

## Daily Proceedings

# Great Plains Annual Conference Younes Conference Center North Thursday, June 6, 2024

### Opening Worship — 2 p.m.

Worship opened with the prelude “Great is Thy Faithfulness” with Sarah Vanderberger at the piano. Rev. Maddie Johnson, Doing Justice Initiative contractor, welcomed the body followed by the singing of “Are We Yet Alive” with vocalists Joye VanTrimmell, Cecilia Jensen, and April Gregory. Bishop Wilson gave the greeting and Micah Corps interns led the Call to Worship and Prayer.

Rev. Jane Langat led the Litany for Laments and the congregation sang “Were You There,” UMH #288. Rev. Russell Anderson led the Lament for Lost Land and Micah Corps interns facilitated the Lament for Connections Lost Through Disaffiliation.

The Scripture reading was 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 from The Message translation. Bishop Wilson shared the Proclamation and Rev. Hollie Tapley invited the body to give to the Great Plains Disaster Relief Fund.

The Commemoration portion of the service honored the memories of those clergy, spouses, and children who had died in the previous year. Vocalists sang “Waters of Babylon” with the congregational body joining. Bishop Wilson presided over the communion table and the members sang “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love.” Bishop Wilson gave the Benediction and Scott Brewer shared announcements as worship ended.

### PM session

Bishop Wilson opened the 2024 Great Plains Annual Conference at 3:38pm. He welcomed the body and recognized the

youth and young adults in attendance. Jesi Lipp, parliamentarian, provided instructions for speaking at the microphone. Secretary Lori Richey presented the Enabling Motions as follows:

1. The Standing Rules, as proposed and printed in the Conference workbook addendum on pages 4-7, be adopted and govern our process during this session.
2. The bar of the Annual Conference shall include all lay and clergy members of the Great Plains Annual Conference who are registered members of this session and present in the Silver ballroom during all voting procedures. Eligibility to vote on individual matters shall be aligned with the criteria printed in the 2024 Conference Workbook.
3. The official Roll Call of the Annual Conference will be taken according to the nametags picked up from the registration table.
4. The Secretarial team shall include Ben Hanne, Michelle Byerly, Truman Lauck, and Venedith Vargas.

Bishop Wilson called for a voice vote and there was no discussion.

**Motion approved.**

## Episcopal report

**Rev. Maria Campbell**

Rev. Maria Campbell, Heritage UMC in Overland Park, KS and chair of the Episcopacy Committee, presented the Episcopal report. She recognized the members of the Episcopacy committee for their work in supporting Bishop David Wilson.

## Episcopal Address

**Bishop David Wilson**

Bishop Wilson presented the Episcopal address and encouraged the body by sharing the image of our creating not a

melting pot, but a beautifully tossed salad together as each person brings their unique flavor to the larger whole. Bishop Wilson recognized many conference leaders including General and Jurisdictional conference delegates, retiring district superintendents, conference staff, and many others. He recognized work well done and admonished the attendees to continue the good work in the days ahead, before closing with a word from the Winnebago Tribe.

## Laity Address

### **Lisa Maupin, Lay Leader**

In her laity address, Lisa Maupin called all laity to be those who live into faith and not certainty, and to keep showing up as courageous leaders. She referenced YouTube content creator Rachel Griffin-Accurso and motivational speaker Brene Brown as she talked about courage and leadership.

Bishop Wilson introduced Associate Lay Leaders Randall Hodgkinson and Keith Olsen, and then invited Char Pyla and Emma Young to present the Young People's Address.

## Young People's Address

### **Char Pyle and Emma Yeon**

In a first, Young People's Address at the Great Plains Annual Conference, Char and Emma shared current language and phrases popular with Gen Z. They talked about being teenagers during the Covid pandemic and how that isolation shaped their current attitudes towards their faith. Emma named that youth events don't have to be "big" — they can be soul-filling as long as genuine, deep relationships are built and nurtured. Char shared about the Racial Justice encounter they attended in Oklahoma and the lasting impact it made. Both named a sense of hope and positive change in the church today.

Rev. Hollie Tapley oriented the body to safety awareness in the venue and recognized the Disaster Response team. Bishop Wilson dismissed the body at 4:50pm.

## Laity Session

Thursday, 6/6/2024 – 5:03pm

Conference Lay Leader Lisa Maupin welcomed everyone to the Laity Session and shared that the format of the session would be a panel discussion led by delegates to past years' General Conferences. Lisa introduced the panel. Randall Hodgkinson, associate lay leader. Jesi Lipp, parliamentarian. Esther Hay, chair of nominations. Oliver Green, former conference lay leader and delegate to General Conference. Keith Olsen, associate lay leader. Shayla Jordan, lay person who has served in multiple delegations. The panel shared their perspectives on the changes coming from General Conference actions and how those affect laity in local churches.

Lisa invited the laity who submitted forms to be candidates for election to the Jurisdictional conference to introduce themselves. Two write-in candidates were nominated, Carly Redding and Jay Baker.

Bishop Wilson closed the laity session with prayer at 5:56pm.

## Clergy Session

Thursday, June 6, 2024, 4:59 p.m.

