

# GPconnect

Connecting United Methodists across the Great Plains

Summer 2016

**Celebrating  
our time with  
Bishop Scott Jones  
& Mary Lou Reece**



***In this edition of GPconnect:***

***Recap of the annual conference session  
What really happened at General Conference?  
Great Plains interns: summer of service***



Connecting United Methodists across the Great Plains

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## Cover photo

Bishop Scott Jones and Mary Lou Reece share a laugh during the 2016 Great Plains Annual Conference Session. Read more about Jones on pages 4-5, and more about AC on pages 8-15.

# The future of the Wesleyan movement



Bishop Scott J. Jones

View the bishop's blog at [greatplainsumc.org/bishopsblog](http://greatplainsumc.org/bishopsblog)

Christianity in the first century and Methodism in the 18th century both began as movements. Movements are characterized by a deep commitment to a purpose, openness to doing new things, and a willingness to sacrifice for the success of the cause.

Successful movements institutionalize. They make difficult decisions about how to sustain themselves over time and how to make the best use of the resources they have accumulated. For example, each movement faces crucial questions when the founding person(s) die or leave, and a new generation of leaders must be chosen. For the church, it was Jesus ascending to heaven and the appointment of the 12 disciples and other leaders to carry on the gospel of the Kingdom. For Methodism in America, it was the continuation of conference and the election of Francis Asbury as bishop that set the pattern for the ongoing, sustainable institutional form of the movement. But successful institutions retain

a movemental commitment to purpose and willingness to sacrifice for their cause.

The United Methodist Church is now, dating from 1784, more than 230 years old. We face daunting challenges, including the question of how to respond to a rapidly changing culture. We have paid insufficient attention to the deep purposes which motivate excellent institutions. We have neglected the rationale for our discipline and mutual accountability.

Yet, I am convinced that God has great things in store for God's Wesleyan people. For us to reinvigorate our institution and regain some of our movement status once again, three things are necessary.

First, we need a theological and spiritual revival. We need more time in prayer and more Bible study to seek God's will for us today. In my life, Disciple Bible Study and the Walk to Emmaus were formative practices that shaped my service to God. Is your church offering these to its people?

Second, we need to focus again on our mission and evaluate everything we do in light of it. Paragraphs 120-22 in "The Book of Discipline, 2012" gives a definition to the phrase "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." I hope every church council member, every Sunday school teacher and every pastor has read, marked and inwardly digested those paragraphs. Then, once we are clear about how we proclaim, invite, nurture and send disciples, we can evaluate all of our ministries by their fruitfulness in those purposes.

Third, we need to strengthen our relationships with each other for both support and accountability. We are a covenant community, and I have been dismayed at the ways in which our clergy have become more distanced from each other and in which our laity no longer join together in groups as much as they used to. We need each other. Support includes praying for one another, suffering with each other, and advising each other. Mutual accountability means making sure we are all faithful to our baptismal and ordination vows.

I am convinced that the Great Plains Conference has made progress on all of these matters, but there is still work before the conference in the future. While I will no longer be your bishop, Mary Lou and I love you deeply and will always care about the people and churches of the Great Plains Conference. May God continue to bless and guide you well!



**Bishop Scott J. Jones,**  
Resident Bishop  
Great Plains United Methodist Conference

[@Extreme\\_Center](https://twitter.com/Extreme_Center)

## From your lay leader **For such as time as this**

### **For such a time as this**

These words from the book of Esther, a Jewish queen of the Old Testament whose risk-taking faith saved her people, have been a continuous echo in my mind for the past few months. I went to bed on May 16, in Portland, Oregon, during the second week of General Conference, with a complete uncertainty of what our Wesleyan denomination would look like the next day. It seemed like we'd finally arrived at a juncture that felt more like an ending. And yet it was this moment that became a defining point for our church.



Courtney Fowler

### **For such a time as this**

Remarkably, it was our Great Plains delegation that you diligently elected last year that rallied the Midwestern spirit of perseverance and became a leading and respected voice at the conference. I want to take a moment and convey my heartfelt "thanks" to you, the Great Plains Conference, for your love and prayers the past few months and especially during those two weeks in May. I felt God's sustaining grace over me and the rest of the group in what were some very difficult moments and I know that in those moments, we walked through them together.

### **For such a time as this**

I was proud to represent the Great Plains during the General Conference laity address titled, "Therefore Go." My part focused on delivering our calling as baptized believers to feed the hungry, to help the homeless and engage those who are lonely. However, my own words stayed with me every single day as I encountered jarringly large numbers of homeless people, including youth and even children, on the streets of Portland. God's mission and calling for me and all of us could not have been made any clearer or any louder.

### **For such as time as this**

And even today as I write this, the multiple and devastating tragedies in Orlando cry out for our compassionate and loving response as Christians. We are all urgently called to be the face of love in the world. And we can't wait for this message to become any clearer or any louder. Message received. We need to start today. For such a time as this.

*Courtney*

Courtney Fowler  
Conference Lay Leader  
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[@c24fowler](https://twitter.com/c24fowler)

Conference events are posted  
at [greatplainsumc.org/events](http://greatplainsumc.org/events)

## **Conference events**

### **July 4**

Independence Day, offices closed

### **July 8-9**

Advanced Lay Servant Training,  
Grand Island, Nebraska

### **July 13-16**

South Central Jurisdictional  
Conference, Wichita, Kansas

### **July 21-22**

Young Preachers Festival and  
Conference, Leawood, Kansas

### **July 25-29**

Licensing School, Great Bend, Kansas

### **Aug. 12-13**

Bishop's Response Team training,  
Concordia, Kansas

### **Aug. 13**

Summer's Last Blast at Camp Comeca  
Cozad, Nebraska

### **Aug. 23**

Right Start Orientation for clergy new  
to Great Plains, at video conference sites

### **Aug. 25**

Right Start Orientation for clergy new  
to Great Plains, at video conference sites

### **Sept. 5**

Labor Day, offices closed

### **Sept. 10**

Camp Norwesca annual barbecue,  
Chardon, Nebraska

### **Sept. 16-17**

Great Plains Conference UMW annual  
meeting, Topeka, Kansas

### **Sept. 29-30**

Leadership Institute 2016,  
Leawood, Kansas

### **Oct. 7-8**

Small Wonders Conference,  
Salina, Kansas

### **Oct. 15**

Celebration of Bishop Assignments  
Lincoln, Nebraska (tent.)

### **Oct. 21-22**

Connecting Council, Hays, Kansas (tent.)

### **Oct. 22**

Camp Norwesca's Oktoberfest Party,  
Chardon, Nebraska

# Bishop Jones gets a sendoff

## ISUPER



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MOSER

Bishop Scott Jones checks out his Superman self during the 2016 Great Plains Annual Conference Session in Topeka, Kansas. Insert: Before Jones was presented with his alter-ego, Mary Lou Reece and Jones share a laugh when the conference honored Jones' ministry.

By **DAVID BURKE**,  
*communications coordinator*

If there was any question about how the Great Plains Conference felt about Bishop Scott J. Jones, the answer came as a life-sized cardboard cutout that first appeared during the annual conference session June 1-4 in Topeka.

With the face of the departing bishop plastered over Christopher Reeve's movie body, the newest Annual Conference visitor — dubbed "Super Bishop," "Super Bish" or "Super Scott" — was ordered by a vote from the floor to have residence on stage during the sessions, and was a big hit with selfie-takers.

Hey, both Superman and the bishop claim roots in Kansas!

Both the sincere and the tongue-in-cheek farewells were plentiful for Jones — wrapping up a 12-year stint as bishop in the Heartland that included being the first leader of the Great Plains Conference — and his wife, Mary Lou Reece, during the annual conference session.

Publically and privately, attendees praised the bishop for his contributions.

"I'll always remember him for his faith and his composure and being our bishop through so many different things," said the Rev. Stacy Ellsworth, pastor of the Howard, Kansas, UMC. "All of the things our bishop had to do and more.

"I have a lot of respect for him," he added.

"He is a true example of what a man of God needs to look like, needs to talk like and needs to act like," said Charley File of Beloit, Kansas, Southwest Regional president of United Methodist Men. "It's been a very impressive 12 years."

The Rev. Warren Schoming, pastor of the Guide Rock and Red Cloud UMCs in Nebraska, said he'll remember Bishop Jones for his willingness to come to local churches and talk about the concerns that they were having.

Schoming was also the first chairman of the Local Pastors and Associate Members group in the Great Plains.

“He was always very welcoming to all of us on the board, very gracious and accommodating,” Schoming said. “His hospitality was always wonderful.”

The Rev. Dorcia Johnson, pastor of the Galena UMC in Kansas, said she’ll remember Jones as her first bishop.

“He made the decision about coming into the ministry rather easy. He’s my role model,” she said. “I hope to emulate his qualities in my ministry of leading and serving.”

Elizabeth Draper, a youth delegate from Sidney UMC in Nebraska, said that although she doesn’t know the bishop well, Jones impressed her as being “a wonderful person who’s done so much.”

