at this year's North Georgia Annual Conference which was held virtually on Saturday August 29th. With a shortened format this year, most of the conference concerned moving from 12 districts to 8. The new districts follow along county lines and they now have a similar number of churches and church sizes along with each district having a county with a growing population. Canton First will now be part of the Northwest District. In a bittersweet time, it was also voted to close 24 churches in the conference. While it is sad to hear of church closings, Bishop Sue remarked that "every church listed has born witness. They have served and been Christ to their communities, yet they have reached the point in the life of their church when it is time to close. Every death leads to new life," she explained, "and new ministries will be fueled by these closures." It was a strong reminder that we at Canton First MUST ALWAYS be about reaching out to our community and growing our congregation so that we may continue the mission of the church which is to introduce Jesus Christ to our world. One other area of interest was the conference budget. The 2021 proposed conference budget was reduced by around 19%. This means that the apportionments due from each church in the conference will be reduced by 19.3%. I am hopeful that we the members of Canton First will continue our generous giving and that our new budget might allow us to take this apportionment savings and increase our mission budget to broaden our reach in our community and beyond. Thank you for the honor to represent you again this year at Annual Conference.

Sincerely,

Rod Metcalf, Lay Delegate

154th 2020 Annual Conference Session - North Georgia Conference - The United Methodist Church

August 29, 2020 - Virtual/Electronic Session - Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson, presiding

Notes from JoEllen Wilson - Canton FUMC Lay Delegate

Session began at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, August 29, 2020 (after 1 hour for delegates to log on to computer) with Opening Worship by Bishop Sue.

John 21: 1-14 "Jesus appears when we need Him -- to give advice and help.

Electronic voting orientation and testing was taken.

Noted that recommended 2020 Provisional Elders, Full connection candidates would be recognized at later date.

Retired Clergy (Rev. Dan Brown, former Canton UMC Pastor is retiring) and Deceased Clergy (Rev. Sanford Williard, former Canton UMC Pastor is deceased) will be honored at 2021 Annual Conference.

Assistant to the Bishop Dr. Terry Walton offered 'Gestures of Appreciation (throughout Session) listing names drawn randomly of delegates to whom honor was given along with gifts to Conference Charities.

Information was given on 'Standing Rules ' which applied to AC regarding Redistricting for Mission & Stewardship.

Motion: To suspend Standing Rules (specifically to suspend the 24 hr. notice). Passed with 92.9% of YES votes.

Because of population growth and shifting of growth/culture, an outside consultant was hired by AC to analyze and report on Re-Districting.

- a. No County will be divided.
- b. AC budget is 20% lower
- c. Four districts located within the Perimeter and 4 districts located on outer Perimeter.

Recommendation/Motion: To condense 12 Districts into 8 new districts: Vote - YES/91.32%

Question: What is a District Union? According to Discipline, districts can organize in corporate form. The 8 new Districts are all District Unions to incorporate District property. AC to transfer assets of dissolving districts to the District Unions to allow for conformity and freedom from personal liability for Trustees and other church committees. District Unions have no effect on local churches - except savings from redistricting will go to conference budget with reduction in local church apportionment.

Motion: To dissolve existing districts & corporations - to incorporate into new District Unions and elect new representatives: Vote - Yes 1,389/ 93.98%

AC Trustee Chair John Simmons gave following Report from Trustee Committee:

\$16.4M in sold church properties accumulated to date.

Recommendation: Transfer of funds from Districts to Barnes Fund - except for \$36M in 'Restricted Funds' that remain in District. (Barnes Fund originally set up as Endowment for Church Development)

Motion: by CBOT to adopt proposed process of pooling funds from closed churches from 8 Districts to Barnes Fund:

Vote: Yes 1282 No 175

Future sales of closed churches to be pooled to utilize funds from 'Windfall Committee' to Barnes Fund for allocation. - Churches can apply for Barnes Fund through their District.