Bishop David Wilson called the Clergy Session to order and welcomed everyone to the gathering. He expressed his thanks for the work for the Board of Ordained Ministry and Rev. Andrew Conard, Chair, was recognized to offer opening remarks. Bishop Wilson reminded the body of the various voting and voice rights for this session.

Members of the board led clergy through the Business of the Annual Conference. All items were approved as printed in the 2024 Business of the Annual Conference.

The names of those clergy who had died in the past year were read and Bishop Wilson closed the session with prayer.

## Service of Commemoration & Baptism

Thursday, June 6, 2024 – 7 p.m.

Worship opened with the prelude “Compassion,” written by Jason W. King and played by Mirim Kim and Colleen Nanstile. Sheka Olenga, Micah Corps coordinator, welcomed the body followed by the singing of “The Summons” (FWS 2130). Bishop Wilson gave the greeting and led the body in Prayer.

Gretchen Ott and Zachariah Clark led the preparation for the ritual of remembering and Sheka Olenga invited the congregation to join the Prayer of Thanksgiving. The Commemoration portion of the service honored the memories of those clergy, spouses, and children who had died in the previous year. Malory Skrabanek and Jacob McCarty joined Gretchen Ott and Zachariah Clark in the reading of names. Between sections of names, hymns sung were “Breathe on Me Breath of God” (UMH420), “In Christ Alone” (W&S 3105). Jacob McCarty read Psalms 23 and the body prayed The Lord’s Prayer.

Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede introduced the offering for the Lydia Patterson Institute and the Offertory hymn was “As the Deer,” led by Mary George, Colleen Nanstile, and Gaye McShea of Kearney First UMC. The commemoration portion of the service closed with the Doxology.

Bishop Wilson then led the body in the Baptismal Liturgy. Rev. Jenny Collins presented the three children for baptism – Ryan Banseok Lee and Chloe Yerin Lee, children of Kyuwook Lee and Ji Syun Lee, and Teo You, child of Seungli You and Yungjun Lee. Following the Baptisms, the congregation sang “Let All Things Now Living” (TFWS 2008) and Bishop Wilson gave the Benediction. The Postlude was “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder,” arranged by Mark Hayes, with musician Mirim Kim.

# Great Plains Annual Conference

## Younes Conference Center North

### Friday, June 7, 2024

#### AM Session

Bishop Wilson called the session to order at 9:03 a.m., and Scott Brewer gave voting instructions for five lay delegates to Jurisdictional Conference. These lay delegates are necessary to restore the correct number following resignations that had occurred since 2019. Paper ballots were distributed and collected by the tellers.

#### General Conference Delegation report

##### **Rev. Adam Hamilton**

Rev. Adam Hamilton led the initial report. He spoke about his experiences of prior conferences and celebrated this conference as a “new day, awesome and holy.” He spoke about the history of restrictive language around LGBTQ communities from 1972-2019. He named that the language in the Book of Discipline has now changed so that we can be more inclusive to communities and “we have gone back to the future.” Rev. Hamilton celebrated the work of our delegation and noted that we are seen as a leading conference around the world.

Rev. Kalaba Chali and Rev. Mark Holland gave a report about revisions to the Social Principles, which included a task force and much feedback that was considered as the new document was created.

Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede and Jesi Lipp spoke about the harmful language that was removed from the Book of Discipline at the 2024 General Conference, with an emphasis that now energy can be focused on mission and ministry of the church.

Rev. Anne Gatobu and Rev. David Livingston spoke about regionalization efforts, which involve restructuring the denomination around organizing, strategizing, and contextualizing the work of the church while holding together shared doctrinal values and what it means to be United Methodist.

Rev. Livingston shared the process for ratifying these changes, which involves constitutional amendments. These must be passed in Annual Conferences by 2/3 vote and it will take over a year to receive all votes. We are an active part of this process. At Annual Conference next year, it will be particularly important for churches to be represented and voting members to be present. Once approved, the implementation process begins at 2028 General Conference unless there is a special called session in 2026.

Rev. Ashley Prescott Barlow-Thompson and Rev. Kurt Cooper shared about the changes in sacramental rites for Deacons. All deacons will have sacramental authority in their ministry settings as of January 1, 2025, rather than at the discretion of the bishop.

Scott Brewer and Rev. Zach Anderson spoke about impacts of disaffiliation on budgets and spoke about the work of GCFA and changes to the pension plan. Scott Brewer expressed a hope for the time to do rebuilding and connection to the local church. Rev. Anderson spoke about his perspective as treasurer for the General Commission on Race and Religion. A reduction of budget means a reduction of staff and ability to do ministry but gives an opportunity to get creative and work more collaboratively and with less overhead. He asked for continued prayers for those who are impacted by these changes.

Lisa Maupin and Rev. Amy Lippoldt shared about impacts on bishops across the denomination and on districting.

Rev. Eduardo Bousson shared final thoughts and experiences around General Conference. He shared thoughts from Francis Asbury about divisions and the need to focus on the work of mission and ministry and prayer over those divisions. It's time

for us to embody the spirit of Christ and to listen to the Holy Spirit. Rev. Bousson closed us in prayer for unity.

The session adjourned for a break at 10:18am.