“He really cares about the youth, with his presence and what he teaches them,” she said.

“And,” she said adding of a traditional



major campaign for improvements to Camp Comeca, near Cozad, Nebraska, continues.

Jones also backed the decision to discontinue the health insurance plan for the conference for clergy, instead providing an allowance that would allow them to purchase their own insurance in whatever way is best for them.

Also during his tenure was the beginning of the Chabadza covenant with the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference, working alongside each

other for mutual benefit.

The on-stage tributes to Jones and Reece, both on the annual conference floor and in a reception sponsored by the Nebraska United Methodist Foundation and the Kansas Area United Methodist Foundation, resulted in combinations of laughter, tears and even red-faced embarrassment.

“Mary Lou has found a way to bring relief of tension and joy, but most especially she has showed us what radical hospitality looks like and extravagant, extravagant, extravagant generosity,” said the Rev. Maria Campbell, pastor of the Susanna Wesley UMC in Topeka and chair of the Episcopacy Committee.

Jones thanked the annual conference for all of the help its given him through the years, saying “I get a lot more credit than I deserve.”

“I have worked with incredible pastors, laypeople, committees, lay leaders, cabinet members, and whatever success I have had has usually been due to the good ideas and the hard work of the people that have surrounded me and supported me, prayed for me, and followed me,” he said.

“It’s been just an incredible journey,” he added.

And as for his Superman self ...

“All I can say is this thing better be gone when the new bishop shows up,” Jones said, “because he or she may not quite see the joke behind it.”



treat prepared by the bishop and his wife at youth gatherings, “their malts are wonderful.”

During Bishop Jones’ tenure, he led the consolidation of the Kansas East and West conferences into one episcopal area, which led to joining with Nebraska in 2014 to become the Great Plains Conference.

He is also credited with the Bridges to the Future campaign, which raised more than \$10.5 million for new church starts, improved camping facilities, campus ministry and placed a greater emphasis on multicultural ministries in the Kansas conferences. A

PHOTOS BY RACHEL MOSER

**From top: Bishop Scott Jones turns a little red in the face while Mary Lou Reece describes a particularly embarrassing moment. Reece receives an embrace from district superintendents and spouses during the close of the session. Jones closes his final annual conference session of the Great Plains Conference**



# So

# what really went on at

...



# General Conference?



PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER



PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER



PHOTO BY PROVIDED BY THE  
REV. STEPHANIE AHLSCHEDE



PHOTO BY TODD SEIFERT

As expected, the subject of human sexuality dominated debate -- directly and indirectly -- throughout deliberations of the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon.

After hours of deliberation, two failed motions and an accusation from the floor of a bishop directing people which way to vote, the General Conference voted May 18 to accept and enact a plan for unity presented by the Council of Bishops.

The motion to accept the bishops' proposal eventually passed 425-408. It proclaims the intent of the bishops to appoint a commission to examine all paragraphs in the Book of Discipline associated with human sexuality, defer all votes related to human sexuality to the new commission and to address the issues in a possible special General Conference prior to 2020.

Business of the day started with a speech by Bishop Bruce Ough, which laid out the proposal by the Council of Bishops. His statement to the conference came 24 hours after a declaration that the bishops proposed unity in the denomination without expressing an opinion on human sexuality matters. The response to the initial statement did not directly impact the follow-up, Ough said.

"That was directly affected by the motion that came off the floor inviting the council to offer some additional leadership," Ough said of the motion made May 17 by the Rev. Mark Holland of Trinity United Methodist Church in Kansas City, Kansas. "I'm grateful for the motion."

The Council of Bishops, Ough said, began its deliberations after Holland's motion.

Soon after the bishop's follow-up speech May 18, the Rev. Adam Hamilton of United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, made a motion to accept

**Photos on page 6, clockwise starting at upper left: The Rev. Anne Gatobu, translates to KiSwahili during a legislative committee meeting. Dixie Brewster, was one of four Great Plains delegates elected to leadership roles within their committees. The Rev. Rebecca Hjelle hugs a stuffed bear that was on display as a stress-relief tool. The Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell speaks to the body. Photo on page 8: Great Plains Conference delegates talk about their experiences during a lunch break.**

the bishops' proposal, citing specific petition numbers to be set aside. An amended petition that would have accepted the bishops' proposal but continue voting on human sexuality petitions was defeated handily.

After the lunch break, Hamilton's motion failed 438-393.

Frustrated delegates then proceeded to the microphone to make what they said were points of order that the presiding bishop during the early afternoon plenary session, Bishop William T. McAlilly of the Nashville Episcopal Area, failed to hold to rules of order. One delegate from the East Coast stood to ask the bishop to recuse himself from presiding over the session, using a tone that drew support from some on the social media platform Twitter but far more criticism for being disrespectful.

Prior to the verbal attack on Bishop McAlilly, Bishop Ough again called for unity and prayer, as well as a "complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph in our Book of Discipline regarding human sexuality.

"We continue to hear from many people on the debate over sexuality that our current Discipline contains language which is contradictory, unnecessarily hurtful and inadequate for the variety of local, regional and global contexts," Ough said.

Asked if any openly gay or lesbian pastors would be included on such a commission, Ough replied, "We will make sure that all voices are present."

### *Delegates vote 'no' on 44*

The first three days of General Conference offered a live demonstration of just how difficult following its rules of order can be as delegates wavered back and forth on using Rule 44, a proposed group-discernment process to deal with particularly complicated and contentious legislation such as sexuality. Ultimately, they voted against it.

### *Slight increase to budget*

General Conference delegates on May 20 approved a general church budget of \$604 million for 2017-2020, a slight increase over the \$603.1 million approved at the 2012 General Conference. It's also an increase over

the \$599 million budget proposed to the 2016 General Conference delegates, which would have been the church's lowest in 16 years.

### *Sand Creek Massacre recalled*

Concerns about legislation were set aside as delegates focused on a historic tragedy with deep Methodist involvement. The 1864 Sand Creek Massacre was the subject, and speakers included a historian and descendants of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian survivors of the attack.

Mountain Sky Area Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky had joined the descendants in planning the remembrance.

### *Judicial Council decisions*

Imposing a mandatory penalty during the "just resolution" process for a clergyperson admitting to committing a chargeable offense is unconstitutional, The United Methodist Church's top court ruled. A just resolution "can be an alternative way of handling chargeable offenses," but the call "for a specific penalty in creating a just resolution is also unconstitutional as it denies the clergyperson the specific right to trial and appeal," the council's decision stated.

The United Methodist Judicial Council on May 19 ruled a proposed establishment of a United Methodist "Standing Committee on Strategy and Growth" funded by \$20 million taken from denominational coffers was unconstitutional. The court's decision noted that the amended petition did not include how the committee's membership "is to be determined nor how the \$20 million is to be spent."

In a May 9 ruling, the Judicial Council declared that Plan UMC Revised, one of the proposed plans to realign the structure of The United Methodist Church, "contains components that fail the test of constitutionality and components that are, as stated, entirely constitutional."

### *Presentations, celebrations*

General Conference 2016 celebrated a few notable milestones. They included the 60th anniversary of the Methodist Church granting full clergy rights to women, the 30th

See **GENERAL** on page 8



PHOTO BY TODD SEIFERT

**GENERAL** continued from page 7

anniversary of DISCIPLE Bible Study, the upcoming 25th anniversary of Africa University and a whole day dedicated to United Methodist Women, which will soon turn 150.

The May 18 morning session celebrated the Imagine No Malaria initiative launched in 2008. The 12-minute celebration debuted “Able,” a song commissioned by Imagine No Malaria. Jeremy Rosado, a Top-12 contestant on “American Idol,” performed the song.

### *New hymnal gets green light*

The United Methodist Church is on track to get its first new hymnal since 1989, and this one will be Internet-cloud based and print-on-demand — the first high-tech hymnal

for a mainline denomination. General Conference 2016 approved a petition authorizing the creation of a 15-member Hymnal Revision Committee.

### *Central Conference issues*

Africa will get five more United Methodist bishops, but not before 2020. On May 16, delegates narrowly defeated an effort to add two bishops immediately, in Nigeria and in Zimbabwe.

Delegates approved petitions to create a provisional central conference in Southeast Asia and Mongolia and a provisional annual conference in Rwanda.

### *Quick hits*

When you are a bishop, you’re a bishop all the way – at least in the U.S. Term limits for United Methodist

bishops got strong support in a May 17 vote at General Conference 2016, but fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to change the church constitution, 482 in favor of term limits to 332 opposed. Some bishops outside the United States are already subject to term limits.

A petition to withdraw denominational general agency membership from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice was passed, as was a second petition to remove language supporting the coalition from the Book of Resolutions. The United Methodist Church was a founding member of the organization in 1973, and the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women are currently members.

