

July 2021



HAVEN CHIMES!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR – by Juhee Lee

My beloved Haven family,

Thank you very much for giving me time to get refreshed and recharged physically and spiritually. I was able to focus on preparing our music project, "Healing Project Through Music," and met people with whom I would walk in a new journey at Cornerstone of Faith UMC during my weeks off. Also, I spent time with Yohan in New Hampshire. I've shared picture here. Even though we got so many mosquitos bites, Yohan and I enjoyed our time.



After coming back home, I found the plants in my garden grew a lot. I sowed the seeds and watered them every day, but I didn't feel that they were growing. However, when I stayed away from them for a few days, I could appreciate their total transformation. This experience taught me that there are some things that I can see only when I slow down and pause for a moment.

When we pause from our busy-ness and breathe in and out, we can feel God's presence and working in us.

Our busy schedules sometimes keep us from recognizing God's presence with us. But God is faithful and consistently works in our lives with God's steadfast love.



During this season of vacation, let us pause, take a deep breath, and look at our lives. We may notice something we missed before. Remember that God is present and works in every moment of our lives.

I hope my beloved Haven family has a blessed month in which you find the living God in your lives.

Peace,

Pastor Juhee Lee

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Mission Statement:

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



Together in Christ

A letter from Bishop Devadhar

July 1, 2021

Beloved in Christ:

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

Since our Annual Conference session, I have been receiving interesting feedback: questions, affirmations, painful statements, and observations.

One of the questions is: Why is it important for us to be in Holy (or Christian) Conferencing as a denomination, annual conference, district, and local church?

As I have been thinking about the centrality of Christian Conferencing, my thoughts go back again and again to a powerful episcopal address delivered by Bishop Joseph Yeakel in 1996 at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference. He said*:

I'm ready to retire. I think it's for the good of the Church ... it's time to retire. And if it happens today, at the end of this session, at the end of this speech, it's okay with me ... I'm ready.

Yet there's a part of me that says, "Oh, if I only had one wish, it would be to start all over ... to start all over in a day when the Church is dis-established from everything except the God who brought the Church into being." And if I had the opportunity to make my wish come true, the second part of the wish would be this: I'd like to belong to a Church that's just like what we've agreed to be in our covenants. I'd like to be a United Methodist!

I'd like to be part of a Church that's conciliar ...

I'd like to be a part of a connectional Church, where we stay at The Table ...

I'd like to be part of an itinerant Church ...

I'd like to belong to an episcopal Church ...

In this and the next two issues of this letter, I will reflect on what Bishop Yeakel shared 25 years ago and what, in my opinion, are still the foundational values of United Methodism.

In explaining a conciliar Church, he shared the following thoughts*:

I'd like to be part of a Church that's conciliar. Not tied to creeds and faith statements - although we use and need faith statements. But a Church that believes God is still speaking! And so we meet in council to counsel together to understand God's will. A conciliar Church.

When Asbury and Coke met over at Barrett's Chapel, and Coke told Asbury that Father Wesley had sent him to ordain Asbury and to make him a General Superintendent (ultimately Bishop, although Wesley didn't say that), Asbury responded saying, "I will if they elect me." That was a strategic intervention. That act took the new Church out of Wesley's hands and put it in the hands of the people who had to live in it. We began as a council and continue to do so. A conciliar Church, counseling together to know the will of God for today. God has not yet spoken the last word.

That quote offers a lot to digest, reflect on, and think about! A United Methodist bishop, not a diocesan bishop elected by the diocese, is elected by jurisdictional laity and clergy and is assigned to serve a particular episcopal area for a limited amount of time.

A United Methodist bishop is also a part of a jurisdictional College of Bishops and a Council of Bishops where bishops counsel and make decisions together! Likewise, it is very important for local churches, districts, annual conferences, and the General Conference to make decisions together after having listened to one another and discussed matters with one another. Yes, sometimes it is difficult to hear the truth in love. However, part of the job of a conciliar church is to have painful discussions and make tough decisions, so we remain true to one another.

When I was a district superintendent, I went to local churches where I often heard, “Conference made that decision (or decisions).” In those moments I used to say, “‘Conference’ is not ‘they,’ it is ‘we.’ An annual conference has lay members, clergy members, and equalization members to ensure clergy do not outnumber laity.” Usually at those moments, I would hear “I did not know that!”

Beloved in Christ, Holy Conferencing is one of the means of grace within Methodism! That is why it is important for conference members to come fully prepared to make informed decisions. To facilitate these meaningful conversations, we have pre-conference briefings.

In a different context, one of the great ecumenists of our time Dr. Jan Love said:

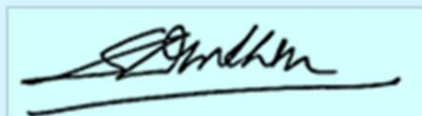
“Conversations matter. They can reinforce or dispel stereotypes about people from radically different cultures such as ours ... Conversations can be pleasant or unpleasant. They can be engaging or boring. They can reveal new insights or mask reality. They can contain powerfully meaningful exchanges when the participants are listening deeply, or they can be fairly meaningless because participants talk past one another ... I define the quest for Christian unity as dialogue despite the offense.”**

The 2021 Annual Conference session was a time of Holy Conferencing that was full of challenging conversations. These tough conversations revealed a lot about who we are as the New England Conference. As we continue to reflect about the meaning of these conversations, let us consider how they were “conciliar” in nature.

Together, as leaders and members of the conference, we engage in discernment, deliberation, and debate — together, we make the decisions. The hard work is placed in our hands.

As we continue to journey together into God’s promised future, I hope and pray as United Methodists that we continue to reflect on the question “What does conciliar mean to me and to us?”

In Christ's love,



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar

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

**Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel’s Episcopal Address, Journal of the Fifteenth Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference of The United Methodist Church, pp 66-67*

***Jan Love, Foreword: Conversations Matter in Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness, Higher Education & Ministry, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, pp x, xii.*

A message from Bishop Devadhar: Juneteenth

June 18, 2021

Beloved in Christ:

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

Yesterday (June 17, 2021), President Joseph R. Biden signed into law that Juneteenth is now a federal holiday.

At the signing, Vice President Kamala D. Harris declared: "Throughout history, Juneteenth has been known by many names: Jubilee Day, Freedom Day, Liberation Day, Emancipation Day, and today, a national holiday."

This day of remembrance marks when Major General Gordon Granger, who had fought for the Union, led a force of soldiers to Galveston, Texas, and read General Order #3 on June 19, 1865.

This military-enforced order enacted Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation that freed enslaved African Americans. Although the proclamation was issued by executive order on Sept. 22, 1862 and went into effect on Jan. 1, 1863, it was not until Juneteenth (June 19, 1865) — two and a half years later — that Black people were freed in Texas.

Indeed it has taken quite some time for us to arrive here today. As we celebrate this great landmark, we give thanks for all who endeavored and led us to this monumental day.

And as followers of Jesus Christ, we recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of liberation: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19). Our Savior declared these words at the start of his public ministry. May we deepen our ministry today, as we seek freedom and justice.

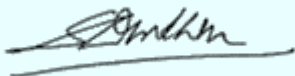
During my Episcopal Address a week ago today, I stated:

"Later this month, on the 19th, we celebrate Juneteenth and the abolition of slavery in the United States. Unfortunately, the legacy of slavery endures, and economic inequity and racial discrimination runs deep — and more painfully still, slavery continues even in our present-day world. Let us not rest until the legacy of antebellum slavery and modern-day slavery and human trafficking are abolished entirely.