After break, Bishop Wilson called the session back and shared a prayer request for Nora and Laney Hinn, twin granddaughters of Kathy Murphy Buschkoetter who is the Prairie Rivers district lay leader. Rev. Adam Hamilton offered a prayer.

## General Conference Delegation Q&A

### **Rev. Adam Hamilton**

Adam Hamilton welcomed Oliver Green to the stage to recognize him for his leadership at many General Conferences. Oliver expressed that it has been an honor to attend six General Conferences and that this conference was energizing in a way that others had not been. He also recognized the many interpreters who attended the General Conference from the Great Plains Conference.

Rev. Hamilton answered a question about whether clergy will be required to perform same-sex weddings. He answered that no pastor will be required to perform a same-sex wedding, and no pastor will be punished for choosing to marry or denying to marry a couple. Congregations get to decide whether or not you are going to perform same-sex meetings in your church building. Adam invited everyone to have a conversation with your church on how your church feels about hosting same-sex marriages.

Adam finished the Q&A section by saying how much of a blessing it is to be in the Great Plains Conference.

## Laity ballot results

Bishop Wilson thanked the eight delegates who ran for lay jurisdictional delegates. All five positions were filled on the first ballot with the following results:

- Liz Collins — 320
- Char Pyle — 320
- Mary L Brooks — 303
- Jim Oliver — 276
- Ben Jones — 242

Bishop Wilson prayed over all the clergy and laity members selected for Jurisdictional Conference.

Rev. Mark Holland gave recognition to members of the delegation who were not present. Rev. Nathan Stanton and Rev. Junius Dotson passed away since their election in 2019, and Cheryl Jefferson Bell was absent due to an illness in her family.

## Lydia Patterson Institute

**Dr. Carla Cardoza, President**

Bishop Wilson welcomed the president of the Lydia Patterson Institute, Dr. Carla Cardoza, to give a report on LPI. Every year LPI serves 240+ students in religious-based education. Last week, 100% of the seniors graduated on time and 98% of them were accepted to college. The other 2% are going to the armed forces or to the workforce.

Despite great achievements, LPI is facing financial adversities due to rising costs. She mentioned ways to support the school- 1) visit the school 2) monetary donations 3) participate in events on social media.

## Personnel Committee report

**Rev. David Livingston**

Rev. Livingston gave the report and briefed the conference on the two items requiring action, found on pages 18-19 in the pre-conference workbook.

VOTE: Motion to adopt a 3% increase in minimum compensation in each clergy status category.

Bishop Wilson called for a voice vote. There was no discussion.

**Motion Approved**

**VOTE:** Motion to adopt a policy that provides consistency and fairness in the treatment of housing across the conference for all appointments where churches have a parsonage and a housing allowance is not provided.

Bishop Wilson called for a voice vote. There was no discussion.

### **Motion Approved**

## **Council on Finance and Administration report**

**Rev. Amy Lippoldt**

Bishop Wilson recognized Rev. Amy Lippoldt to introduce the 2025 budget. She provided an update about budget reserves and indicated that the body would vote tomorrow on guidelines that will help the committee know when and how to spend out of that fund. A search is underway for a new conference treasurer to replace Scott Brewer who is now the Executive Director of the conference. Details were shared about the proposed budget.

## **Kansas Methodist Foundation**

**Rev. Dr. Dustin Petz**

Rev. Dr. Dustin Petz recognized the 60-year anniversary of the Kansas Methodist Foundation. He invited the Board and staff to come to the front for recognition, including Ali Foster, Tyler Curtis, and Gloria Markus.

## **Nebraska United Methodist Foundation**

**Kristine Roberts**

Kristine Roberts, executive director, recognized Marci Logsdon, Christy Bousquet, and Sharon Schmidt for their work. She shared that \$2.9 million had been distributed to churches and ministries.

Scott Brewer gave announcements before the lunch break, and he introduced Paul Younes, owner of the Younes Center venue. The session adjourned at 11:54 am.

## Friday, June 7, 2024

### PM Session

Bishop Wilson began the session at 1:30pm and introduced associate lay leader Keith Olsen on the stage. He then invited Dr. Elizabeth Frombgen, president of Southwestern College to greet the annual conference. Dr Frombgen shared about the college and gratitude for the support of the conference. She shared about the strategic plan as a United Methodist college to equip students to go out and serve the community.

### Archives and History

#### Doris Wills

Doris Wills, committee Chair, gave the Archives and History report and recognized the following churches who celebrated 100, 125, and 150 years of service in 2024:

- Auburn (Methodist Episcopal), Missouri River District, Auburn NE (150 years)
- Grace UMC, Prairie Rivers District, Boelus NE (125 years)
- First (Methodist Episcopal), Parsons District, Chanute, KS (125 years)
- Colony, Five Rivers District, Colony KS (150 years)
- Saint Paul UMC, Blue River District, Elmwood NE (150 years)
- Eudora UMC, Five Rivers District, Eudora KS (155 years)
- Franklin UMC, Gateway District, Franklin NE (150 years)
- Mankato (Harmony UMC), Salina District, Mankato KS (150 years)
- Milligan UMC, Prairie Rivers District, Milligan NE (100 years)
- Mulvane UMC, Wichita East District, Mulvane KS (150 years)
- Phillipsburg UMC, Hays District, Phillipsburg KS (150 years)
- Powhattan UMC, Topeka District, Powhattan KS (150 years)
- Republican City UMC, Gateway District, Republican City NE (150 years)

## Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR)

Peter Karanja, Corelle Leeper, and Janice Elmore presented the report for the Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Their official purpose is to call the UMC to repentance, to build God's church as a community of faith, to declare the traditions and stories of the bible in Black culture, to reclaim the Black community, and to liberate all people from racism and injustice everywhere. They spoke of their work of raising prophetic leaders which will advocate for the needs of Black people in the United Methodist Church. They expressed appreciation to the bishop for scheduling meetings with BMCR over the previous year to address their critical work.