An amendment offered on May 20 during a General Conference debate on socially responsible investing that sought to divest from illegal settlements on occupied lands failed 559-167. But delegates adopted a petition on behalf of a Palestinian village, Wadi Foquin. Delegates chose not to add a fossil fuels investment screen for the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

One Great Hour of Sharing will now be known as UMCOR Sunday. Offerings for the special Sunday, observed annually on the fourth Sunday of Lent, cover the United Methodist Committee on Relief’s overhead.

In a May 12 ceremony, Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce R. Ough was formally installed as president of the Council of Bishops. Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr., outgoing president, “passed the gavel” to Ough.

A petition calling for a mandatory vote of proposed legislation sent to General Conference was approved by a vote of 406 to 361. All petitions submitted to General Conference “shall receive the vote of a legislative committee” and all petitions approved by legislative committees “shall receive a vote by the plenary session.”

*United Methodist News Service Reporter Joey Butler, Great Plains Communications Coordinator David Burke and Great Plains Communications Director Todd Seifert contributed to this story.*

## videos & stories



Throughout the 2016 General Conference, the communications staff interviewed delegates and volunteers from the Great Plains Conference on video to record their reflections on matters during the 10-day event.

Visit [greatplainsumc.org/generalconference](http://greatplainsumc.org/generalconference) to view these videos, photos and other stories.





# Serving Christ NEAR & FAR

2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
Great Plains United Methodists



## Conference highlights

- **Celebration of Bishop Jones' ministry**
- **Resolution on reconciliation**
- **19 clergy ordained**
- **37 pastors retire (page 23)**
- **Meet the new conference treasurer**



# Archbishop speaks of peaceful resolution in opening worship

By DAVID BURKE, *communications coordinator*

Retired Archbishop Elias Chacour declared himself a “proud Palestinian” as he began his teaching session at the 2016 Annual Conference session, and then he opened his suit jacket.

“I have no bombs,” Chacour demonstrated, in one of several humorous moments that dotted his more-than-60-minute presentation.

The self-described “Palestinian-Arab-Christian-Israeli” said he has never had any weapon in his hand. The 78-year-old said, “And I love all.”

“I love the Jews. I love the Palestinians. I love all of us with our deficiencies, with our pluses and minuses,” he said. “And to be a Muslim, it’s normal that a Palestinian be also a Muslim, because Muslims are, in your media, people who are blood thirsty and inclined to violence.

“This is what the politicians want us to be seen as,” he added.

Being a Palestinian-Arab-Christian, he said, “complicates the picture.”

The native of Galilee told of how, as a boy, his family received warning of Jewish soldiers coming to their village. His father referred to the soldiers as their “blood brothers,” and should be received by the family.

The soldiers did not kill, molest, persecute or hurt anyone, Chacour said. They accepted the food and beds of those in the village, he said, while his family slept on the roof of their houses.

Chacour’s father, as well as other men in the village, were taken to the West Bank for three months to serve as soldiers.

“My father was a man who believed in God and believed

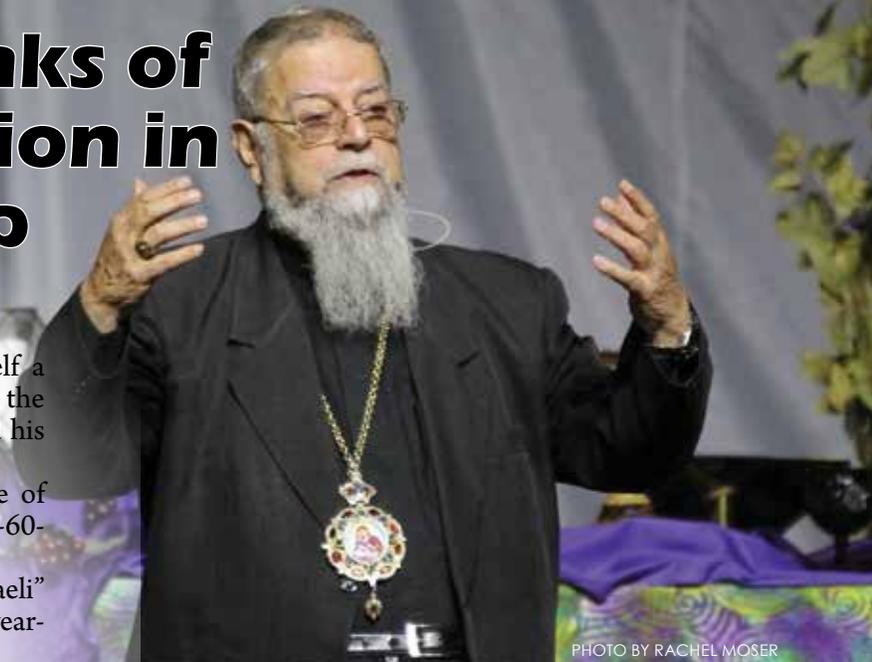


PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER

in human beings,” Chacour said. “He never allowed any of my brothers to think about using violence to recuperate their rights.

“He always told them, ‘If you use violence, you will fall victim of violence.’”

That spirit of nonviolent resolve has stayed with Chacour, archbishop of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and all of Galilee from 2006 to 2014.

“We are citizens of Israel,” he said. “We never protest against the existence of Israel.

“We protest against the qualities of that existence. We want to be full citizens. We want to be sharing the building up of this country with the Jews,” Chacour added.

Chacour is the author of two books, “Blood Brothers” and “We Belong to the Land,” which he signed for annual conference session attendees following his presentation.

“When I sign my books -- I’ve signed hundreds of thousands -- I sign it, ‘God does not kill’ and sign my name in Arabic,” he said. “And God is love.

“All the rest is commentary.”

## GBGM exec pushes local, worldwide efforts

PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER

At top, Archbishop Elias Chacour, speaks during the morning teaching on June 2 at the 2016 Great Plains Annual Conference Session. At right, George Howard, executive director for the General Board of Global Ministries speaks to the body on June 3.



By DAVID BURKE, *communications coordinator*

Attendees to the Great Plains Annual Conference session Friday morning learned more about reaching out across the street and around the world during a presentation by the executive director of global coaching for the General Board of Global Ministries.

“There are more and more missionaries in the world today,” George Howard said, “from everywhere going to everywhere.”

GBGM opened a new Latin American headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in April, and will open a new Asian regional office in Seoul, South Korea, this fall. A new African office for French-speaking countries will open next year.

The United States regional office will complete its

# 'Aspirational resolution' involving Meyer case approved

By **DAVID BURKE**,  
*communications coordinator*

An "aspirational resolution" asking that the decision about the future of an openly gay United Methodist pastor in Kansas be left to the Great Plains Conference bishop was approved Saturday morning during the annual conference session.

The Rev. Russell Brown, pastor of Heritage UMC in Overland Park, Kansas, introduced the motion. Brown said the motion was not an attempt to rewrite the Book of Discipline, was not an attack on the bishop, was not a directive to Bishop Scott J. Jones nor a committee and was not binding by the bishop nor committee.

"It is an aspirational resolution," Brown said. "If I had to give it a nickname, it would be the 'Please pump the brakes' resolution."

The resolution asks that the counsel for the Church and the counsel for Rev. Meyer invoke Book of Discipline paragraph 2706.Sc3. That paragraph allows for such a matter as the Meyer case to be referred to the resident bishop "as deemed appropriate for a process seeking a just resolution."

The bishop could seek assistance from impartial third-party facilitators or mediators under such circumstances.

Brown said a window was made available after a letter from the Council of Bishops during the recently completed General Conference encouraged ways to avoid complaints, trials and any harm.

"Let's walk through that window," Brown said. "It's seeking to speak as a unified voice for the Great Plains Annual Conference."

On Jan. 3, the Rev. Cynthia Meyer told her congregation at Edgerton United Methodist Church in Kansas that she was in a committed relationship with another woman. Bishop Jones referred the complaint against Jones to a counsel for the church, pending

the annual conference session. "This (resolution) isn't much of a change — it's been going on all along."

An array of opinions filled the floor, from a young adult who threatened to leave the denomination over LGBTQ issues to a laity delegate who accused the body of trying to "rewrite the Bible."

The Rev. David Livingston, pastor of St. Paul's UMC in Lenexa, Kansas,



PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER

**The Rev. Russell Brown, Heritage UMC in Overland Park, Kansas, introduces the motion that asks the decision of the Rev. Cynthia Meyer's future to be left to the conference bishop.**

any changes in the Book of Discipline reached at General Conference.

Jones has not publicly expressed an opinion regarding the Meyer case.

"I have, ever since the complaint was filed, done everything I can to bring a just resolution to this case," Jones told

and an advocate of Meyer, said he was pleased with the results of the vote.

"It affirms the idea from the Council of Bishops that we can uphold the spirit with the space for grace and conversation," he said.

move from New York City to Atlanta this fall.

A new initiative, the first in 10 years, includes the Central African Republic, Howard said. Although bureaucratic hurdles have kept the United Methodist Church from becoming established in Vietnam, GBGM may succeed because the country's leaders want United Methodist Committee on Relief, or UMCOR, services available there.

"Please pray for Vietnam," Howard said.