As we continue to fight for justice and for the liberation of all the children of God, we must not forget that Juneteenth is also a celebration of black resilience and joy. We rejoice that reconstruction, rebuilding, and flourishing happens — even in the face of unthinkable violence and devastation."

It is my prayer that this weekend of remembrance and thanksgiving will energize us for the journey that is ahead.

In Christ's love,



Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar



Our Daily Bread

Love God. Love Others.

Not Rushing Prayer By: John Blase



July 1, 2021

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Today's Scripture: Psalm 13 (NRSV)

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; ³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵ God is in the midst of the city;[b] it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. ⁶ The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. ⁷ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. ⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.” ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Alice Kaholusuna recounts a story of how the Hawaiian people would sit outside their temples for a lengthy amount of time preparing themselves before entering in. Even after entering, they would creep to the altar to offer their prayers. Afterward, they would sit outside again for a long time to “breathe life” into their prayers. When missionaries came to the island, the Hawaiians sometimes considered their prayers odd. The missionaries would stand up, utter a few sentences, call them “prayer,” say amen, and be done with it. The Hawaiians described these prayers as “without breath.”

Alice’s story speaks of how God’s people may not always take the opportunity to “be still, and know” (Psalm 46:10). Make no mistake—God hears our prayers, whether they’re quick or slow. But often the pace of our lives mimics the pace of our hearts, and we need to allow ample time for God to speak into not only our lives but the lives of those around us. How many life-giving moments have we missed by rushing, saying amen, and being done with it?

We’re often impatient with everything from slow people to the slow lane in traffic. Yet, I believe God in His kindness says, “Be still. Breathe in and out. Go slow, and remember that I am God, your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” To do so is to know that God is God. To do so is to trust. To do so is to live.

Reflect & Pray

Recall a time when you slowed down and listened to God in your prayer time. How did that feel? What actions can you put into place to still yourself in God’s presence and know Him?

Father, thank You for being my ever-present help in good times and bad. Give me the grace to be still and know that You’re God.

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

Psalm 46 has been a source of encouragement to many over the years—including reformer Martin Luther. In fact, he based the classic hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” on this psalm. During times of struggle, “when terribly discouraged, he would turn to his co-worker, Philipp Melanchthon, and say, ‘Come, Philipp, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm’ ” (Ligonier Ministries, *Luther and the Psalms: His Solace and Strength*).

This mighty fortress describes the God of strength who’s our refuge and the God who calls us to find our rest in Him. In the New Testament, Jesus personalized that rest when He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). In the midst of the cares and despairs of life, we can stop, be still, and find refuge in God. **Bill Crowder**

Connecting with people through prayer

By Heather Hahn

June 16, 2021 | NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UM News)

The Rev. Jacqui King (second from right) clasps hands and prays with people at the Discipleship Ministries booth during the 2019 meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal in Atlanta. Photo courtesy of King.



A simple question changed the Rev. Jacqui King's entire approach to prayer.

It started one morning when the United Methodist pastor was in line at a busy counter outside Nashville International Airport. The man checking in bags was smiling and polite, but King could tell something was bothering him.

She looked at the man's nametag and was about to silently pray for him. But then, she said, the Holy Spirit nudged her to do something outside her comfort zone.

When she stepped up to the counter, she found herself asking: "Daniel, how can I pray for you?"

That was the first time she remembers directing that question to a stranger. It would not be her last.

As vaccinations increase and pandemic restrictions lift, people are starting to reconnect with friends and meet strangers in person once again. King sees prayer as a crucial part of connecting with God and each other.

"Scripture says to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself," said King, previously an executive with United Methodist Discipleship Ministries. "For me, prayer is that love connection."

The Rev. Jacqui King addresses the 2020 Pre-General Conference Briefing in Nashville, Tenn. File photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.



King continues to be in extension ministry as a church coach focusing on community development, leadership, virtual visioning and prayer.

When people pray together, even mundane encounters become miraculous. That was her experience five years ago across the airline counter from Daniel.

When she asked how she could pray for him, he opened up. He told her that he was worried because his daughter was going on a school field trip that morning — not long after a school-bus crash had killed six children. "Would you pray for her safety?" he asked.

King held his hand and prayed with him. She handed him her luggage and hurried into the terminal — feeling exhilarated that she had done what God asked her to do. "But I never expected to see Daniel again," she said.

She was wrong.

Two weeks later, she was at the same counter at the same time, and Daniel greeted her like an old friend. He said his daughter had a great trip. He then stunned King by saying, "You changed my life."

His Bible study group had been trying to pray for the Nashville community without much success, he said. Whenever study members asked people "Can I pray for you?" the answer was invariably "no."

He told King, "You changed my life because you changed the question."

From that time onward, King committed to have the boldness to ask people: “How can I pray for you? And then I actually pray.”

King, who grew up in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, had long experience coming to God with a bowed head.

As a community organizer with The United Methodist Church’s “Shalom Zone Initiative” and later pastor in the Texas Conference, she frequently asked people for their prayer requests. However, she often would ask them to jot their requests on index cards to reference in her private prayer time.

“The change for me was I stopped putting prayer in this time period where it was convenient for me,” she said. “That’s it. People need to be prayed for right now.”



Prayer resources

King prays with United Methodist-made prayer beads as she watches a 2019 special General Conference session online. Photo courtesy of King.

The United Methodist Church has multiple resources available to help Christians in their prayer life. The Rev. Jacqui King shares the following:

- Resources from The Upper Room, the denomination’s devotional ministries and part of Discipleship Ministries.
<https://www.upperroom.org/resources/category/prayer>
- The Upper Room’s Prayer Wall, where people can make requests and join in praying for other people.
<http://prayer-center.upperroom.org/prayer-wall>
- Prayer Walk Guide from North Cross United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Missouri.
<https://www.playlearnshare.org/prayer-resources>

King also invites people to contact her about prayer ministry at drjacquiking@gmail.com.

Her approach has left an impression on even seasoned church leaders.

The Rev. Greg Bergquist first met King shortly after he was elected as chief executive of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. King, then at neighboring Discipleship Ministries, introduced herself as Bergquist was walking up the stairs to the agency’s entrance.

“She told me, ‘I want to be supportive of you and one of the ways I do that is through prayer,’” Bergquist recalled. He asked her to pray for him to be open to God’s vision for The United Methodist Church and to lead boldly into that vision.

“I love praying with and for people, but because of my role, it’s not often that someone stops me and says, ‘I would love to pray for you,’” he said. “It reminded me that I am part of this wonderful community and that we are continuously praying for each other.”

King, who travels a great deal for her ministry, acknowledged that she often is hesitant to strike up a conversation with the unknown person sitting beside her.

One night, she remembered, she had a late flight that delays caused to embark even later.

“I said, ‘God, I am going to get on this plane, and I am not going to talk to anybody,’” King recalled. However, the Holy Spirit nudged her and she ended up greeting the young man sitting beside her.

Robert Carter told her he was flying to Delaware to see his then-fiancée, and he asked her to pray for his upcoming interview for a job that would allow him to move closer to his wife-to-be.

His conversation with King also led to their discovery that his mother and King’s mother-in-law lived in the same Chattanooga neighborhood. The connection went deeper than that. He grew up United Methodist, and his godmother was King’s sister-in-law.

He and King kept in touch. Carter got the job as a senior data analyst, and he invited King to his wedding.

“She prayed for us and got me up there, so I wanted to invite her,” he said with a chuckle.