## Global Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)

**Rev. David Martinez**

This agency walks alongside people discerning, learning, and leading in the call God places on their lives. GBHEM has worked to establish regional leadership education and development hubs called LEAD Hubs that connect the UMC with pan-Methodist and ecumenical partners around the world. He celebrated the connections to schools, colleges, and seminaries around the world as well as the scholarship program.

Board of Ordained Ministry report Rev. Andrew Conard and Rev. Karen Jeffcoat

Rev. Andrew Conard shared about the role of the Board to nurture the gifts of those who seek license or ordination for ministry. He invited those working with BOM, DCOM, and others to be recognized and then honored those pastors with 10-, 20-, 30-, and 40-year milestones of service.

Rev. Berniece Ludlum recognized Course of Study graduates- JoEllen Axthelm, Michelle Chestnut, Richard Chrisman, Connie Edgerton, and Jason Gant.

Rev. Conard recognized the work of the conference registrar, Rev. Karen Jeffcoat, who supports candidates through various

credential stages.

Rev. Jeffcoat recognized those to be commissioned as provisional members: Robert Mark Fillmore, Jacques Kazemb Kambol, Kyuwook Lee, Jed T. Linder, Jessica Cecile Lovell, Aresene Lumami, Joohyun Moon, Joshua D. Seifert, Edison De-Conti Toe, and Yolanda White-Oliver.

Those being received into full membership either after ordination or after recognition of the ordination in another tradition:

Deacon: Allyson Nicole Drummond

Elders: Mandy Loure Barkhaus, Caitlin Bentzinger, Marcee Binder, Ho Kyoung “Peter” Choi, Wesley Neil Gately-Price, Elizabeth Ellen Graverholt, Cameron Charles Miller, Daniel Adam Reffner, Susan Nkatha Baariu Murithi, Sketer Makena Riungu, Andrea Lynn Roth, Jenifer Coleman Schultz, and Lauren Baker Thomas.

Bishop Wilson asked the historical questions of the candidates for full membership.

Rev. Jeffcoat recognized those transferring in from other UM conferences or denominations:

- Elmer Armijo, Rio Texas Conference, elder
- Dennis “Taud” Boatman, Oklahoma Conference, elder
- Nancy Liston, Missouri Conference, retired elder
- Angela McCarty, Desert Southwest Conference, elder
- Peter Karanja, Kenya-Ethiopia Conference, deacon

Rev. Conard introduced Rev. Changsu Kim as the next chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry and recognized committee members coming on and going off of their terms of service.

Rev Kim recognized Margaret Johnson who has served on the executive committee and chair of the competency team as well as lay member of BOM, Sandy Simmons. He shared about his experiences in life and ministry, recognized Rev. Andrew Conard for his work through pandemic and disaffiliations and his legacy of shaping the culture of the board to be inclusive, faithful, and whole.

## Pension and Health Benefits report

**Mike Shockley**

Mike Shockley presented the Pension and Health Benefits report and moved the adoption of the resolution on Rental/Housing/Household Expense Allowance presented on pages 24-26 of the conference workbook.

There was no discussion and Bishop Wilson called for a vote.

**VOTE:** To adopt the resolutions presented on pages 24-26 of the conference workbook

### **Motion Approved**

Scott Brewer thanked Mike for his work as he goes off the Board.

After announcements, Rev. Amy Seifert offered special music as the body recognized the 2024 Retirees from their service in ministry in the Great Plains conference. Those celebrated were: Revs. Trudy Kenyon Anderson, Linda Bolz, Thomas Brady, Maria Campbell, Lance Carrithers, Cathy Cole, Jaime Farias, Cindy Karges, Kelly Karges, Thomas Lucas, Michael Marion, Betty Jo Mead, Jerre Nolte, Richard Randolph, Lynn Sifrit, David Brian Smith, Donald "Rick" Souter, Dan Spearow, Sergio Tristan, Lee Wigert, and Paul Wilke.

The session adjourned at approximately 3:15pm for a break.

## Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions were held on the following topics:

1. Camps
2. Archives and History
3. Disaster Response/VIM
4. United Methodist Men
5. Campus Ministries
6. What's Next Discernment Guide

7. Intergenerational Discipleship
8. Clergy Excellence
9. Lay Servant Ministries
10. Board of Pension & Health Benefits
11. United Women in Faith
12. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Task Force

## Retirement Recognition Celebration

Friday, June 7, 2024

Worship opened with special music by Rev. Amy Seifert. Rev. Lee Johnson of the Great Plains Association of Retired Clergy and Spouses (GPARCS) greeted the body and the gathered people sang "For All the Saints." Rev. Kelly Karges gave the Opening Prayer and Micah 6:6-8 was read by Rev. Cindy Karges.