Howard showed the different models for building church-community partnerships, many involving health care and many involving interaction with the unchurched around them.

"Just like in John Wesley's time, we're called to build new

United Methodist movements," Howard said.

"You put the movement in place, then build systems and structures around it," he added, not vice versa.

Both locally and in other continents, especially Africa, microfinance programs are growing to help financial literacy education and small business development.

Those are growing, as well as health ministries.

Howard showed an illustration of John Wesley's saddlebags, with a Bible in one pouch and a small health manual in the other, to help tend to the medical needs of those he visited.

"Wesley understood the holistic nature of the Gospel," Howard said.

# Conference celebrates **CAMP Comeca** progress

By **DAVID BURKE**,  
*communications coordinator*

A celebration — complete with confetti poppers, T-shirt catapults and the Kool & the Gang song of the same name — took place Friday afternoon at the Great Plains Annual Conference to mark advancements in the campaign for Camp Comeca.

The initial Renew Comeca matching goal of \$250,000 was exceeded, campaign chair Janelle Wilke said.

“Our dream goal is \$994,000,” Wilke said, “and we are still accepting pledges.”

After a Wednesday morning offering at the annual conference session, the drive has received \$721,000 in donations and pledges.

“That’s a great step forward,” Bishop Scott J. Jones said.



PHOTOS BY RACHEL MOSER

At top, Janelle Wilke, Camp Comeca Capital Campaign chair, speaks June 3, during the annual conference session. Wilke updated the body with the campaign totals. Below, attendees raise their hands in hopes of receiving a T-shirt.

## progress

Fundraisers for the camp, located near Cozad, Nebraska, have included a concert of area choirs, a rancher donating a bull and proceeds from the print replica of a plaque given to the bishop and his wife, Mary Lou Reece, on Wednesday.

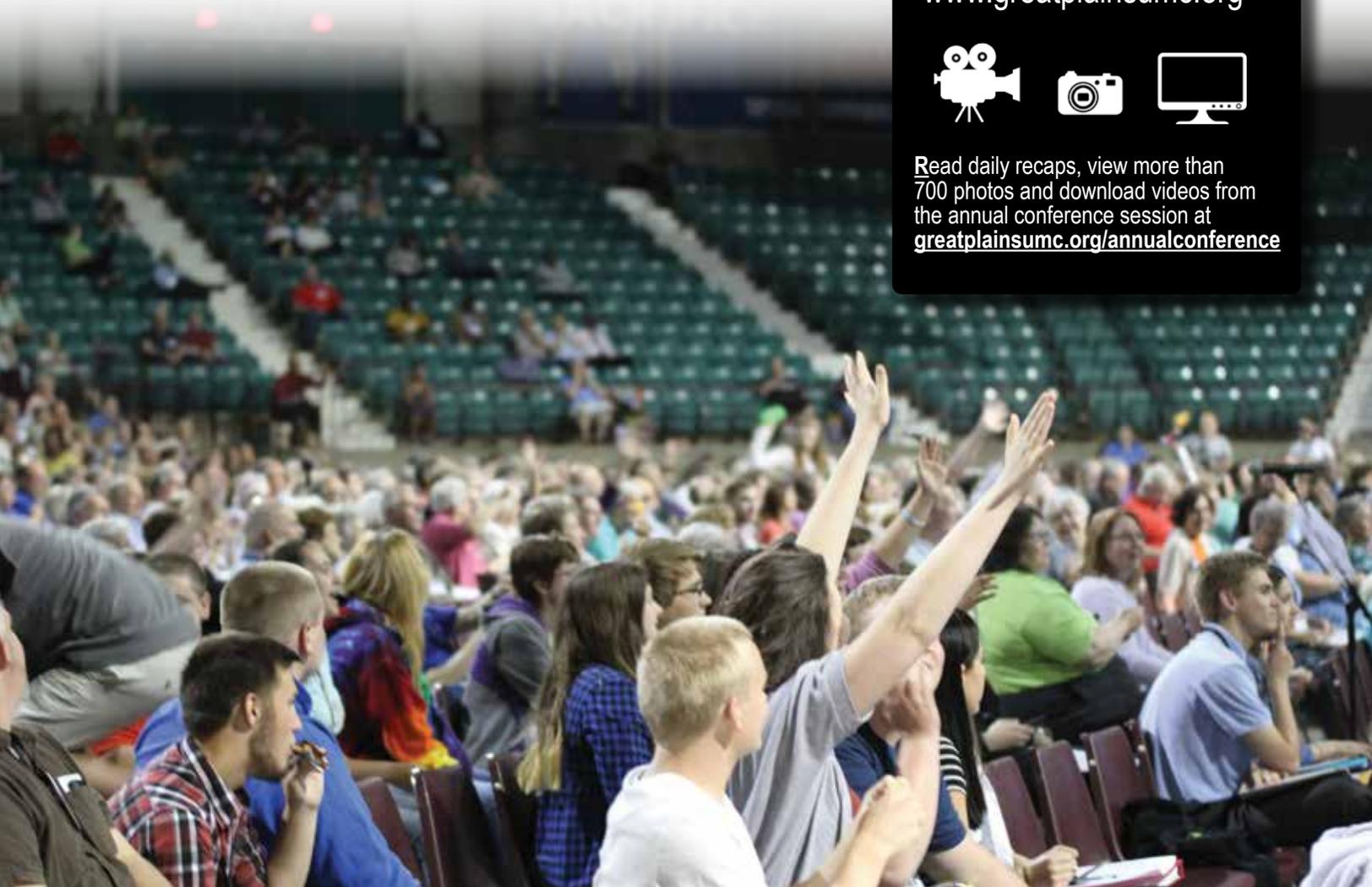
A matching gift of up to \$111,000 was announced, that would bring the total near its “dream goal.”

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# New elders, deacons encouraged to fly, stay humble



By **DAVID BURKE**, *communications coordinator*

Taking flight and staying grounded were some of the challenges given to the newest elders and deacons in the Great Plains Conference in their ordination service Friday night.

Bishop Robert Hayes – shown in a YouTube video produced in his Oklahoma Conference where he appears to be in flight – talked to the newest ordinands about membership and privileges, including being chided by a long-lost friend for not having the prestige of a frequent-flyer club when both were on the same plane.

“What time does your plane land?” Hayes asked his friend.

As a Christian, Hayes said, “Jesus offers you membership into his elite circle.”

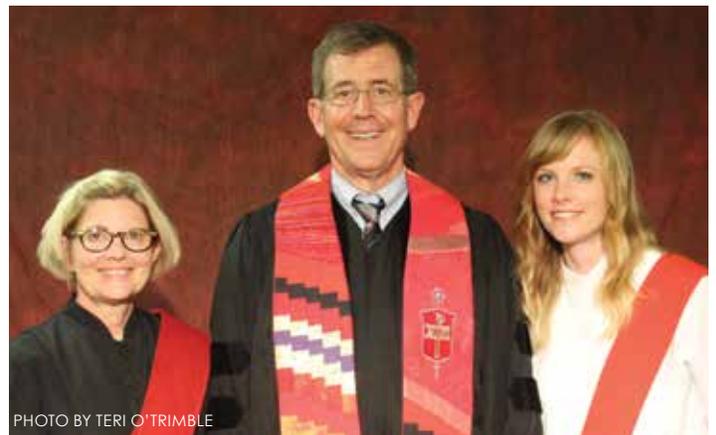
Becoming an elder or deacon in the church, he said, means:

- Self-denial – “This night is not about you. Jesus becomes the object of your attention, the focus of your ministry.”
- Carrying your own cross – “This job will empty you. But it will also fill you up with things the world can’t take away from you.”

After the playing of his YouTube video, Hayes asked for silence, and then washed the feet of Changsu Kim (insert), one of the 17 to be ordained elders. The Oklahoma bishop used the lyrics of the Gospel hymn “There’s Just Something About That Name” as his opening prayer.

His sermon title, “Membership Has Its Privileges,” brought back the old ad slogan for the American Express credit card – which sent an application to in-debt seminary student Hayes.

“My credit was so bad at that time that I had to have a co-



signer to pay with cash,” said the bishop, with the timing of a standup comedian.

Pictured at the top of the page are those ordained as elders with Bishop Jones, June 3. (Fourth row from left) Changsu Kim, Jacob Cloud and Aaron Duell. (Third row) Emily Spearman Cannon, Andrew Ebling Frazier, Bishop Scott Jones, Jose Miranda, Benjamin Hanne and Joel Plisek. (Second row) Joseph McColligan, Rebecca Davison, Katherine Ebling-Frazier, Lora Andrews, Joohyang Kim and Bryce Hansen. (Front row) Tiffany Baker, Hyun Choi and Hyeayoun Kim.

Recognized as an elder was Todd Maberry. Pictured in the insert with Bishop Jones is Karla Woodward (left) and Melanie Martin who were ordained as deacons. Lawrence Barbary II was recognized as an associate member.

Melissa Gepford was commissioned for the work of a deacon. Commissioned for the work of an elder were Michael Brown, Isaac Chua, Orlando Gallardo-Parra and Kayla Mangrich.