King has long seen her role as helping to connect people to the wider church and help them in their Christian discipleship. Her offer to pray with people often also serves as evangelism.

On one trip, when King asked how she could pray for the woman next to her, the woman confided that she was searching for a church home. King remembered bulletins she had received from a United Methodist church near where the woman lived.

“I pass that church all the time. That’s where I get the bus,” the woman told King. “God has told me that I need to check out that church.”

When King landed, she called the church’s pastor to be on the lookout for a new visitor.

It’s not always easy to talk to strangers, much less pray with them. Whenever she asks to pray with someone, King said she has to get out of her head, screw up her courage and trust God.

“Every time I pray for somebody, it’s a humbling of my soul to listen,” she said. “If you believe that prayer is a means of grace, how can you not act?”

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests.

United Methodist Beliefs: Heaven

By Rev. Adam Hamilton

“So, one of the biggest questions I receive from people is, ‘Do you really believe in heaven?’ And that’s easy for me to answer and my answer is always the same. I not only believe in it but I’m counting on it.

C.S. Lewis once said that what you believe about the afterlife changes everything about how you live your life. If you believe there’s an afterlife, then you’re willing to take risks. You don’t believe this is the end. When you face death, the death of a family member, somebody you care about, you know it’s just goodbye for now. So, how you grieve is different.

The Apostle Paul says, ‘I don’t want you to grieve as people who have no hope,’ when he was talking to people who lost their loved ones. So, the afterlife gives me hope but that’s not a reason to believe in it. It’s just something that is the benefit of it.

I believe in the afterlife in heaven because Jesus talked about it. I believe in Jesus. I think He was right about who He was and what He said, and so, because I believe in Him, I believe in what He said. Jesus demonstrated there was an afterlife by His resurrection. And so, if you believe in His resurrection, He said, ‘Because I live, you shall live also.’ I think He was right. I believe the testimony of those who saw Jesus risen from the grave. And I believe that in His resurrection, He was addressing this fundamental dimension of our human existence, our fear of death, the fact that all of us are going to face death someday, and in Jesus’ resurrection, he was saying, ‘You don’t have to be afraid cause this is not the end.’

And I love how C.S. Lewis described the life that we have on earth is like the preface. Or maybe the title page to the preface of the book that God has, and after that comes chapter after chapter of the adventure that goes on.

I believe in heaven because there are people I have been with as they were dying, and they were describing things they heard. I remember a man who described, people, they were speaking to him and he said. ‘Can you hear them?’ And I said, ‘No, I can’t hear them.’ And he said. ‘They’re calling my name.’ And when we asked him, ‘Who?’ He described people who he had loved who had died, who had gone before him.

And I think about people who have had near death experiences, who died for just a moment and then they came back and they describe meeting people who had died and gone before them. They described hearing the sound of music, of people calling them, and the joy they felt and the peace they felt. For all of those reasons, I believe in heaven. And I would say again. I not only believe it, but I’m counting on it.”

Church to start counting non-binary members

By Heather Hahn June 28, 2021 | UM News

During a June 25 online meeting, the General Council on Finance and Administration board voted to update local-church statistical forms to include the option of non-binary under the category of gender. This change only affects the U.S. Excerpt of the current church statistical form highlighted for emphasis by UM News.

United Methodist congregations in the U.S. will soon have a new way to break down the gender of its members.

By a voice vote June 25, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) board approved revising local-church statistical forms to include “non-binary” alongside the categories of “male” and “female.”

The change will take effect with forms for the 2021 collection year and will only affect the denomination’s data collection in the U.S.

“We currently only collect local-church statistics in the U.S.,” explained Rick King, the agency’s chief financial officer.

GCFA also plans to ask U.S. annual conferences — church regional governing bodies — to include the number of non-binary clergy in their Business of Annual Conference records. The finance agency expects to send information on these additions to church data collectors in July.

GCFA’s data includes totals — not individuals’ names.

“Non-binary” is a commonly used term for people whose gender identity falls outside the man-woman binary. A study published this month by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law found that about 11% of the LGBTQ adults, ages 18 to 60, identify as non-binary. That translates to about 1.2 million U.S. adults.

The current United Methodist statistical forms ask pastors to tally the number of female and male members and then give a total membership for the two. However, those gender categories have left some members feeling counted out.

The board made the change after hearing from U.S. annual conference treasurers who have responsibility for collecting membership data from local churches.

“We are having issues reporting people with pastors calling our office and saying: ‘What do I do here?’” said Christine Dodson, North Carolina Conference treasurer and the GCFA board’s vice president.

“Quite frankly, I’ve had a pastor tell me, ‘I’m not going to force a person to choose one or the other when they have told me how they identify.’”

Sharon Dean, GCFA’s chief communications officer, said that the agency gets requests for information from various United Methodist groups about gender distribution.

“We’ve also heard from around the connection that some annual conferences and some other organizations are already using a third choice,” Dean said. “And so to be consistent with requests that come in, we might include this additional selection.”

Of the 18 GCFA board members present, only one board member voted no to the change.

“I’m appreciative of the recognition of all God’s people, but I am also cautious that we are making a decision that appears to affect less than half our global constituency,” said the Rev. Steve Wood, who is also lead pastor of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in Johns Creek, Georgia.

5e	Members with ethnic origins in indigenous America (including Aleut, Inuit, Micmac, Ojibwa, Mayan, Miskito, etc.) and/or who maintain cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.	
	Pacific Islander Members with ethnic origins in the Pacific Islands (including Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Marianas, Micronesia, Papua, Polynesia, Samoa, Solomon and Tonga, Vanuatu, and Tuvalu).	5e
	White Members with ethnic origins in Europe, including its various ethnicities.	5f
	Multiracial Members with ethnic origins in two or more of the other six categories.	5g
	5 TOTAL MEMBERSHIP ETHNICITY (5a+5b+5c+5d+5e+5f+5g = 5 = 4)	5
GENDER	On the following lines, report for each member the gender with which she or he identifies. The total of the numbers entered in these two spaces must equal the membership total in Line 4.	
	6a Female	6a
	6b Male	6b
	6 TOTAL MEMBERSHIP GENDER (6a + 6b = 6 = 4)	6
ATTENDANCE & BAPTISMS	7 Average Attendance at all weekly worship services Report average <u>in-person</u> attendance at all services held on a consistent weekly basis as the primary opportunity for worship. Count all persons (including children) who participate in part of any of these services. Do not include online worshippers nor attendance from irregularly held special services (i.e. Christmas Eve services).	7
	7a Number of persons who worship online Report here average weekly number of unique viewers who access worship online. This includes those live streaming your worship service and views/downloads of recorded worship services (audio or video), sermons, and/or podcasts. Do not include generic hits/visits to your website.	7a
	8a Number of persons baptized this year ages 0-12	8a
	8b Number of persons baptized this year ages 13 or older	8b
	8 Total number of persons baptized this year (sum of 8a + 8b)	8

"I'm just wondering if we are creating more angst than we are creating benefits, so I have to speak against it."

Per-Endre Bjørnevik, a board member from Norway, is chair of the Connectional Outreach Committee that recommended the revision. He as well as board members from Côte d'Ivoire and the Philippines voted for the change.

The statistical-form revision comes as The United Methodist Church faces a possible split after decades of intensifying debate over same-sex weddings and the ordination of "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination's policy book, says all people are of sacred worth but states that "the practice of homosexuality" is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

However, GCFA staff confirmed that adding non-binary to the forms does not conflict with any paragraph in the Discipline. Board members also concluded the change is not in conflict with any legislation related to sexuality heading to the pandemic-delayed General Conference, now scheduled for 2022.