Bishop Wilson recognized the Retirees and led a call and response prayer. The congregation sang "Bless Be the Tie." Bishop Wilson dismissed the service with a blessing.

# Great Plains Annual Conference Younes Conference Center North Saturday, June 8, 2024

## AM Session

Morning worship was provided by the youth of the Great Plains conference, with Youth President Emma Yeon providing the message.

Bishop Wilson called the session to order at 9:23 a.m. with thanks to the youth members for their powerful opening worship and Rev. Melissa Gepford for her work with the youth. Bishop Wilson recognized Rev. Charlotte Abrams to offer a prayer for the following concerns – Lindsay Oliver, who died after a battle with cancer, and Vera Maydew, aunt of Rev. Daniel Norwood, who passed away the night before.

Bishop Wilson invited Emma Yeon, youth president, to join him at the table for the session.

## Districting Task Force report

### **Lisa Maupin and Scott Brewer**

Bishop Wilson recognized Lisa Maupin, conference lay leader, and Scott Brewer to present the report of the Districting Committee. Lisa Maupin recognized the members of the committee and Scott Brewer presented the details of the report, found on pages 8-21 in the Workbook Addendum. He recognized and thanked Ben Jones, lay member from Pratt, KS and Jurisdictional lay delegate for his assistance in working on the specifics of district boundaries.

Lisa Maupin closed the presentation and offered the work of the Districting Committee to the annual conference for approval.

Steve Kirkeby, lay member from Stilwell UMC, rose for a question about administrative structure. Phil Sloat, clergy from Broken Bow UMC, rose for a question about the geographic size of the two Western districts and the practicality of meeting for their district needs.

With no further discussion, Bishop Wilson asked for a vote by a show of hands.

**VOTE:** To adopt the recommendations given by the Districting Committee for reducing and restructuring the districts of the Great Plains conference.

### **Motion Adopted**

Bishop Wilson asked the Extended Cabinet to come to the stage for recognition. The members introduced themselves. Bishop Wilson invited Scott Brewer forward for announcements before the morning break and Rev. Neil Gately assisted with special music.

Following the break, Bishop Wilson recognized Brayden Senecal, youth member from McPherson First UMC, as he joined the Bishop at the front table.

Bishop Wilson also recognized Torrey Gerdes and Dave Sealy, Conference Chancellors, for all of their help in this last season of disaffiliation.

## **Congregational Excellence report**

**Rev. Jeff Clinger**

Rev. Jeff Clinger thanked members of the team which sought to support those affected by disaffiliations. He invited Jose Olivas, lay member Ulysses, KS and Rev. Willy Banza, clergy, Ulysses to come and share about their experience with their season after disaffiliations. Rev. Banza thanked Rev. Gideon Achi, Rev. Kalaba Chali and others for all of their help in the process.

Susanne Wendorff, Callaway UMC, was invited to share her and her church's experience with the disaffiliations. She thanked Rev. Seungli You, Rev. Matt Fowler and the people of Kearney First, and Rev. Cindy Karges for their assistance. Rev. Clinger thanked the body for their support in this challenging process. He invited the members of the Congregational Excellence Team to join him on stage and noted that between June 2023 and April 2024, \$1.2 million in grant money was sent out to local churches.

Rev. Nicole Conard came forward to present the winner of the Francis Asbury Award to Rev. Lora Andrews. Bishop Wilson bestowed the award.

Rev. Clinger invited Rev. Curt Magelky, chair of GP New Church Development and Rev. Dr. Gerald Liu to present information about new church development. Rev. Magelky invited Pastor Joseph Ogole to the stage to present him with the "Move the Chains" award in honor of the late Rev. Nathan Stanton. Rev. Dr. Gerald Liu thanked Alan Gager, Corey Reeves and Dennis Ackerman as they finish their time on NCD. The New Church Development Fellows are Changyun Kim, Diana Fajardo and Lora Andrews.

Rev. Jeff Clinger then invited Chris Wilterdink, Director of Young People's Ministries at Discipleship Ministries, to offer greetings and to award a "One Matters Discipleship" Award. The receiving church is awarded a plaque and \$1,000. Rev. Michael Ketchens of the Russell Trinity UMC was this year's recipient. Despite having 0 professions of faith in 2022, in 2023 they had 12 professions of faith and 5 baptisms.

Harry Denman Evangelism Awards were awarded to:

- Clergy — Rev. Juan Carlos Veloso
- Laity — Erin Sams - Aurora, NE
- Youth — Landon Shanahan, Wahoo 1st UMC, Nebraska

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion report

**Rev. Dr. Eduardo Bousson**

Bishop Wilson invited Rev. Dr. Eduardo Bousson, Director: Schools, Colleges, And Universities and chairperson of the DEI Committee of the Great Plains Annual Conference to present information about the DEI team and their work.

Scott Brewer gave announcements before the lunch break. Before adjourning the session, there was an Apology to Victims & Survivors of Sexual Misconduct in the United Methodist Church.