# Bishop Jones, Fowler share state of conference

By DAVID BURKE,  
communications coordinator

With a focus on the recently completed General Conference in Portland, Oregon, Great Plains lay leader Courtney Fowler and Bishop Scott J. Jones delivered their State of the Conference addresses Wednesday afternoon.

Fowler said the two-week conference was a “spiritually challenging experience” where she learned more of the “vast global nature of our denomination.”

In the midst of all of the parliamentary procedure disagreements and continued calls for points of order, Fowler wondered, “What was God thinking about us then?”

She said the denomination needs to find some mutual ground.

“We can’t wait for people to believe the same as we do,” she said.

Bishop Jones praised the Great Plains clergy and laity delegates in Portland for their involvement, both in motions on the floor and ceremonies on the stage.

“They weren’t just sitting there watching this happen,” he said. “You should be proud of them.”

Jones, leaving as bishop after 12 years and overseeing the merger of the Kansas East and West and Nebraska conferences into the Great Plains, looked back at what had been done during that time.

“It has been amazing to see how we have all grown together to become the Great Plains Conference,” he said.

Despite the large geography of the conference – Jones said it’s a 10 ½-hour drive from the conference office in



Wichita to the furthest regions of Nebraska – there have been accomplishments including The One Event, a youth rally in Grand Island that draws from throughout the Great Plains.

“We are a big conference that can do amazing things,” he said.

The bishop’s message was not all congratulatory, going back to the original goals of the newly formed conference to see what has fallen short.

The conference is “behind the curve” in planting new churches and revitalizing existing congregations, he said.

The average age of clergy in the conference has risen to 57, he said, and more than half of the churches have had no professions of faith in the past year.

Pastors, Jones said, don’t talk enough about money to their congregation, even though Jesus mentions it more often than prayer in the New Testament.

Jones was brought nearly to tears twice in his last address to the Great Plains Conference. Just because he’s moving on to another conference, he said, “it doesn’t mean I don’t care.”

“I love you all,” he said. “Mary Lou (Reece, his wife) and I will always love you.”

## Nebraskan to return to Great Plains as treasurer

By DAVID BURKE,  
communications coordinator



The son of two longtime Nebraska United Methodist pastors is returning to the Great Plains to become the conference’s new treasurer and director of administrative services.

Scott Brewer was announced Saturday morning as the successor for Gary Beach, who is retiring from the position next year. After a transition period where both will work together, Brewer will fully move into the role on July 1, 2017.

For the past 1½ years, Brewer has been the associate general secretary of

administration and operations for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, based in Nashville, Tennessee. He held positions in the United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration for the previous 12 years.

A Nebraska Wesleyan University graduate, Brewer is the son of retired pastors, the Rev. James S. and the Rev. Dr. Carol Roettmer Brewer.

He is “absolutely thrilled” to return to the Great Plains.

“It’s an opportunity to serve in an Annual Conference that I deeply care about, close to people and territory that mean so much to me,” he said.

# Service remembers late clergy, spouses

By DAVID BURKE,  
communications coordinator

The Rev. Jim Akins, Hays District superintendent, spoke of “The Power of Memory” at the Memorial Service during the Great Plains Annual Conference session.

“It’s kind of a mysterious power,” Akins said.

Those memories, Akins said, are encapsulated in the looks, special touch, phrases or “laughter you could hear from across the room.”

They manifest themselves in a smile, a tear or a “gut-wrenching sob,” he added.

The service honored 39 Great Plains clergy who had passed away since the 2015 Annual Conference.

“We feel oh-so-special and oh-so-blessed,” Akins said, “because they those to share their memory of the faith with us.”

Also honored were 23 spouses of clergy who had died in the past year.

Clergy spouses hold a special place,

Akins said, since they are the ones who have to deftly juggle family commitments around the clerical duties of the pastor.

Akins was a replacement for the Rev. Kibum Kim, Parsons District superintendent, who had to return to Korea for the funeral of his mother-in-law.

The rest of the memorial service had a Korean flair, with a choir of Korean clergy in song, including a version of “How Great Thou Art” in their native language.

Chimes were rung and candles were lit after the name of every late pastor and clergy, with a gong struck following each category.

## Clergy remembered

at the service were the Rev. Donald Bakely, the Rev. Harold Dean Baldwin, the Rev. Olin A. Bel, the Rev. Jerry Lee Bever, the Rev. James Charles (JC) Browne, the Rev. Philip Brownlee, the Rev. LaDonna Ruth Carey, the Rev. Shirley Holden Carpenter, the Rev. G. Richard Carter, the Rev. Dale Clare, the Rev. James E. Fleagle, the Rev. T.J. Fraser, the Rev. Carroll French, the Rev. John Goering II, the Rev. Paul R. Hett, the Rev. Donald D. Hines, the Rev. Conley Kent Hinrichs, the Rev. Nellie “Nel” Lou Holmes, the Rev. Charles Stanley LaRue, the Rev. Lloyd J. Lowe, the Rev. Gerald Arthur Martin, the Rev. Dennis Howard Matthews, the Rev. Lillian Delorse Moore, the Rev. Marvin D. Neubauer,



PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER

the Rev. Raymond Eaton Noah, the Rev. Robert “Bob” Donald Parker, the Rev. Arlie Persell, the Rev. Eugene Rasmussen, the Rev. Arnold Roland Jr., the Rev. Oliver Rosas, the Rev. David Dean Rowe, the Rev. John Schmitt, the Rev. Dwight Alden Skow, the Rev. John Snook, the Rev. James “Jim” Townson, the Rev. Richard Urbach, the Rev. Henry Wagoner, the Rev. George Wattenbarger and the Rev. Marion Woods.

## Spouses remembered

were Uriel Bernell McNeill Baldwin, Willa Mae Borger, Lynda Brazil, Merceda Joan Dussair, Valda Joan Embree, Doris Ellen Garrison, Vera Evelyn Gordon, Irma Herrick, Sonia D’Ann Irwin, Connie Jo Jones, Hilda Zoe “Zodie” Kaye, Mary Lou Bauer Martin, John Byron Norwich McLennan, Fern H. Mead, Cleo Pataricia Noah, Helen Barber Norman, Cara Ruth Hutchinson Perkins, Virginia E. Rimel, Nita Wyatt Sundbye Sewell, Donna Elaine Stewart Stanton, Marjorie Watts Strohl, Phyllis Watkins Tudor and Julia Kitchens Wilke.

## Offertory totals during AC

### Wednesday, June 8

Mission Partnerships -  
Haiti, Nigeria and Zimbabwe: \$15,793.84

### Thursday, June 9

Camp Comeca \$15,912.87

### Friday, June 10

Imagine No Malaria: \$6,656.24

### Saturday, June 11

Youth Service Fund: \$4,864.27

# Other noteworthy events at annual conference

## Minimum salaries

After deliberating a higher rate, the conference voted that pastors at all levels will receive a 2-percent minimum compensation rate increase beginning in 2017.

Accepting a proposal by the personnel committee, the minimum for a full-time local pastor will be \$35,445; associate member, \$37,740; provisional elder or deacon, \$40,035; and full member, \$42,330.

The Rev. Amanda Baker, Marion UMC in Kansas, proposed an amendment to increase the full-time minimum salary to \$41,000, “equitable pay that we can live on,” she said.

But the Rev. Jim Akins, Hays District superintendent, spoke against the amendment, saying “you will sink many of our small churches.”

There was no compensation increase in 2016.