The Discipline takes no stance on the ordination of non-binary or transgender people. In 2019, the Rev. M Barclay became the first openly "non-binary trans person" to be ordained a United Methodist deacon, according to Reconciling Ministries Network. The network advocates for full inclusion of LGBTQ people in the life of the church.

"While it will take much more substantial change in policy and practice for the UMC to be a positive force in the lives of queer and/or trans people, I celebrate the effort of those who are striving to honor the existence of non-binary people in their communities," Barclay said by e-mail. "Lives depend on this seed of change being nurtured in all contexts."

Non-binary identity is still a new concept to many people, acknowledged California-Nevada Conference Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño. In the spirit of learning together, she suggested adding a commonly held definition of what non-binary means to statistical forms.

"I know for me, it's been a journey of learning," she said.

Dean said she would work with the agency's data services department to add the definition.

Dean and others cautioned that whenever a form change takes place, it takes a while for church leaders to send in additional data.

Ken Ow, a board member from the Baltimore-Washington Conference, also cautioned that pastors should not try to guess how people identify as they report local-church data.

Board members largely spoke with support for the change.

"I think it reflects that the church is aware that it's a reality," said the Rev. Sandra Olewine, who starts July 1 as a district superintendent in the California-Pacific Conference. "And it is a way for the church, even in its forms, to begin to acknowledge more of the fullness of who we are as human beings."

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

England: Methodist Church allows same-sex marriage in 'momentous' vote

By Harry Farley BBC News

The Methodist Church has become the largest religious denomination in Britain to permit same-sex marriages.

A vote to change the definition of marriage at the Methodist Conference on Wednesday overwhelmingly passed by 254 in favour with 46 against.

Freedom of conscience clauses mean ministers will not be forced to conduct such weddings if they oppose the move.

Same-sex marriage is not allowed in the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church.

However it is welcomed in the Scottish Episcopal Church, the United Reformed Church and the Quakers in Britain.

The Methodist Church is Britain's fourth largest Christian denomination with about 164,000 members across more than 4,000 churches.

Church officials hope the first same-sex weddings in Methodist chapels will take place in the autumn.



Church officials hope the first same-sex weddings in Methodist chapels will take place in the autumn GETTY IMAGES

The Rev Sam McBratney, chair of the Dignity and Worth campaign group, said it was a "momentous step on the road to justice" after many years of "painful conversations".

"Some of us have been praying for this day to come for decades, and can hardly believe it is now here," he said. "We are so grateful to our fellow Methodists for taking this courageous step to recognise and affirm the value and worth of LGBTQ+ relationships.

"We reassure those who do not support this move that we want to continue to work and worship with you in the Church we all love."

However in an emotional debate, Carolyn Lawrence, a former vice-president of the Methodist Conference, warned there was a "significant minority" of Methodists who were "planning on leaving or resigning their membership" as a result of the vote.

"Today is a line in the sand for many people and seen as a significant departure from our doctrine."

Ben Riley and Jason McMahon have been together for 12 years but have waited to marry until they could have a church wedding. Ben said today's decision "means so much" and they now hope to marry in their local Methodist church in Preston.

Jason, who is training to be a Methodist minister, described it as a "very emotional day." "To be told by the Church that you are worthy, that we accept you, and that you can be married in the eyes of God in the church you call home with friends and family - it means a great deal.

"It has really helped me feel truly at home within a Church that is able to embrace anybody."

He said waiting for same-sex weddings to be permitted had been "painful" but added that he hoped the Methodist Church could now "begin to look outwards."

The proposals were initially passed by the Methodist Conference in 2019 before being sent to local synods for consultation. All but one of the 30 local synods have since voted in favour of the change. Wednesday's confirmatory vote was due to take place at the 2020 conference but that was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The changes mean the Methodist Church now holds two parallel definitions of marriage - one position says "marriage can only be between a man and a woman" and the other that "marriage can be between any two people."

Church officials hope the dual definition will persuade conservative churches not to leave and protect ministers from discrimination claims if they refuse to marry gay couples.

The Rev Sonia Hicks, president of the Methodist Conference, said: "The debate today and our wider conversation has been conducted with grace and mutual respect.

"As we move forward together after this historic day for our Church, we must remember to continue to hold each other in prayer, and to support each other respecting our differences."



'WE FEEL ACCEPTED' JASON MCMAHON

July 2021



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.

Bishop names new Director of Connectional Ministries

Bishop Devadhar has appointed Rev. Ashley Renée Johnson as part-time Director of Connectional Ministries. She takes over for Rev. Erica Robinson-Johnson, who served as DCM and Assistant to the Bishop.

The responsibilities of the Assistant to the Bishop will be taken care of by other episcopal office staff and consultants as needed.

In announcing the appointment, the bishop said, "As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Order of Deacons, I am very excited about Ashley bringing her presence and perspective as a young deacon to the position of DCM and to the Extended Cabinet table as well as to the many Conference committees on which she will serve."



Rev. Johnson, who is a teacher at Epiphany School in Dorchester, MA, returned to school and graduated from Boston University School of Theology with a Master of Theological Studies degree in 2017. She is a member of Union Church Boston.

Her appointment begins July 1.



2021 Annual Conference recap

Here's a short recap of what happened during the business sessions of the 2021 Annual Conference, June 10-12. (More details, including the full text of legislation and links to videos, can be found on our website).

The Annual Conference approved the 2022 budget that was \$175,000 less than originally proposed. The Board of Pensions agreed to absorb the \$175,000 cost for the Missional Pension/Benefits Fund (Fund 3).

For 2022:

- \$6,159,706 actual spending limit
- \$7,269,340 apportionment amount

Approved the formation of a Vision Forward Team "to advance the strategic imagination and mission" for the New England Conference." (Read more on page 2).

Annual Conference approved the Commission on Native American Ministries resolution asking the NEAC to acknowledge and commemorate May



5th as National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and recognize and celebrate the second Monday in October as Indigenous People's Day. United Methodists are encouraged to wear red on these days to show support and raise awareness.

Approved the Commission on the Status and Role of Women's (supported by the Commission on Religion and Race, the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Committee on the Episcopacy) proposal to create a Sex/Gender-Based Crisis Response Team "to address, heal, and seek justice in circumstances where persons have been harmed on the basis of their sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression."

Approved disaffiliation of 3 churches:

- Chebeague Island (ME) UMC
- Hope.Gate.Way, Portland, ME
- Tuttle Road UMC, Cumberland Center, ME



FOR MORE DETAILS LOOK FOR STORIES HEADLINED AC21
www.neumc.org/news

2021 Annual Conference

Vision Forward Team approved

Members approved Bishop Devadhar's proposal to create a Vision Forward Team based on the work of the New England delegation to the General and Jurisdictional conferences to gather leaders and stakeholders to "provide collaborative insights to the incoming Bishop, and to the delegation as they deliberate in the coming Conferences."

The bishop called on the Annual Conference to authorize the formation of a Vision Forward Team "to advance the strategic imagination and mission" for the New England Conference.

"We have an amazing opportunity before us as we emerge from the wilderness of the past 15 months of the pandemic," Bishop Devadhar said. "As we imagine a 'future with hope,' we can also build from our strengths and pick up where we have left off and complete the unfinished work."