Bishop Wilson invited Rev. Jenny Collins, the Dean of the Cabinet, and Rev. Andrew Conard, the outgoing Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry to lead a litany of lament and confession.

## PM Session

The afternoon session of the Great Plains Annual Conference was called to order by Bishop David Wilson at 1:47 p.m. Youth delegate Ian Kapundu from Cairo UMC joined Bishop Wilson at the table on the stage.

## Clergy Excellence report

**Rev. Kathy Williams**

Rev. Williams introduced the Clergy Excellence team and described a new initiative focused on pastoral transitions. Rev. Karen Jeffcoat was invited to speak about the Clergy Excellence covenant, including Boundary Training and Credentialing. Rev. Jane Langat spoke about diversity and presented Bishop Wilson with a club that is traditionally given to a great leader as a form of thanks.

Bishop Wilson recognized associate lay leader Randall Hodgkinson, who was seated with him at the head table.

## Mercy and Justice report

**Rev. Sarah Marsh**

Rev. Marsh recapped the work of the Mercy and Justice team through a “top ten” list, with points ranging from evangelism opportunities to denominational leadership and beyond. She called the members of the team to the stage for recognition. Details were shared about a new DART initiative covering fifteen counties around Salina, KS. Rev. Anne Gahn provided additional remarks.

## Communications report

**Todd Seifert**

Communications director Todd Seifert introduced the communications team members and shared about the new conference website that will launch soon. He reminded the body of [greatplainsumc.church](http://greatplainsumc.church) that is a new way to stream services for your congregation. UMC apparel may be purchased through the store at [www.greatplainsumc.org/gp-store](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/gp-store). An audio time capsule is in the works, with recordings not opened for 25 years. There will be an app launch soon for people to record their answers to the questions “What does the Great Plains conference mean to you?” and “What does it mean to be a United Methodist in the Great Plains conference?” Todd thanked the Kent AV team, the Younes Center AV team, and Melissa Spotts for closed captioning.

## Council on Finance and Administration

**Rev. Amy Lippoldt**

Bishop Wilson invited Rev. Lippoldt to present the 2025 budget for approval. Rev. Troy Bowers, clergy, Meriden UMC, was recognized for a question related to restricted funds and the timeline for the guiding document regarding the reserves.

Rev. Bowers asked if a resolution was in order, and Bishop Wilson ruled that as the current motion was the adoption of the budget, it was not in order at this time.

Bishop Wilson asked for a vote by show of hands for the approval of the 2025 budget.

**Motion approved.**

Following the afternoon break, Bishop Wilson recognized Rev. Amy Lippoldt who shared that following subsequent conversation with Rev. Bowers, the committee will report back regarding the discussion around guiding documents for the use of budget reserves.

### Commissioning of Interns

Bishop Wilson welcomed Destiny Walker, youth delegate, to the table and invited Rev. Maddie Johnson to introduce and commission the Micah Corps interns. She and Rev. Maria Penrod introduced the work of the Micah Corps which focuses on the call in Micah 6:8 to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. They expressed gratitude to host pastors and lay leaders—Pastor Harry Christian at Asbury Mount Olive and lay leaders Gloria Christian and Lester Montgomery, and Pastors Grace Woods, Carissa Miller, and Brad Wheeler at Topeka First UMC with lay leaders Randall Hodgkinson, Emma Turner and Lauren Berzer.

The Micah Corps Coordinator is Sheka Olenga, who is seeking a Master of Philosophy at Loyola Marymount University.

Interns recognized were:

- Gretchen Ott of Woodlawn UMC in Derby, attending KU as secondary education with focus on history and government, and theater.
- Jacob McCarty from Goddard Kansas, home church West Heights, is at KU studying political science, public administration and leadership studies.

Two interns not present but recognized were:

- Zachariah Clark from Olathe, Kansas, attending Nebraska Wesleyan, majoring in philosophy and religion with a minor in Spanish language.
- Mallory Skrabanek from Bryan Texas, attending Texas A and M for a B.S. in social science with a minor in English with plans to be criminal justice attorney.

The interns and coordinator were commissioned and prayed for in their work this summer.

### Annual Conference Planning Team

Rev. Ross Baker, chair of the Sessions Planning team, was invited to recognize those members who oversee planning for Annual Conference. He recognized Debi Nixon, Melinda Harwood, Eduardo Bousson, Jesi Lipp, Hyun Ju Kim, Lisa Maupin, Bob Kahle, Brandy May, Jeremiah Eck, Jason Russell, conference staff, Bishop Wilson, Scott Brewer, Julie Kohr, Todd Seifert, Barb Black, Jeff Clinger, Kathy Williams, He also mentioned the secretarial staff, tellers, Kent AV team, venue staff, and many others. Lori Richey and Melinda Harwood are retiring and were recognized for their work. Bishop Wilson recognized Rev. Baker for his work in leading the Sessions planning team as he completes his term.