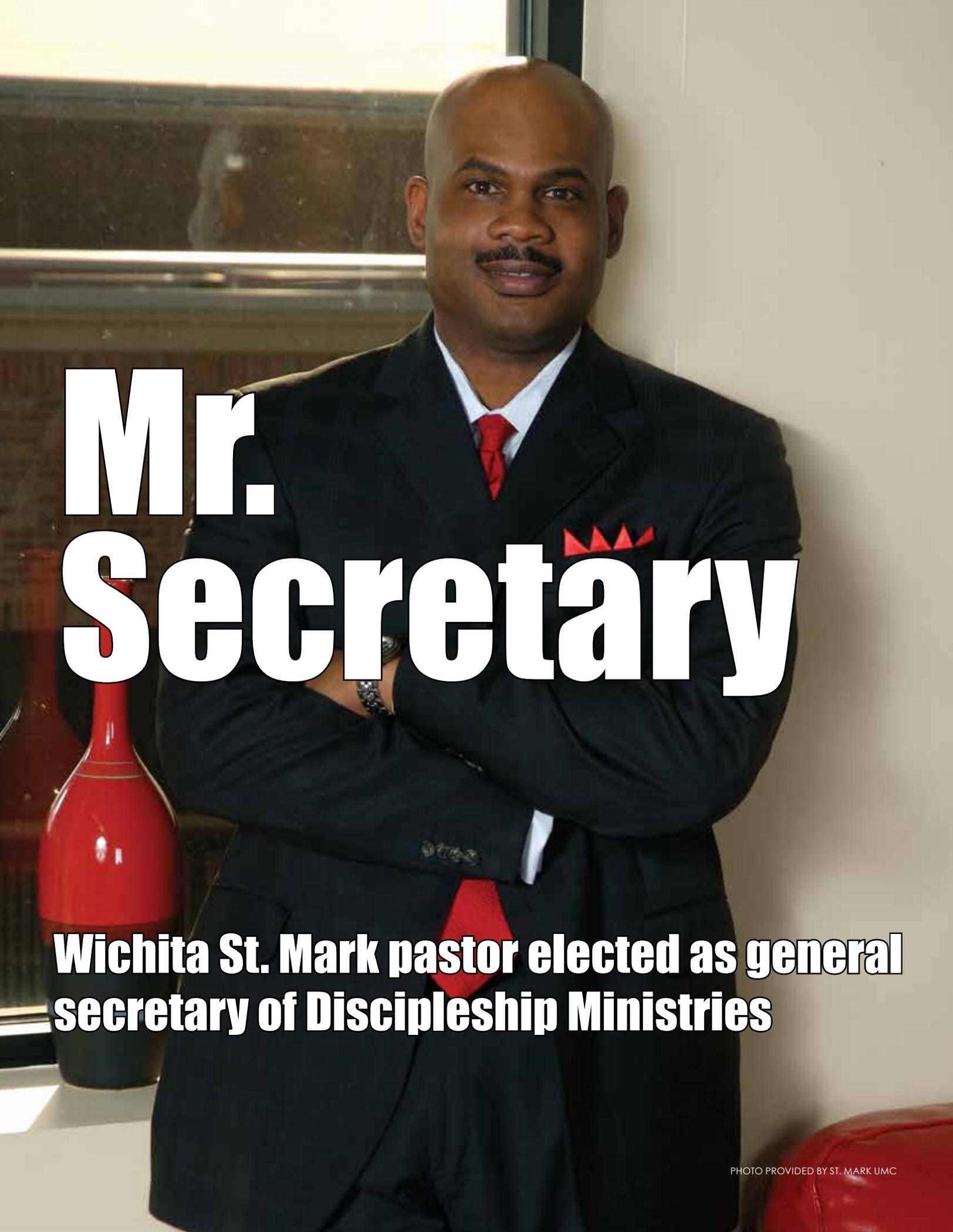
## Death penalty

The Rev. Stephen Griffith, a retired United Methodist clergy and executive director of Nebraskans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, told the conference that capital punishment was a “broken system” where justice was delivered “arbitrarily and unequally,” that it does not deter crimes and is not needed for public safety.

“Be witness to execute justice, not people,” Griffith said.

The lone voice in favor of the death penalty was Pat Taylor, a Kingman, Kansas, delegate and retired law enforcement officer.

Speaking against the death penalty and in favor of the resolution, was the Rev. Darryl Burton, congregational care pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, wrongly convicted of a crime and sentenced to life without parole before his conviction was overturned.

A photograph of a man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is standing with his arms crossed, leaning against a white wall. To his left is a red vase. The text "Mr. Secretary" is overlaid in large white font.

# Mr. Secretary

**Wichita St. Mark pastor elected as general secretary of Discipleship Ministries**

By **DAVID BURKE**, *communications coordinator*

Ever since his childhood in Houston, the Rev. Junius Dotson says, “being a part of a growing, vital church has been a part of my DNA.”

Now Dotson — senior pastor of Saint Mark United Methodist Church in Wichita for the past 14 years — will be transferring those skills and passions to the worldwide level.

The 50-year-old has been elected as the new general secretary, the chief executive position, with Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. He will begin his new position July 1, replacing interim general secretary MaryJane Pierce Nolan.

“I’m very, very passionate about the ministry of discipleship,” Dotson said after making the announcement to his Saint Mark congregation.

A former member of the Board of Disciples, Dotson founded Genesis United Methodist Church in California’s Silicon Valley in 1996, and saw it grow to 500 members. In Wichita, he helped increase the membership at Saint Mark from 2,500 to its current 3,500.

“Through the years it’s been a passion for me,” Dotson said of growing churches. “The thought of actually being able to lead the agency into a bright future is really, really was appealing to me.”

Dotson was elected last week at the Discipleship Ministries Board of Directors meeting in Overland Park, Kansas.

“Junius Dotson knows how to lead people inside the church to introduce people outside the church to Jesus and invite them into Christian discipleship,” Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky of the Mountain Sky episcopal area, who is president of the Discipleship Ministries board of directors, said in a news release.



PHOTO BY RACHEL MOSER

The Rev. Junius Dotson of Saint Mark UMC in Wichita, Kansas, takes part in a legislative committee meeting at the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, this past May.

Great Plains Conference.

“As I told my congregation ... the hardest thing to choose from is two great things,” he said. “I feel like this is the place where God would have me be right now.”



# DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

General Board of Discipleship

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“Working with board and staff, we believe Rev. Dotson can focus the church on three missional fronts: strengthening partnerships in our increasingly global church, improving the effective ongoing ministries in our churches, engaging the growing number of “spiritual but not religious” people in the United States,” she added.

In his new position, Dotson will be the chief executive for Discipleship Ministries, will serve on the Connectional Table and will work with central conferences.

Dotson, married and the father of two children, said it was a difficult decision to leave Saint Mark, Wichita and the

Dotson said some of the challenges he sees ahead for Discipleship Ministries includes improving the disciple-making systems of local churches, using emerging technology to help reach potential church members and reaching out into the communities United Methodist churches serve.

“If we’re truly focused on disciples, making disciples, it’s all about sharing our faith beyond these four walls,” he said. “We need to be intentional about our conversations with people, especially those who consider the church to be irrelevant.”

# SUMMER OF SERVICE

CHURCH  
PLANTING

MICAH  
CORPS

VBS

YOUTH  
MINISTRY



## Great Plains interns shown leadership in, out of pulpit

By DAVID BURKE, *communications coordinator*

The Rev. Nicole Conard quickly quashes the old church cliché about the “leaders of tomorrow.”

“These are not the leaders of the future,” Conard, coordinator of young leadership for the Great Plains Conference, said of summer interns. “They lead right now. They are leaders.”

Most of the 33 college-age students settled into Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina on May 24 to begin 10-week internships in the Great Plains.

“We work on how they lead where they are, in their context, in their way,” Conard said. “Hopefully this summer will give them some confidence to lead where they are or encourage what they’ve already been a part of.”

Although remnants of previous internship programs – the Micah Corps program in Nebraska and the Vacation Bible School leadership in the former Kansas West Conference – are still in place, this is the second year for a full-fledged program in the Great Plains.

“Last year it was a concerted effort for all intern-type programs that we had previously to come under one

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE REV. ASHLEE ALLEY  
The Rev. Dee Williamston, Salina District superintendent, anoints those in the internship program for ministry this summer during the internship training May 24, at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina, Kansas.

umbrella,” Conard said. “That gave us the creativity to add other internships programs that had not been a part of any of our previous conferences.”

Those new programs include pastoral leadership, church planting, Hispanic ministry, youth ministry and, new in 2016, young adult community building.

“Last year was our first, pilot year,” Conard said. “This year we have some sense of rhythm of how we work together and how these internships can work together.”

Feedback after last year led to a longer, two-day closing retreat at Camp Comeca, near Cozad, Nebraska.

“We can wrap this up in a way that allows the learning to continue on after they leave,” said the Rev. Ashlee Alley, clergy recruitment and development coordinator.

After a praise-and-worship service, which included a sermon by the Rev. Alan Gurupira, assistant to the bishop of the Zimbabwe Conference, the interns discussed church leadership and how it doesn’t necessarily mean becoming an ordained minister.

“In a lot of conferences, you can be an apprentice to a pastor, to learn that,” Conard said. “We’re encouraging leadership no matter what vocation they go into. They can still serve God and their neighbor in many different ways.”

Conard said applications for the internship program were nearly double the number of students who were hired.

The interns come from not only across Kansas and Nebraska, but New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Iowa.

“The word is getting out about what we’re doing in this conference,” said the Rev. Kalaba Chali, Great Plains mercy and justice coordinator.

Conard agreed, saying that she has received inquiries about the Great Plains internships from conferences across the country.

Several of the interns have returned from last year, some in different roles and others in leadership tasks.

“I just like working for the church and being able to help people during the summer,” said Kristina Henrich, a Wilson, Kansas, native and Fort Hays State University student who is supervising the VBS interns. “It’s fun and entertaining and

gives me an opportunity to get away for the summer but still explore, but not have to spend as much to explore.”

Amy Kenyon, Omaha, who just graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in secondary English/theater education, said that like other internships the Great Plains offered a chance to travel and meet people.

But there was also a fulfilling aspect.

“It’s an opportunity to do some self-learning and do something useful with your summer – a moment of growth rather than relaxation,” said Kenyon, a Micah Corps member.