The team would comprise the organizing members of the delegation's consultations: Amanda Bonnette-Kim, Rev. Becca Girrell,

Rev. Leigh Goodrich, Claire Holston, and Rev. Dr. Jay Williams. And three members, clergy or laity, one each chosen by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, the Trustees and the Board of Pensions. The bishop, the Dean of the Cabinet and the Director of Connectional Ministries would be members with voice, but no vote.

The bishop's proposal also includes hiring Rev. Meg Lassiat, who has been facilitating the consultation process, to act as a consultant. Rev. Lassiat was acting assistant general secretary for the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Bishop Devadhar called on the Vision Forward Team to "help our conference dismantle the silos, build more trust, and collaborate better together" by reviewing and improving the Strategic Plan to bring to the 2022 Annual Conference. Funding would come from non-apportionment, unrestricted funds.

Service of Ordination and Commissioning

The 2021 in-person service on June 12 included the clergy classes of 2020 and 2021 as well as two deaconesses. Bishop Devadhar was preacher.

2020

Ordinands Deacons

Natalie Hill
Sheri Smith

Elders

Kathleen Decker Szakas
Shannon Keeney
SeokCheol Shin

Commissionees

Deacons

Adama Brown
Ashley Johnson

Elders

Brian Hyungsuk Choi
Sooyoun Kim
Sunjae Lee
Adam Randazzo
Alicia Vélez Stewart

Deaconesses

Tracy Tarver-Weisel
Wanda Winnicki

2021

Ordinands Deacons

Caroline Bass
Karen Skalla

Elders

Ross Johnson
Yunki Kim
Kenneth Mantler
Dongmyung Shim

Commissionees

Elders

Michelle Ashley
Sungmin Jeon
Juhee Lee
Junsang Lee
Minchang Lee
John Melick
Jamie Michaels
Christy Wright

See photos & more online in the Saturday recap at www.necumc.org/news

Awards

2021 Ziegler Preacher Rev. Rae Fraumann, pastor of Hedding UMC in Barre, VT, is the 2021 winner of the Wilbur C. Ziegler Award for Excellence in Preaching. Rev. Fraumann is the first non-binary person to earn this award.

2021 Laity Address The opening worship on Friday included the 2021 Laity Address. The winner of the 2021 Laity Address Challenge is Heather Josselyn-Cranson, lay leader of Sudbury (MA)UMC. Find the recording on our website.

One Matters Awards

The One Matters Awards are presented annually by the New England Conference Office of Congregational Development in conjunction with Discipleship Ministries. The awards recognize churches that, in 2020, received a high percentage of professions of faith (relative to average worship attendance), baptized both children and adults, and are focused on the process of making disciples of Jesus Christ. Each church will receive a plaque and a check for \$1,000. This year's recipients are:

Highgate Center UMC in Vermont
First UMC in Southbridge, MA
St John's UMC in Jefferson, NH

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 or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150



SEE MORE CELEBRATIONS 6/11 RECAP
www.neumc.org/news

Bible Quiz: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount



1. Fill in the blanks: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and _____."

- ☐ trampled under foot
- ☐ left for the cattle
- ☐ left for the dogs
- ☐ washed down to the sea

2. "You are the _____ of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid."

- ☐ glory
- ☐ shining star
- ☐ light
- ☐ heavenly flock

3. "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you _____ a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment."

- ☐ despise
- ☐ are angry with
- ☐ strike
- ☐ kill

4. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, _____."

- ☐ show no mercy to an evil man
- ☐ love your neighbor and hate your enemy
- ☐ the Law must be fulfilled
- ☐ do not resist an evildoer

Answers can be found on the next to the last page. Quiz taken from *The Christian Bible Reference Site*, www.christianbiblereference.org

5. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be _____."

- ☐ among the chosen people
- ☐ a light unto the world
- ☐ children of your Father in heaven
- ☐ righteous before the Lord

6. "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and _____."

- ☐ Satan
- ☐ the devil
- ☐ wealth
- ☐ Beelzebub

7. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their _____. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?"

- ☐ evil words
- ☐ fruits
- ☐ lying eyes
- ☐ sharp teeth

8. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who _____."

- ☐ believes in Me
- ☐ does good works
- ☐ is faithful to my Church
- ☐ does the will of my Father in heaven



Please Pray For... Frontline Workers ~ Those affected by COVID-19 ~ All veteran's dealing with PTSD, addiction, physical injuries ~ John Bentz ~ David ~ Manny Fernandes ~ Brian Higgins ~ Raymond Smith ~ Lisa ~ Heidi Bentz ~ Matt ~ Robert Fernandes, Sr. ~ Amelia ~ Mila ~ Jimmy ~ Emily Bentz ~ Amy Bentz ~ Jean James ~ Mary ~ Steve & Debbie Bentz ~ Mike & Ellie Pickering ~ Kenny ~ Delores August ~ Steve Robinson ~ Angell Rodrigues ~ Joseph Thomas ~ Rev. Julia Doutaz ~ David ~ Andrew Anguita ~ Mike M. ~ Marge Lavoie ~ Paul ~ Bert Dorrance ~ Rev. Emmalou Kirchmeier ~ Joan Chase ~ Joanne ~ Jamie & family ~ Kurt ~ Deborah ~ Ginny Melo ~ Sue Dorrance ~ Alex Holt ~ Justin Johnson ~ "Winkie" Chrystie ~ George Glover ~ Michael Tonry ~ David Springer ~ Teachers, students and staff

Building an ARK in Cambodia

By Christie R. House and Patrick Booth
June 10, 2021 | PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA

ARK's local business manager, Chey Piseth, and his daughter scout potential properties for Project ARK. PHOTO: PATRICK BOOTH



Patrick Booth learned about interdependence at a young age. When circumstances changed for his family, his mother, who had been a stay-at-home mom for 15 years, went back to work to support her three children. The job she found didn't pay enough to meet their needs, so she worked two jobs. It took a few years for her to stabilize their finances.

Booth remembers what it was like to become a latch-key kid overnight and the loss of things they once had. But mostly, he remembers how the church community eased the family's burden.

"I remember going to CCA (Christian Community Action) for food and the church stepping in. One church member gave a check for rent, another paid for gas. The congregation chipped in and helped us. I've always wanted to give back and help others," Booth explained.

He participated in the church's local youth mission trips. Booth obtained an associate degree in substance abuse counseling and an associate certificate in mental health and substance abuse prevention. He continued his education to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology and began counseling in downtown Dallas. A third of his initial clients were homeless. After a few years, he returned to Lewisville, his hometown, to open a private counseling practice with a partner. Their clients were primarily people on probation.



After four years, their practice grew to include four locations, 17 employees and \$375,000 in annual gross revenue. Booth continued to participate in volunteer mission trips, including some international trips. In 2014, he sold his half of the business to his partner, which freed up his time for more travel and volunteer work. In 2020, he was commissioned to serve as a missionary with Global Ministries in Cambodia.

Patrick Booth, Chey Piseth (local business manager), and Chey Banabas (resident manager) discuss future plans for Project ARK. PHOTO: PATRICK BOOTH

An ARK in Cambodia

Booth is in Phnom Penh to help the Cambodia Mission Initiative launch a nonprofit called Advancing Resilient Khmer (ARK), with a goal to keep people out of human trafficking networks. He explained that there are many kinds of human trafficking, and often, trafficking involves a pattern of wage theft and overwhelming debt accumulation, whether the trafficking involves sexual exploitation or labor exploitation. Though some are kidnapped and literally locked up, more commonly, a deliberate system of predatory debt and wage bondage keeps them in the trafficking system even after they leave a job.

