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Daily Digest – June 4, 2021

Annual Conference 2021

Jun 5, 2021 | Headlines



A chain of people linked arms around the Hot Springs Convention Center to show racial unity during the Having the Conversation presentation.

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Friday, June 4, 2021 was the last day of this year's Arkansas Annual Conference. The day consisted of many reports from institutions and committees, as well as legislative actions from the Board of Trustees that required approval by the voting members of the Annual Conference. Our Order of the Day was presented by the Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson. The One Matters and Denman youth and adult awards were also given out, and after a final worship service, everyone left Hot Springs, Arkansas, and returned to their homes after another successful Annual Conference.

Morning Business Session

At the beginning of Friday's business session, the One Matters Award was presented to Hawley Memorial UMC of Pine Bluff. The Rev. Edna Morgan, pastor at Hawley UMC and newly appointed Southeast District Superintendent, accepted the award on behalf of her church. The award is given out every year to a local church that exemplifies remarkable leadership in their community and seeks to bring people to Christ through action and spirit.



The Rev. Edna Morgan received the One Matters Award on behalf of Hawley Memorial UMC in Pine Bluff.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award is given out every year to two individuals, a youth and an adult recipient, who exemplify what it means to be a disciple in their own communities. The youth recipient of this year's award was Phoebe Sanders, ACCYM President and student at Hendrix College. The adult recipient of the Denman Award was two people this year, the Rev. Jim and Beth Lenderman. The Rev. Jim Lenderman passed away in May after a courageous fight with cancer. His wife, Beth, was present at Annual Conference to accept the award for both of them.



Beth Lenderman received the Harry Denman Evangelism Award for her and her late husband, the Rev. Jim Lenderman.

After a report from the Committee on Disaster Relief, Janice and Byron Mann, Coordinators for the Arkansas Conference Disaster Response Ministries and Volunteers in Mission, were honored for their decades-long service to the Annual Conference. The Manns will be retiring at the end of 2021 and were given a special commemorative vase in their honor. It was also announced that the new disaster response warehouse and staging headquarters in Conway would be named in honor of the Manns for their years of faithful service.



Janice and Byron Mann were honored for their years of service in disaster response and will be retiring at the end of 2021.

The Board of Trustees gave their report during the morning session. After voting and passing recommendations contained in their report for church closings, Bishop called for a quick break. When we returned from break, the Rev. Tony Griffin and Todd Burris presented a new disaffiliation policy that the Board of Trustees had crafted in response to legislation passed at the 2019 General Conference special session. The disaffiliation policy laid out the process churches would need to go through, in regards to financial assets and property, if they voted to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church based on par. 2553 of the Book of Discipline. After amendments, and amendments to the amendments, were introduced, the voting members of the Annual Conference voted to strike all of 6.b.III from the disaffiliation policy. The text that was removed can be found on page 41, lines 10,11 in the [Pre-Conference Journal](#). The final vote on the disaffiliation policy passed 348-147.

Order of the Day: Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson

The Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson presented to the Annual Conference a discussion on racism and the church titled “Honoring Our Wesleyan Heritage through Racial Reconciliation. Beasley and Johnson were contributors to the book “I’m Black. I’m Christian. I’m Methodist,” which was edited by the Rev. Dr. Rudy Rasmus and featured contributions from Black UMC pastors from across the connection. The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas and the Arkansas Conference previously hosted Beasley and Johnson during a webinar discussion of the same name. Beasley and Johnson were asked by Bishop Mueller to offer advice to local churches that are seeking to dismantle racism and move toward racial reconciliation, and both panelists said one of the most important things a local church can do is to constantly check themselves and make sure that the programs they have implemented now to dismantle racism don’t get left behind and

forgotten. There must be constant work put into the process of dismantling racism and building racial reconciliation.



The Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson presented the Order of the Day on racial reconciliation.

Immediately following the presentation by the Rev. Dr. Erin Beasley and Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson, a group of pastors joined the Rev. Troy Conrad and the Rev. Rashim Merriwether on stage to discuss a new free resource produced by the Arkansas Conference, “Having the Conversation: A devotional series for dismantling the sin of racism, and building God’s reconciliation.” The book features different devotional series written by Arkansas clergy and laity dealing with racism in the modern world, and how we can all work toward building racial reconciliation in our local churches. The resource was passed out to the audience at Annual Conference, and an online copy will be made available on the Conference website soon.

Afternoon Business Session

The afternoon business session featured reports from a collection of various institutions, and Conference committees and organizations. Institutional reports were given either live or through video by Lydia Patterson Institute, Hendrix College, Philander Smith College, Perkins School of Theology, and Methodist Family Health.

The Methodist Foundation for Arkansas, the Committee on Disability Concerns, the Board of Global Ministries, the Committee on the Status and Role of Women, the Board of Pensions, the Dean of the Cabinet report, and the Nominations Report were all given as well. You can find all of these reports in the [Pre-Conference Journal](#).

The Rev. Jim Polk also introduced our two newest camp directors for Camp Tanako and Mount Eagle Retreat Center, Kayle Hardage for Tanako and Katelyn Hiatt for Mount Eagle.

Near the end of the afternoon business session, Rob and Kathi Walker were honored by Todd Burris, the Bishop, and the entire Annual Conference for their years of dedication to the annual event. Rob and Kathi have been providing wonderful, delicious home-cooked meals, backstage assistance, and so much more to the Annual Conference for many years, and this year was their last event to help with. We appreciate all they have done for our Conference and will miss them dearly.



Rob and Kathi Walker were presented a gift on behalf of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Setting of Appointments

The final day of Annual Conference closed with a beautiful worship service where LED candles were lit and held up by clergy and laity in the arena. The setting of final appointments by the Bishop was also made, and you will be able to find the full list of appointments on the Conference website soon.

To view full sessions of the 2021 Arkansas Annual Conference, visit our [YouTube page](#).

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