“Being young adults, being in a very transitional time of life, we’ve been talking a lot about discernment, about what path God’s calling me to,” she added. “I’m having space to figure out what that is for myself, as well as helping interns figure it out for themselves.”

Alley said the goal of the Great Plains staff members was to provide a transformational 10 weeks.

“The internships are formative experiences,” she said. “I think this is a summer they’ll remember for a lifetime.”

PHOTO BY DAVID BURKE

The 2016 Great Plains Conference interns let loose during their internship training on May 24, at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina, Kansas.

**YOUNG ADULT  
COMMUNITY  
BUILDING**

**HISPANIC  
MINISTRY**

**PASTORAL  
LEADERSHIP**



# Out of Africa, into the Great Plains

## Churches welcome foreign-born pastors to lead congregations

By **DAVID BURKE**,  
*communications coordinator*

The Rev. Alice Koech quickly broke the ice with the congregation of First UMC in Hays, Kansas, when she began as associate pastor last year.

"I have an accent," she recalled as the opening of her first sermon. "I laid it out there."

"Some of you don't know where my accent is from, and I'll tell you," she added. "It is from Nebraska."

Alice and her husband, the Rev. Ezekiel Koech —pastor at Trinity UMC in Russell, Kansas — began new assignments last summer after five years in Big Springs and Chappell/Lodgepole, respectively, in Cornhusker country.

The Koechs, both of whom are natives of Kenya, are among a number of African-born pastors in the Great Plains Conference. Bishop Scott J. Jones says there are more African-born pastors in the conference than there are African-American pastors.

Before the 2014 union of the former Nebraska, Kansas East and Kansas West conferences that created the Great Plains Conference, the two states already had a history of reaching out to Africa — Kansas maintained a connection to Zimbabwe, and Nebraska was linked with Nigeria.

Since the union, those bonds have only strengthened.

"That mutual relationship opened up opportunities to know people. When some of those people needed places to serve in America, we welcomed them," Bishop Jones said. "The hospitality of the Great Plains made this a place they would be interested in talking to, because they knew they would be welcomed here."

The Great Plains was not the first American stop for either of the Koechs.

Ezekiel, 46, went to Asbury College in Kentucky for a year as part of an exchange program. While his original plans were to return to Kenya to become a pastor, there were no openings in his home country. The former bishop of the Nebraska Conference offered him a charge in the Great West District.

"I realized I could minister anywhere," Ezekiel said. "God kind of opened up my world view, expanded it."

Alice, 42, grew up in another Kenyan village, feeling the call to ministry while she was still in high school. She

ministry.

"The church we were a part of at that time did not have a lot of women in ministry," Alice explained, "And women who were in ministry did not have that as their jobs. It was an additional thing."

"They were not opposed to women in ministry, but they did not recognize that it was something you could do as a vocation," she continued. "They looked at it as, 'You could serve in ministry while doing something else.'"

Celebrating their 22nd wedding anniversary this year, the Koechs have three children: Roy, 19; Abigail, 14; and Zachariah, 10. The children consider themselves Americans, their parents said.

"When they go to Kenya, people say they talk like missionaries. They have American accents," Ezekiel said. "They feel this is their home, and when they go to Africa they feel like they are missionaries."

Alice Koech will return to Kenya this summer, to her home village, as part of the Water and Sanitation Program sponsored by the United Methodist Committee on Relief, or UMCOR.

"This is an opportunity to share God's love," she told

the Hays congregation recently. "To tell them, 'God cares about you.'"

"I had to remember what the missionaries in Kenya would do," Ezekiel said. "They would speak slow, not very fast. The more you talk with them, the more you understand them. Really I didn't know I had an accent — I thought it was just the missionaries who were in Kenya. When I came here, they told me I had an accent, too."

"I wanted them to hear my message,



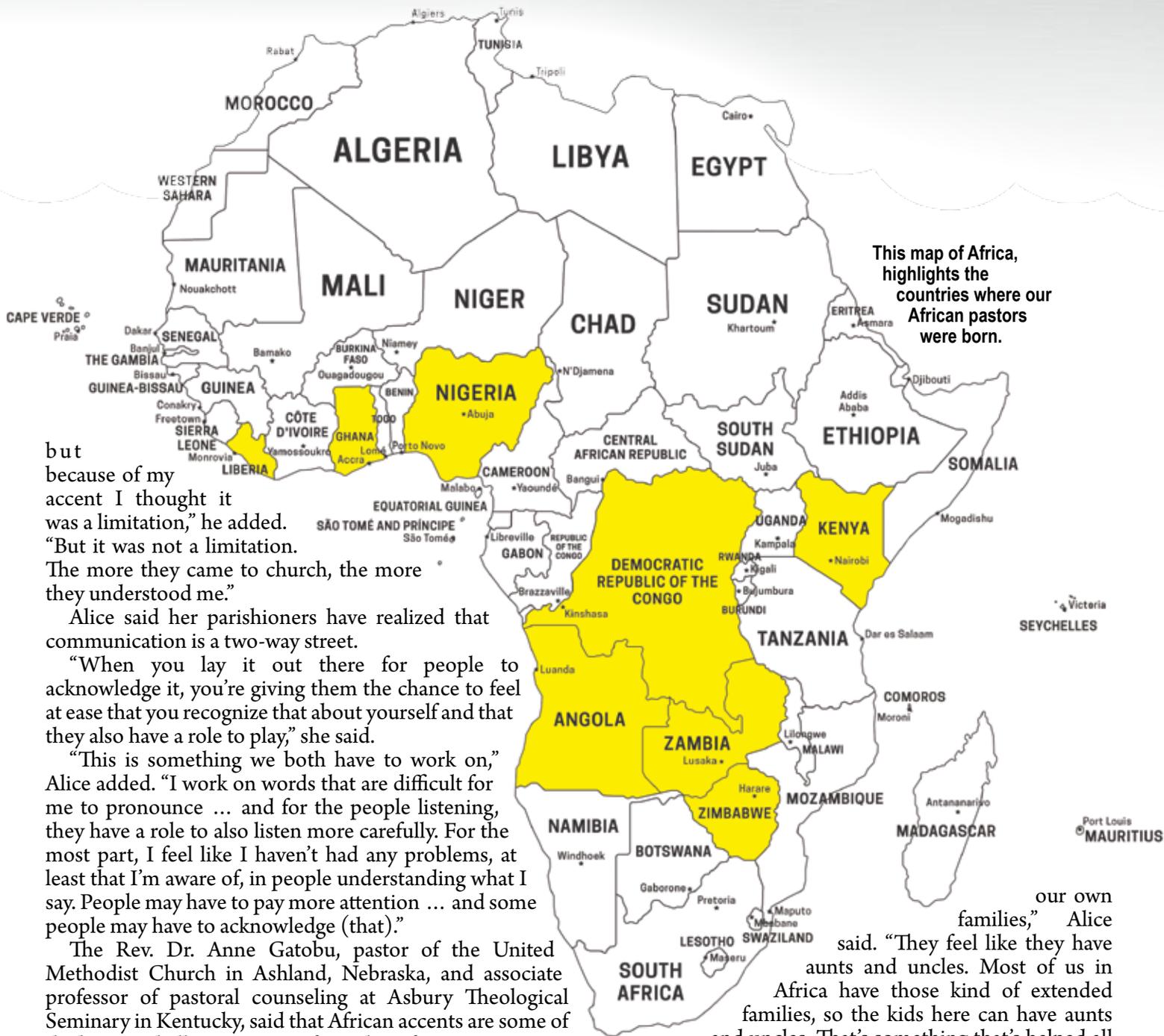
PHOTO BY DAVID BURKE

The Rev. Ezekiel Koech and the Rev. Alice Koech stand in front of Trinity UMC in Russell, Kansas, where Ezekiel preaches. The Koechs are among a number of Great Plains Conference pastors who are African-born.

proceeded with seminary against the wishes of her family members, several of whom weren't Christian.

"My own family was opposed to me going to Bible college. They had reservations," she recalled. "They wondered what kind of job that was. How would you be able to live on offerings? How would you survive on that?"

In Africa, she said, there weren't many female role models in the



This map of Africa, highlights the countries where our African pastors were born.

but because of my accent I thought it was a limitation,” he added. “But it was not a limitation. The more they came to church, the more they understood me.”

Alice said her parishioners have realized that communication is a two-way street.

“When you lay it out there for people to acknowledge it, you’re giving them the chance to feel at ease that you recognize that about yourself and that they also have a role to play,” she said.

“This is something we both have to work on,” Alice added. “I work on words that are difficult for me to pronounce ... and for the people listening, they have a role to also listen more carefully. For the most part, I feel like I haven’t had any problems, at least that I’m aware of, in people understanding what I say. People may have to pay more attention ... and some people may have to acknowledge (that).”

The Rev. Dr. Anne Gatobu, pastor of the United Methodist Church in Ashland, Nebraska, and associate professor of pastoral counseling at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky, said that African accents are some of the biggest challenges pastors from there face.

“There’s a feeling that others may not be open enough to hear them,” Gatobu said.