"Someone comes in from the outside and says he'll pay 10 times what you are making if you give six months of your life while you work on his project," Booth said. "Half the men in town sign on. After being transported to the job site, workers are charged for that transportation. They charge you for room and board. At the end of the day, they pay you \$4 a day so that you can owe them \$5. If you quit the job, you still owe the money. In our view, that is what modern slavery looks like."

The Cambodia Mission Initiative and the Global Ministries Asia Pacific Regional Office surveyed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of human trafficking in Cambodia and discovered that once people are extracted from a trafficking situation, they have a 90% chance of falling

back into it because of excessive debt. They also determined that an overwhelming majority of helping agencies focus their efforts on supporting women and children, so the first participants in Project ARK are underserved men; they plan to expand to all populations in the future.

Plans for ARK changed as the coronavirus pandemic and government restrictions affected the economic landscape. Currently, Booth and his Cambodian coworkers are focusing on a “Business as Mission” model. They bid for construction jobs and hire a crew of skilled workers. Men that enter the program as clients work alongside the crew and learn from them.

Another aspect of ARK is a communal living situation that provides time for learning, group discussion and instruction on work, living, finance and business management. The dorms and meeting space are up and running.

Booth said: “If they remain with us for the full 18 months, we provide them with everything they need to set up shop on their own. That’s our end goal for every participant, but the minimum that we want for everyone is the ability to earn a livable wage.”

*Piseth gets the dorm ready for its first participants.
PHOTO: PATRICK BOOTH*



Participant profile By Patrick Booth



Rati is 35 years old. He is from Kamput province. He traveled 150 km to Phnom Penh to search for work to provide for his wife and three-year-old boy. He has many years of experience working with electricity in the construction field but many problems with employers.

For two years, he worked far away from his family in Sihanoukville, traveling back home to see his wife and child only once or twice each year. The construction sites promised to pay workers during COVID lock-downs but four months went by without a single dime for the hired workers. Rati had no choice but to leave Sihanoukville without his pay to search for better opportunities.

Rati has found a new way to gain work experience, business knowledge and new life skills with ARK in Phnom Penh.

He found a job building a wall along the riverbank in Phnom Penh. This government district contract seemed promising. However, the local community living along the river resisted. They came at night and physically destroyed the construction progress the crew made during the day. The district blamed the crew for lack of progress and refused to pay the workers. In the last year alone, Rati has worked nearly five months with various employers who promised to pay him and then refused to do so after his work was completed.

To further complicate matters, Rati borrowed money from a money lender to pay for medical treatments for his mother. She eventually died, but not before he had borrowed a considerable amount. He has wisely refinanced his debt with a bank. His interest rate with the bank (1.5%/month) is considerably lower than the original interest rate with the money lender (10%/week).

At Project ARK, Rati is able to spend his days working toward a better future. He learns a variety of skills, such as air conditioning maintenance, concrete structuring, plumbing, tiling and brick laying. Furthermore, he shares his knowledge and understanding of electrical work with others. He also has the opportunity to grow personally and spiritually through routine encouragement with personal mentors.

When asked what Rati hopes to gain through his cooperation and work with our program, he replied, “I want to learn more skills so that I will be able to work different jobs that are available. I want to share my skills and understanding with other people.”

This is what we want for you, too, Rati. So, we will work every day to give you that opportunity.

For more information about Project Ark, visit <https://umccambodia.org/ark/>. A gift to the Cambodia Mission Initiative, designated for ARK, will help support this important work. Christie R. House is a consultant writer and editor with Global Ministries and UMCOR. Patrick Booth (Advance #3022599) is a missionary with Project ARK in Phnom Penh.

Enduring racism, badgering, as a pastor

Commentary by Dr. Josephine Whitely-Fields
April 29, 2021 | SYLVANIA, Ohio (UM News)

*The Rev. Josephine Whitely-Fields
Photo courtesy of the author.*



I answered the call to ministry as a second-career person, following years of integrating educational systems beginning with middle school and concluding with dental school. I was aware that the church had dissolved the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction and given women full rights of ordination, but racism and sexism were still alive and well.

One encounter with racism occurred at a church where I was appointed as pastor. I brought many skills and expertise to the position after having served several churches. A few but loud and boisterous people decided they did not want a Black pastor, and they verbalized it openly to my face. I had no defense to counter their discontent because being Black was who I was and would be until I die. Therefore, I did not try to appease them; I simply went about doing my job of pastoring and administering the church.

That same group of people found fault with everything I did, including preaching, teaching, confirmation, baptizing, burials, hairstyles, working with the children and youth, and conducting meetings. In other words, nothing I did was satisfactory to them.

They complained to members of the church, each Sunday arriving early enough to corner other members as they came to church and sharing with them their discontent. They also complained to the staff/pastor-parish relations committee and requested to be included on the agenda so they could express their displeasure.

During the staff/pastor-parish relations committee meetings each month, they would take turns expressing why I should not be the pastor of the church. Their accusations were so ridiculous and obviously prejudiced that the committee advised me to not come to the meeting until after they had finished their circus. This went on from the time I arrived until I was appointed to another church.

Fortunately, the committee was supportive of me as a pastor and did all it could to defuse the conflict, but to no avail. In addition, the staff/pastor-parish relations committee gave me positive evaluations because the church was thriving under my leadership, new ministries were birthed, community outreach was growing by leaps and bounds and finances were stable.

The committee requested help from the conference, which sent a team to the church to interview the members and me and to assess what they deemed to be the problem.

After several months of interviews, the conference team assessed the problem was racism and made recommendations for correction. Those recommendations worked for the congregation as a whole but not for the discontented few.

Unfortunately, the racism was not resolved, and I suffered from the racial badgering until I was appointed to another setting.

Another encounter with racism occurred at another church where I was appointed. In that church were relatives of people in another church where I experienced racism. When I was appointed to that church, prior to my arrival, several couples sent strong and hateful letters to the bishop expressing they did not want me as their pastor. I was not told this until after conflict arose and those same people left the church.

Meantime, I arrived at the church, and everything seemed to be going well until about six months later, and all _____ broke loose. Out of nowhere, these couples came equipped to the staff/pastor-parish relations committee to express all the so-called wrongs I had committed and their justification for my removal. It was apparent they had strategized from my arrival and had planned for this encounter.

Their accusations were unfounded, exaggerated and unadulterated lies, so much so that the committee could see that without me even defending myself. When these couples saw they could not bully the committee to take a stance against me, they all left the church.

I am happy to report that after their exit, I did not experience any more episodes of racism at that appointment.

Whitely-Fields is the author of "Pioneer Black Clergywomen: Stories of Black Clergywomen of The United Methodist Church 1974-2016," published by WestBow Press. She is a retired pastor, having led churches in Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania; a former director of missions outreach in the Western Pennsylvania Conference; the founder of four nonprofit corporations; and a former associate dean and adjunct faculty member at United Theological Seminary. She also holds a doctorate in formative spirituality as well as three master's degrees and an equivalent doctorate of dental medicine.

Cicadas show up for church, testing clergy



By Sam Hodges
June 14, 2021 | UM News

Brood X cicadas are currently a common sight and sound on the grounds of Trinity United Methodist Church, in Germantown, Maryland. The church is in the background. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Bonnie Scott.

The Rev. Bonnie Scott recently preached an online sermon titled "The Cicadas Are Humming." She did it in the style of spoken-word poetry, and she included the sound of cicadas in the background.