Motion to transfer funds from District to Barnes Fund:

Yes - 1109 No - 253 Abstain - 95

Consolidation of Barnes Fund and all sold properties to establish a Church Development Fund, Windfall Committee established in 1918 as a short-term committee to recommend proceeds from sold closed churches be pooled and distributed equally to all Districts.

Barnes Fund to become an Endowment for Church Development and for future initiatives for purchase and use by churches

Motion for Amendment to Barnes Fund:

Yes - 1312 No - 126 Abstain - 45

Motion to postpone General Conference from August 29, 2021 through September 7, 2021 and Jurisdictional Conference to November 10, 2021 through November 12, 2021 and affirm delegates and alternates elected for both Conference in 2019 remain intact.

Vote: Yes 1371 No 112 Abstain 24

Lunch Break from 12:30 until 1: 30 p.m.

Conference Lay Leader Bill Martin - Acts 4: 7 - 20 - - Officials demanded that Peter and John stop preaching. However, they cannot stop speaking because of what they've seen and heard from Jesus. Today the Church cannot stop preaching - but can minister differently because of what Jesus allows us to do.

Report from Pension & Health Benefits:

Funds \$859,871 in 1982 - -currently \$8,357,968 -

Motion: recurring Recommendations for Retirees, Part-time and 3/4 clergy (See pages 52-55 in Conference Handbook.

Vote - Yes -1379 No - 14 Abstain - 36

Motion - Clergy Health Plan mandated and billed to each church - Conference to establish premium @\$1,256 month:

Vote: Yes - 1367 No - 26 Abstain - 58

Report from Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A)

2019 Apportionment payment percentage was 91.3% - \$6,371,284 in payments.

85.4% (679) churches paid 100% of apportionments.

Recommended budget for 2021 represents a 20% decrease - 2021 budget is \$4M less than 2020:

\$16,976,101.

CF&A recommends adoption of 12 items (listed on Pages 96 & 97 of AC Handbook:

Motion: 1406 Yes 20 No 30 Abstain

Annual Conference Expenses for 2019 = \$371,000

Annual Conference Expenses for 2020 + \$163,000

Motion and Vote of 2021 Budget:

1355 Yes 31 No 30 Abstain

Report on Equitable Compensation:

Motion: No change in minimal compensation from 2019

Vote: 1411 Yes 19 No 16 Abstain

Report from Nominations Committee:

Committees are found on pages 175 - 192 of AC Handbook

Motion to accept Nominations Committee Report for 2020 Committees:

Vote: 1400 Yes 16 No 30 Abstain

Property Resolutions - presented by Conference Chancellor Jim Thorton:

Twenty-four (24) churches to be recommended for closure. (List of churches on NGConf. Website)

District Superintendents worked with each congregation to either close or merge with another church.

District Superintendents recommended each closure.

Book of Discipline says assets of closed churches are transferred to Conference Board of Trustees.

Motion to close 24 churches: Vote 1222 Yes 134 No 83 Abstain

Motion by Jay Horton that General, Jurisdictional and Annual Conferences take into consideration dates to coincide with school dates to allow youth representation:

1219 Yes

155 No

49 Abstain

There were no changes to Consent Agenda listed on pages 11 & 12 of Conference Handbook

Vote: 1354 Yes 27 No 37 Abstain

The 2019 Standing Rules for 2020 Annual Conference were reviewed.

The sentence "number of districts can only be changed at least one (1) year in advance" was removed from Standing Rules:

Vote: 1263 Yes 116 No 38 Abstain

Vote on changing North Ga. Conference Districts from 12 to 8:

1302 - Yes 68 No 20 Abstain

Therefore, beginning today, there are no only 8 districts in the North Georgia Conference

2021 Annual Conference is planned for June 3 - 5 at the Classic Center in Athens, GA.

Bishop Sue dismissed with prayer at 4:02 p.m.