“It is uphill sometimes, because that depends on the congregation being open to hear,” she added. “English is not necessarily a problem, it’s the accents.”

Both of the Koechs have become involved with their communities, and their children are participating in a whirlwind of activities.

“I love to get involved with the community activities. It is not only an ideal way to meet people, you can meet people in the middle of the week wherever they are. I want to be involved too,” Ezekiel said.

“They become open once they know you,” Alice added.

The Koechs keep in close contact with other African-born pastors in the Great Plains Conference. Many of them gather for an annual Thanksgiving dinner.

“We’ve decided to form a family here, being away from

our own families,” Alice said. “They feel like they have aunts and uncles. Most of us in Africa have those kind of extended families, so the kids here can have aunts and uncles. That’s something that’s helped all of us.”

The networking of extended families is vital, Gatobu said. “Everyone in Africa becomes an aunt and an uncle,” said Gatobu, a native of Nairobi. “I have lots of nieces and nephews, many of whom aren’t even from my country. That comes from our African understanding of family being more extended than in the West.”

Likewise, she said, definitions of friendship are different in the continents.

“Friendships are a big challenge, being able to have a true and trusting friendships across culture,” Gatobu said. “The whole idea of friendship in the West is very individualized, in terms of ‘What can I get from my friendship with you?’ whereas the African friendship is ‘No matter what, you are there for the other person.’”

Read full story at [greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/out-of-africa-into-the-great-plains-4954168](http://greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/out-of-africa-into-the-great-plains-4954168)

# Death notices

**Hazel Inez (Fore) Calcote, 94**, a surviving spouse of a clergy member, died May 25, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Lee Russell Calcote; and daughter, Elizabeth Ann. Survivors include children, the Rev. Victor Calcote, Elrea Mullen; Dr. Ronald Calcote and Katrina Tamsen. Memorial contributions may be made through Miles Funeral Service to Harry Hynes Hospice or First UMC in Winfield, Kansas.

**The Rev. Dale Lee Clare, 82**, a retired clergy member, died April 30, 2016. He was preceded in death by his wife, Nanon (Bird) Clare. Survivors include daughters, Dr. Lisa Clare, Lori Cross and Linda Clare.

**Laura Belle Haines, 80**, surviving spouse of a clergy member, died May 2, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Robert A. Haines; and stepdaughter, Ruth Ann Capley. Survivors include children Daniel Williams, John Williams; Laurinda Raney, Janette Quigley, stepchildren; Doris Shoemaker and Robert Haines. Memorial contributions may be left in the care of Shelley Family Funeral Home, 803 Loomis St., Winfield, KS 67156.

**Irma Herrick, 92**, a surviving spouse of a clergy member, died April 4, 2016. She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Marvin V. Herrick. Survivors include children, Lorie June Tudor, Carol Pewthers and Don Herrick. Memorial contributions may be made to Lincoln Indian Center, 1100 Military Rd., Lincoln, NE 68508.

**The Rev. Nellie "Nell" Lou Holmes, 67**, a retired clergy member, died April 27, 2016. Memorial contributions may be made to the donor's choice.

**The Rev. Elton "John" Lee Hunter, 82**, a retired associate member, died May 21, 2016. Survivors include his wife, Lola Hunter; and children Diane Hiebert, Vicki Strausberg and Dwight Hunter. Memorial contributions may be made to Stockton UMC and may be sent in care of Plumer-Overlease Funeral Home, 723 N. 1st Street, Stockton, KS 67669.

**The Rev. Susan A. Montgomery, 69**, a retired clergy member, died May 27, 2016. Survivors include sons, Brien Montgomery and Stacy T. Montgomery. Memorial contributions may be made to the Community Health Ministry or the charity of the donor's choice and sent in care of Piper Funeral Home, 714 Maple St., St. Marys, Kansas 66536.

**The Rev. Robert "Bob" Donald Parker, 86**, a retired clergy member, died April 20, 2016. Survivors include his wife, Frances Parker; and children, Denise Cribbit, Becky Hill, Cheri Dubuque, Melinda Loney, John Parker and Michael Parker. Memorial contributions may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

**Cara Ruth Hutchinson Perkins, 78**, the spouse of a retired clergy member, died April 26, 2016. Survivors include her husband, the Rev. Thomas Perkins; and sons, Tom Perkins II and Lance Perkins. Memorial contributions may be made to Western Nebraska Community College Foundation, 1601 E. 27th St., Scottsbluff, NE 69361 or to Delta Gamma Kappa's Cradle Catcher Books for Babies program in care of Marcia Schlictemier, 2617 Ave. D., Scottsbluff, NE 69361.

**The Rev. Sheila Taylor, 62**, a clergy member, died May 10, 2016. Survivors include her husband, Gregory Taylor; and children Jamie Connell and Sarah Taylor. Memorial contributions may be made to Camp Norwesca, or the Brain Research Foundation, in Chicago, Ill.

**The Rev. Marion Franklin Woods, 97**, a retired clergy member, died April 21, 2016. He is preceded in death by his first wife, Marjory, and his second wife, Fannie May. Survivors include wife, Mary; and children, Paula, Karen, Stanley and Margie. Memorial contributions may be made to Costa Rica Methodist Mission Projects, in care of The Bank of Northwest Kansas, Bird City.



The 2016 South Central Jurisdictional Conference Presents:

an evening of

**CELEBRATION, WORSHIP & PRAISE**

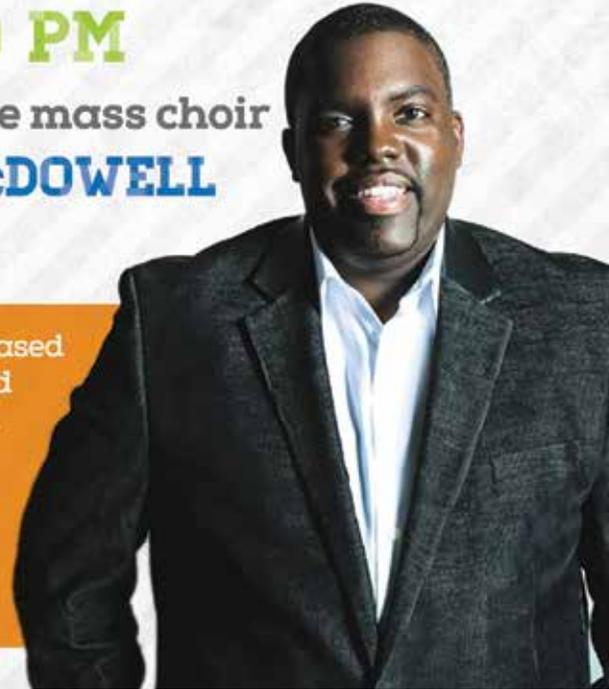
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## Conference honors 37 retirees



PHOTO BY TODD SEIFERT

The class of 2016 retirees are (fourth row from left) Russell Brown, Tom Hyde, Tom Reazin, Dale Lambert, Warren Hett and Randy Dilts. (Third row) Bob Whitaker, Dennis Linton-Hendrick, Dennis Fulton, Kip Ryherd and David Bell. (Second row) Michael Graber, Dale Coats, Bonnie Linton-Hendrick, Janet Maxwell, Rick Saylor, Louis Davies and Dale Thiele. (Front row) Larry Barbary, Quenton Bennet, Cheryl Wertheimer, Pat Ault-Duell, Janie Freeman Michael Flury, Teresa Mason Pricella Davies and Keith Johnson. Not pictured include: Sandra Atkins, Eva Brown, George Wine Chase, Moon-Hee Chung, Joyce Harris-Scott, J.C. Kelley, January Kiefer, Bernard McFarthing and Karla Shafer.

# POEM FROM THE MICAH CORPS

I wrote a little poem that was influenced by what I learned last year in Micah Corps, and my parents suggested that I share it with the conference. The piece has a lot to do with black injustice in the 21st century. But the overlaying message is to harp on the honest opportunity we all have to make a change no matter how little it is. Hope you like it!

Sincerely,  
Mutethia (Tay) Gatobu

**Given to all men yet received by few  
You can have luck but a boy need to  
study too  
You'll know the ones who succeed,  
Give it a decade or two  
While the dunce will blow it before  
thirty two, what am I?  
Turn the page, chapter twenty one  
The Man threw us the rules but we marched on through  
And against all odds the minority still grew  
But we're still in a small box expanded by those few  
Why?  
Cam became our best friend with the solid catch  
The only legitimate witness against that badge  
What a white house for such a colorful land  
Could two thousand and eight be a change of hand?  
The mile stone that can't be moved by the next  
The Chosen Pests! Continued unrest!  
Are we destined to contest? On a system for the select best?  
Please, make haste  
We help fund this pace  
I forget we're all in a race  
They forgot we're all the same race  
Omitting Micah six eight must've been the case  
Keep peeling the layers, the color is still red  
Insinuating a world full of dread  
After the war, is when truth crawls from hiding?  
Claiming the Trophy, which will be a branch  
I named it olive, so we can all live**

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