Asked what technology she drew on for the special effect, Scott — pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Germantown, Maryland — replied that she hadn't used any.

"I just opened the window," she said.

This is a Brood X cicadas year, meaning billions of the red-eyed, flying insects have noisily emerged in parts of 15 states and the District of Columbia, after spending 17 years underground.

United Methodist clergy are finding inspiration in this miracle of nature. They're also having to cope.

The Rev. Ashley Allen, pastor of Oakton United Methodist Church in Oakton, Virginia, retreated inside with some parishioners from an outdoor gathering where cicadas were nearly overwhelming in their buzzing and flying around.

In the church narthex, she removed a cicada that had come inside with an older parishioner, hopping from his shirt to his face.

"I told him to close his eyes so I could get it off quick and get it back outside," she said.

The Rev. Bonnie Scott is intrigued by Brood X cicadas, to the point of preaching a sermon inspired by their life history. Scott is pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church in Germantown, Maryland. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Bonnie Scott.



Though they look somewhat like locusts of Bible fame, cicadas are different anatomically in key ways. They fly but don't really swarm, as do locusts. And they don't decimate crops.

Once above ground, cicadas drop their shells, form wings and search for landing places on hardwood trees or shrubs. The males' mating calls account for the shrill sound.

In their few days above ground, the adults mate and the females lay eggs on leaves. The hatched cicadas chew through branches that fall and carry them to the ground for the cycle to begin again.

There are many cicada species, but only a few are periodical cicadas, emerging after 13 or 17 years. Brood X — the X is the Roman numeral for 10 — is one of the largest, with the Baltimore-Washington area as its epicenter.

In Washington, on June 8, the charter plane set to carry journalists to Europe to cover President Biden's visit there had its engines clogged by cicadas. Another plane had to be found.

Last year's Brood IX emergence coincided with United Methodist churches moving to drive-in and other outdoor services because of the pandemic. The Rev. Jon Woodburn, then pastor of Oakland United Methodist Church in Dry Fork, Virginia, remembers sound technicians turning up the volume because of competition from cicadas.

"Not only was it loud, those little suckers would bomb worship leadership and fly into people's cars," said Woodburn, now serving a church on the Virginia coast.

As with the general population, United Methodist clergy vary in their feelings about cicadas.

The Rev. Jennifer Smith Walz, lead pastor of Princeton United Methodist Church in Princeton, New Jersey, is fascinated. She has been taking photos of the Brood X cicadas, and measuring their sound.

"I was outside getting lunch a little bit ago and on my Apple Watch, the decibel reading went up to 91," she said.

That's lawn-mower loud.



By the billions, Brood X cicadas have emerged in recent weeks in 15 states and the District of Columbia, disrupting various activities including outdoor worship services. Photo courtesy of Professor Gene Kritsky, Mount St. Joseph University.

Smith Walz recently used cicadas as the subject for a children's message. She finds theology in entomology, including the need for creation care. Some parts of Princeton, she notes, are void of the sound of cicadas, because the ground they would emerge from has been paved.

While a cicadas fan, Smith Walz is a bit concerned that they will drown out and gross out people at her church's upcoming Juneteenth cookout.

"I didn't know we were going to have to make cicada-contingency plans," she said.

Scott, the Germantown pastor, has already called off an outdoor service because of cicadas.

But she, too, is entranced by them, as evidenced by her decision to preach a sermon about how they offer what she calls a "beautiful interruption" in climate-controlled human lives.

"It reminds us there's no way to keep the outside out and the inside in," Scott said by phone. "I wanted to draw a parallel to the way Christ enters our world."

The Rev. Patricia Allen, senior pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Kensington, Maryland, drew on cicadas for a weekday online devotional.

Allen called her talk "The Dreaded Cicada." She shared with her church how, 17 years ago, she was driving through Baltimore with the windows down when a cicada landed on her dashboard.

"I do know they are God's creation, but I also believe God created ... me and those critters to not inhabit the same space," she said.

Allen advised drawing on God's help in confronting fears.

"We have to make a decision as to whether we're going to face our cicadas," she said in the devotional.

Cicadas have lately been a major topic of conversation at Fairlington United Methodist Church in Alexandria, Virginia.

The Rev. Janine Howard noted that staff and members are still sharing a photo of a model church created 17 years ago by a boy in the congregation, Jonathan Dooley, who used Popsicle sticks for pews and cicada

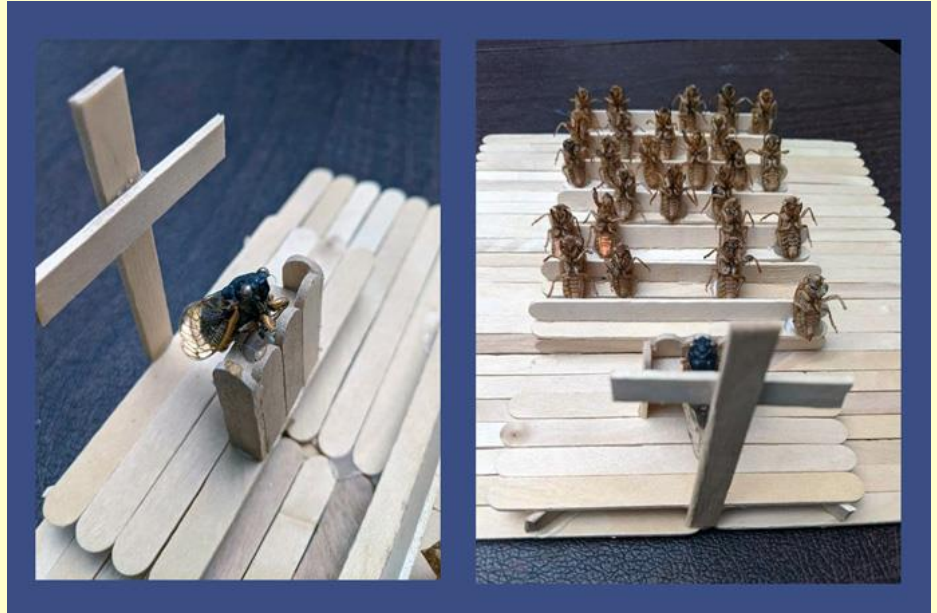
carcasses for people. He gave the cicada church as a present to the departing pastor, the Rev. Drema McAllister-Wilson, whose tenure extended back another 17 years.

If there's a pastor who is wistful about cicadas, it's the Rev. Barbara Miner, associate pastor at Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon, Virginia.

Seventeen years ago, her daughter was married in a backyard ceremony, with a lot of uninvited guests.

"We had to pick cicadas out of her veil," Miner said. "The bridesmaids would run screaming. We've got these great pictures of people trying to look happy and natural and, in fact, they're terrified."

Staff and members of Fairlington United Methodist Church, in Alexandria, Va., cherish photos of a model church made by a boy in the congregation 17 years ago during the last Brood X cicadas emergence. He used cicada husks and Popsicle sticks. Photos courtesy of the Rev. Janine Howard.