### Nominations report

#### **Esther Hay**

Esther Hay and Rev. Andy Frazier gave the nominations report as provided on pages 27-35 of the workbook addendum, with additions and corrections provided in their final report as submitted. Esther recognized Donna VotEAU and Grace Gichuru as part of the nominations team and expressed gratitude for those saying yes to filling needs with the various conference bodies. Those who had served on conference committees were invited to stand and be recognized. Esther also recognized Lisa Maupin, Jeff Clinger, Jeanie Leeper, Scott Brewer,

Heather Hoffman, and Todd Seifert.

Bishop Wilson called for a vote to approve the nominations slate as found in the workbook addendum and as shared in the final report.

**Motion Approved.**

Al Seibert, laity, Saint Paul Benson UMC, raised a question about how the United Methodist Men will fill the vacancy for president, and Bishop Wilson said this was a matter for UMM, not nominations.

## Trustees report

**Rev. Amy Seifert**

Rev. Seifert asked those serving as trustees to stand and be recognized and she shared their work from the previous year, highlighting the completion of the new conference office in Topeka. The Trustees express thanks to Scott Brewer and Sabrina Aubuchon for their assistance in the work of that committee.

## Resolutions

### **Resolution 1: Core Doctrines and Beliefs**

Bishop Wilson recognized Rev. Spenser Johnson of Ord-Sargent to present Resolution 1, "Core Doctrines and Beliefs." Rev. Johnson moved the adoption of the resolution. Seconded.

Rev. Johnson spoke in favor of the resolution and moved to amend by substitution with document distributed to the conference members. Rev. Johnson spoke to the amendment. Al Siebert, laity, Saint Paul Benson asked whether the amendment changes anything we've already been saying. Bishop ruled this as a speech against.

Rev. Adam Hamilton, clergy, Church of the Resurrection,

Leawood, KS, moved to amend the amendment, looking at the second full Whereas paragraph beginning with “Whereas the United Methodist Church” changing to Lordship “of” rather than “in” Jesus Christ, and changing “and holding God’s Holy Word, the Bible as the Inspired Word of God.” to “and holding that Scripture reveals the word of God.” Seconded. Rev. Hamilton spoke to the amendment to the amendment.

Bishop called for vote on amendment to amendment.

**Motion to amend the amendment approved.**

Rev. Neil Gately of Norfolk and Winside, Nebraska moved an amendment to amendment. Seconded. On second line of rationale paragraph after “Articles of Religion”- add “and EUB confessions of faith”

Bob Resnik, laity from Shawnee Heights UMC, Tecumseh, KS, moved to refer to Connecting Council. Seconded.

Rev. David Livingston of Old Mission UMC in Fairway, KS spoke against referral.

Rev. Adam Hamilton of Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS spoke against referral.

Bishop Wilson called for a vote on referring to Connecting Council.

**Motion failed.**

Rev. Dr. Kalaba Chali, clergy, Wichita, KS, called the question on the resolution. Seconded.

Rev. Michael Brown of Nebraska City raised question about whether Rev. Chali had called the question on everything before the body or just the amendment.

Parliamentarian Jesi Lipp clarified that the motion to call the previous question is on all before us and would close debate on all matters including the Gately amendment to amendment, the substitution amendment, and the resolution. We would vote on each item in order.

Dave Seeley of Wichita Kansas raised an editorial correction

and was ruled out of order by the Chair.

Rachel Fetters, serving in Five Rivers district, raised a question about clarity of process for calling the question. Each part of the motion will be taken as a separate vote.

Bishop Wilson called for a vote on calling the question, which requires a 2/3 majority vote.

**Vote passed.**

The next vote was on the Gately amendment to the amendment to add “and EUB Confessions of Faith” in rationale paragraph.

**Vote passed.**

Bishop Wilson called for a vote on the amendment by substitution.

**Amendment passed.**

The final vote taken on Resolution 1 as amended was taken.

**Resolution adopted.**

**Resolution 2: Great Plains Naming Review**

Resolution #2 was presented by Rev. Andrew Conard of Topeka Susanna Wesley UMC. Seconded.

Rev. Conard spoke in favor of resolution and there was no debate.

Bishop Wilson called for a vote.

**Resolution adopted.**

Bishop Recognized Rev. Michael Brown, clergy, Nebraska City, NE for a motion. Rev. Brown moved that the Great Plains Annual Conference encourage our Mercy and Justice Team and our Cabinet to make the Santee Sioux Nation Reservation water crisis one of their top priorities in any interactions they have with relevant elected officials.

Bishop Wilson explained that the Standing Rules require that the text be available to the Body for four hours before being addressed but asked for any objections from the body and received none. The motion received a second. Rev. Brown spoke in favor of the motion. The motion was repeated and accompanied by a slide with the text presented.

Bishop Wilson called for a vote by show of hands. There was no discussion.

**Motion approved.**

## Church Closings

**Rev. Jenny Collins**

Bishop recognized Rev. Jenny Collins to present resolutions related to churches which are closing. They are listed below by resolution number and found in the conference workbook on pages 78-80, with two additional resolutions having been distributed to the body of the conference early in the conference sessions.

3. Barnes UMC in the Salina District
4. Lawrence Central UMC in the Five Rivers District
5. Spring Hill UMC in the Kansas City District
6. Valley UMC in the Missouri River District
7. Genoa UMC in the Prairie Rivers District
8. Oswego Mason Chapel UMC in the Parsons District.