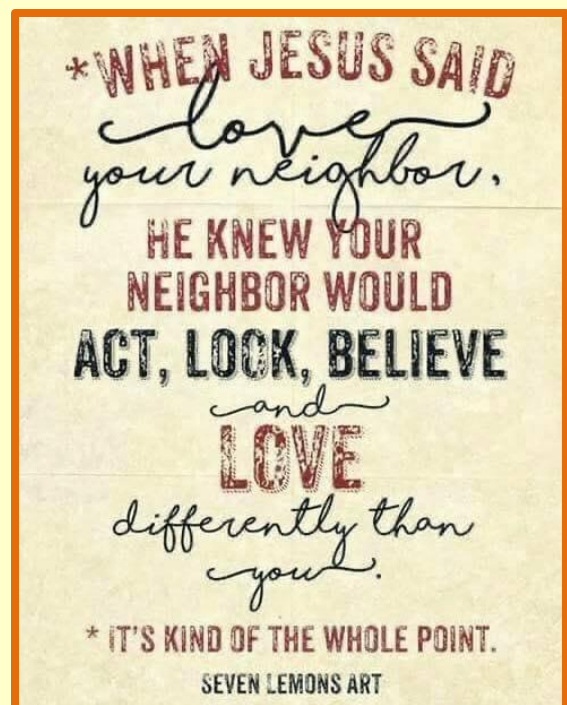
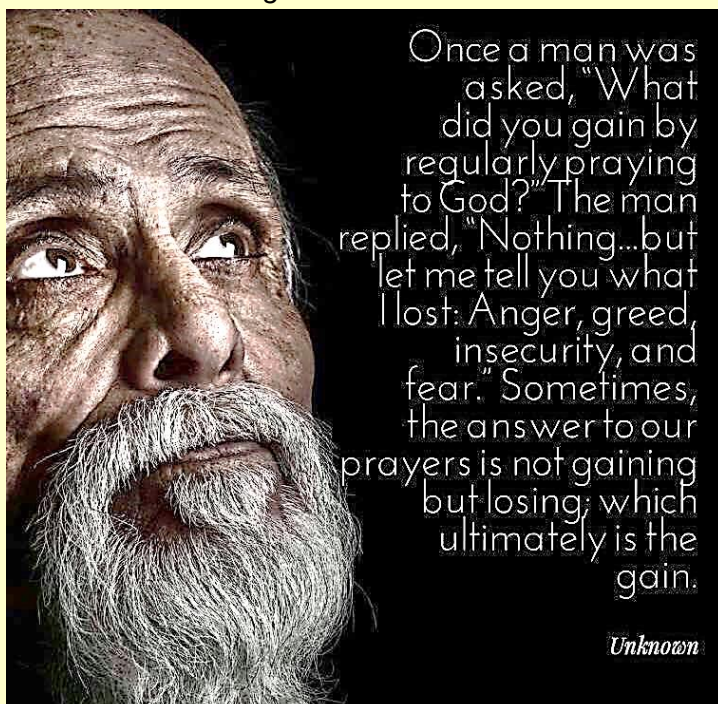
Miner has used this Brood X cicada season to reflect on all that's happened since the last one, including her daughter having had two children, and she and her daughter both having lost family members and close friends.

"It gives you this opportunity to look back at 17 years and realize how short that time is, and yet how much has changed," she said.

Miner is sentimental, but only to a point. She noted that cicada husks have been piling up outside the entry to Floris United Methodist.

"Our facilities guy had to get the leaf blower."

Hodges is a Dallas-based writer for United Methodist News. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

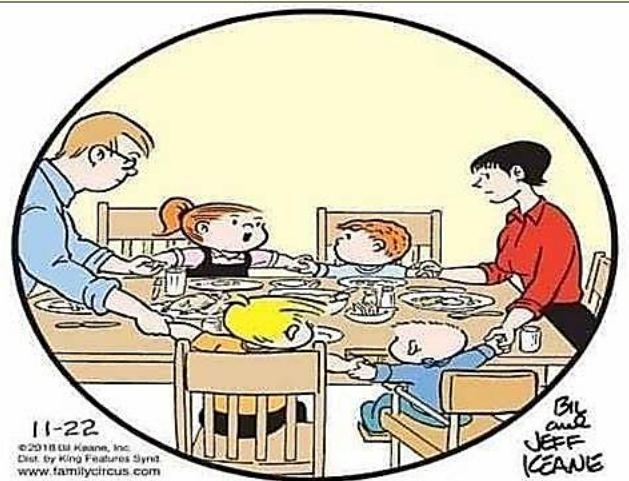


Quiz Answers – Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

1. Trampled under foot. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6 and 7) contains the heart of Jesus' moral and ethical teachings. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49) is a condensed version of the same material. Matthew 5:13. Salt preserves food and gives it flavor. Similarly, believers can make a positive difference in the world and protect it from corruption by evil. A believer who loses the will to be a force for good is useless, like salt which has lost its taste.
2. Light. Matthew 5:14. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12). We should model our lives on Christ so as to reflect that light to a world in spiritual darkness.
3. Are angry with. Matthew 5:21-22. Obedience to God involves more than just following a set of rules. It is our attitudes that reveal our true character. We must be willing to forgive other people, just as God is willing to forgive us for our sins (Matthew 6:14-15). More often than not, our angry feelings are based on a misinterpretation of what someone said or did. Holding a grudge can cloud our judgment and may lead us to an act of revenge that can never be undone.
4. Do not resist an evildoer. Matthew 5:38-39 The Old Testament rule was that retaliation must be limited to equal injury for a wrong done. But Jesus said not to retaliate or take any revenge at all. Instead, we must try to win over our enemies with love and kindness. Retaliation serves only to escalate a conflict, but a kind response can often calm a tense situation.
5. Children of your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:43-45. There is no Bible verse that says, "Hate your enemies," but that was a common attitude at the time of Jesus, just as it is today. But, Jesus said we should show love and kindness for all people, just as God does. In His Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made it clear that we should treat all people of the world as our neighbors.
6. Wealth. Matthew 6:24. We must choose between a life of devotion to God or a life pursuing wealth and other worldly things. We cannot have it both ways. Instead of "wealth," the King James version uses the word mammon, a transliteration of an Aramaic word meaning wealth, riches, or earthly goods.
7. Fruits. Matthew 7:15-20. Jesus warns us to beware of false teachers who would lead us astray. We should judge any religious leader by his or her deeds, not by his or her claims, credentials or charisma. Just as thorn bushes do not produce grapes, false teachers do not produce good works. False teachers may skillfully preach a doctrine filled with prejudice, hatred, greed and covetous desire which is distorted to sound as if those things were virtuous. False teachers may promise us blessings if we give them money, while, in reality, they are just making themselves rich.
8. Does the will of my Father in heaven. Matthew 7:21-23. God is not fooled by empty talk, empty belief or mere profession of Christian faith. We cannot count ourselves among the saved unless we are committed to obedience to God.

Prayer is sitting in the
silence until it silences us,
choosing gratitude until
we are grateful, and praising
God until we ourselves are
an act of praise.

Richard Rohr



11-22
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**"We hafta hold hands while we say
grace so nobody gets a head start
eating. Right, Mommy?"**

It was a sad
and
disappointing day
when I discovered my
Universal Remote Control
did not,
in fact,
control the Universe.

(Not even remotely.)

Churches that become passionate
about people outside their walls will
be far more effective than churches
that are passionate only about keeping
the few people they have inside their
walls.

Carey Nieuwhof

Remember to turn
everything off at least once
a week, including your brain.
Then sit somewhere quiet
and just chill out.

—UNKNOWN

@PeacefulMind
PeacefulLife



Right answers matter.

Discovering and telling the truth matters.

Good theology matters.

The problem is that, from the perspective of Jesus, right answers aren't enough. Jesus did not say to the expert in the law, "You have given the right answer. Good for you! Way to go! High five!"

Rather, Jesus said, "You have given the right answer; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28).

Mark D. Roberts