Bishop Wilson offered a prayer for these churches and those connected with them.

Resolutions 3-8 moved; vote taken.

**Resolutions adopted.**

## Connecting Council/Administrative Services

### Scott Brewer

Scott Brewer gave a report on behalf of Connecting Council and Administrative Services, directing the body to page 21 of the workbook addendum.

Brewer highlighted a proposed change to the conference nominations team membership, which proposes going from 6 to 21 persons, including one clergy and one lay person from each district and one chair. This would take effect in July 2025. Brewer moved the adoption of this change.

Rev. Phil Woodson, clergy, Stillwell KS, asked if the current nominations team will have to do the work of nominating the expanded nominations team. Brewer answered "Yes but based on suggestions from district connecting councils."

Nancy Forbes, Palmer NE, asked about the possibility of district lay leader and district superintendents being responsible for those nominations. Brewer said there's no reason they couldn't, but noted that many DSs are extremely busy already, though they would be engaged in the nomination process.

Rev. Scott Adams, serving Doniphan and Rosedale, called the question.

Vote was taken to call the question.

### **Vote passed.**

Bishop Wilson called the vote on the proposed change on page 21 of workbook addendum.

### **Motion approved.**

Scott Brewer named that disaffiliations were completed with the end of paragraph 2553 but that in consultation with Bishop and cabinet there will be a process developed with the Bishop, Trustees, and the Cabinet to work with churches who continue to discern the future in the UMC. As conference leadership, they are committed that churches are basing decisions on facts, not disinformation. He expressed his gratitude

and love for the conference and the hope for continuing the work together.

Brewer announced the nominations and selections to serve on boards of general agencies. Every jurisdiction is invited to cultivate lists of interested people with skills and biographies to assist in that nomination work. Every annual conference may submit up to 45 additional names for jurisdictional structures. Interested persons are invited to submit their information to [questions@greatplainsumc.org](mailto:questions@greatplainsumc.org).

Conference secretary, Lori Richey, was invited to offer the closing motions.

Lori Richey moved

1. that the Conference Secretary be authorized to make editorial changes to the minutes in the Journal as needed for clarity.
2. that the record of the minutes printed in the 2024 Conference Journal shall be the official minutes of this Annual Conference session.
3. that all reports presented in the workbook be accepted as presented or edited by the Annual Conference.
4. that the Annual Conference be authorized to print the total number of Journals required by the Book of Discipline and ordered by individuals.

Motion seconded. Vote taken.

**Motion approved.**

Scott Brewer gave closing announcements. Rev. Neil Gately raised a moment of personal privilege, expressing the fun of the conference because of Scott Brewer. The conference offered their acclamations to support this. Brewer expressed appreciation to the Bishop and Conference members. Bishop Wilson gave a few final remarks celebrating the joy and positive culture of the conference.

The 2024 Great Plains Annual Conference session adjourned at 5:35 PM.

Great Plains Annual Conference  
Younes Conference Center North  
Sunday, June 9, 2024

Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition  
Reaffirmation of Ministry  
Setting of Appointments and Assignments

The prelude consisted of organ music provided by YJ Lee.

Rev. Changsu Kim welcomed everyone and led the Call to Worship, followed by the Processional Hymn "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," UMH 57.

Bishop Wilson greeted the body and opened the service with prayer.

Bishop Wilson offered a recognition of common ministry and then he and Rev. Berniece Ludlum recognized the Licensed Local Pastors who had just completed their first year of service in the Great Plains Annual Conference.

Conference lay leader Lisa Maupin and Rev. Andrew Conard, Board of Ordained Ministry chair began the Presentation of Candidates. Rev. Changsu Kim presented the persons for commissioning as provisional elders. Rev. Jerry Brabec presented the person to be commissioned as deacon in full connection. Rev. Changsu Kim then presented the persons to be commissioned as elders in full connection.

Bishop Wilson gave the charge to the congregation followed by the singing of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," UMH 519.

Evie Cannon, who was the first child baptized in the newly formed Great Plains Annual Conference ten years ago, read Exodus 24:1-11 and Rev. Sarah Marsh gave the sermon titled "Eyes on the Prize."

Rev. Alan Gager introduced the offering for the Crouse Fund, with the Offertory “Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” sung by Rev. Neil Gately, followed by the Doxology.

The General Examination portion of the service began with Bishop Wilson inviting all of the candidates to stand for the historic questions of the faith, followed by each candidate coming forward individually for commissioning or ordination. Youngest Elder Ordinand Cameron Miller and longest serving retiring Elder, Rev. Lee Wigert participated in the Passing of the Mantle.

### Reaffirmation of Ministry

Bishop Wilson invited the District Superintendents to stand and affirm their commitment to faithful witness.

### Fixing of Appointments and Assignments

All appointed and assigned persons stood and affirmed their readiness to build up the body of Christ, engage communities, and establish hope.

### Charge to Laity, Deaconesses, and Home Missioners

All laity stood and reaffirmed their faith in Christ and commitment to serving Christ in their daily lives.

The Hymn of Dedication was “A Charge to Keep I Have,” UMH 413.

Bishop Wilson gave the Benediction and dismissed the annual conference members, with the recessional hymn of “To God Be the Glory,” UMH 98.