

Proceedings

Morning Proceedings for May 1

Worship

RITA SMITH (Northern Illinois): Good morning, my brothers and sisters in Christ!

ALL: Good morning.

SMITH: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Please, those who are able, please stand in body or spirit, and join me in the call to worship.

Remember, we have been called.

ALL: Come, let us join together, centering on the one who has called us.

SMITH: Remember, we have been claimed.

ALL: Come, let us join together, centering on the one who has claimed us.

SMITH: Remember, we are surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses.

ALL: Come, together let us worship our God.

(music)

DEE DEE AZHIKAKATH (Desert Southwest): Please be seated. I am reading this morning from the Book of Hebrews 12:1-2, as well as 13:7:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely. Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

The word of God for the people of God.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Good morning.

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP DAVID M. WILSON: *(speaking in Choctaw)* Good morning, I am David Wilson, and it's a privilege to get to preach this morning for this service. Thank you. I want to say thank you to my college of the South Central Jurisdiction for nominating me to be here this morning. I, if you don't know come from the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference and want to say thank you so much for the group who performed today.

(applause)

I accidentally asked them—they asked me if they could sing in honor of me being here today, so I'm so thankful for them for this morning. I was excited when I found out the passage for our service today. It's one that I've used often in memorial services and anniversaries and so many places. It's one that I have used often in my life as a pastor after that. The reading calls me to look back to people who have made a difference in my life and my ministry and many of those people come from this body from generations past, the general conferences there. This passage that was read this morning calls us a look to the future. It calls to think about what it is that Creator God has in store for this United Methodist Church. So the one piece that I want to share today that will be what I focus on is this: The author Hebrew says: remember your leaders, those who first spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Amen.

BISHOP WILSON: I think about this reading, and first of all, it calls us to remember, and so I think back to my first involvement in this General Conference of my lifetime. I grew up in a small Native American congregation in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where I was nurtured by so many leaders—women and men who were so important to my life. I had a pastor, I had a pastor there who first recognized God's call upon my life, long before I ever did. And I remember those leaders so often, those who first taught me about Creator God, those who taught me about faith, those who taught me about love, forgiveness, and so much more. But most of all, I remember their witness of how they cared and loved me and so many people around our communities. They taught me to be proud of who I am as a Native American.

So in 1992, my very first General Conference, I was asked—and this is a long title, so I'm going to have to take it slow—the Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group (IESDG) to put together their newsletter for the General Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Some of you remember the days when many groups would stand outside of the coliseums and would pass out newsletters every single day. By the time those two weeks was over we would have a stack of papers that big. So that was my job, I was the one to put together the newsletter. I was a journalism major. I had written for school papers since the seventh grade, and I went to college on journalism scholarships. That was my first calling to be a writer.

So late in the evening, around 10:00 every night, they would bring stories to me that I would use to create their newsletter. And so I would finish after midnight, they'd come by room, pick up the papers, they'll have it printed, hand it off the next day. Went back to bed and started the process over and over for about two weeks. I learned much from those leaders, most of those who are now gone. Most are now gone. Their work focused on being recognized and included in the life of this United Methodist Church, of what it meant to belong, to be represented in this denomination that we love so much. My siblings, I think about that often in terms of what we're doing this week—working towards inclusion, the understanding of this church which has been for all of God's people.

In 1996, I was asked to be a secretarial assistant to what folk over here have been doing that Carolyn Marshall, many of you will remember Carolyn Marshall. She served for many years as the secretary of this General Conference. She and her staff would orient us and get us ready, would enter petitions, do anything they asked us to do during that conference. Then in 2000, I was a alternate for the General Conference; my predecessor passed away, and I assumed his duties, and since that time have served as

a delegate for this General Conference. And in 2022, I was elected to the episcopacy in the South Central Jurisdiction and having a wonderful time—

(applause)

—having a wonderful time serving the great people of the Great Plains Annual Conference! And who we've heard from often throughout the last several days.

(laughter)

My friends, I share these episodes of my life because in each of these, there were leaders who taught me about the church that I first entered as a Methodist and later as a United Methodist. They were people who nurtured me, who cared for me and taught me so much about what it meant to be a disciple of Christ, in whatever role I served in at the time.

And all of us are here today, in this arena are folk over here, folk who are watching, because we have been elected by those who see us as leaders in this United Methodist Church. There have been and continue to be people all around who have depended on us to show them the way, to be people who lead with wisdom, who lead with faithfulness with our walk with Jesus Christ. And my friends, we are not here by chance but rather through the support, direction, and hope of others who believe that we will listen to the movement of the Holy Spirit to do the best we can for the sake of the church and the world.

The reading secondly tells us to consider. Consider. I think about what that means and certain that many stories of those who early prepared us to lead in the church. I think about what the author is writing when it says, "Consider the outcome of their way of life." Another definition is to "think carefully about it before making a decision." Eugene Peterson in his translation of the passage writes, "Take a good look."

All of us here have dealt with disaffiliation of churches leaving our denomination. It has been so challenging, but I have been so amazed in my annual conference of the Great Plains with the tenacity and faithfulness of so many across the Great Plains. And in fact, in most cases, it was the laity who dug in their heels and vowed to keep their faith in place with this United Methodist Church.

(applause)

It was the laity who often led the way, and I am so thankful for their commitment. One church that I have been fascinated with in my conference is from Imperial, Nebraska, voted to leave the denomination. It passed by one vote. So you can imagine what progressed after that. But there was a good number of people there who said, "We are going to stay as United Methodists." So they found a place to rent just about a half a mile from the former church and the people have been meeting there for almost a year, and a community of a little over two thousand people.

Our content specialist, David Burke, wrote a story in our paper. And David wrote about them and said these are folk who continue to meet as United Methodists, without a pastor, which is their choice for now, and they gathered people of all ages, including many children. David writes about the many who once were members and moved to the new church and donated items in the past such as a beautiful, stained glass cross that they left behind. The sanctuary's grand piano, pew Bibles were purchased as memorials years ago by members who left the church who are now part of this new gathering. So listen

to what they told David. One of the members said, “We had to make a decision not only to remain United Methodist with all of our great theology and all that comes with it, but we had to think about the decision we made—what was most important to us. Was it the building and the cross and the Bibles and the piano—were those the things that were going to make us stay as United Methodists or in this church? Or was it the way we believe or the things we find important? Were those the things that were going to make us leave?”

I am thankful for the outlook of the church, which calls us all to think carefully about who we are as people of faith, what is most important and how we live that out in our communities.

I went to visit that congregation in southwest Nebraska last fall. I needed to see for myself this commitment of this great group of people there who left to start something new amid a region of churches that left our denomination. So when I began my visit in that part of Nebraska, it was a cold day in October, and it snowed the night before. Area had about four inches of snow, and it turned to ice in the morning. Had I been in Oklahoma where I come from, churches would have been shut down, stores be closed, and everything. But, my friends, that does not happen in Kansas and Nebraska. I’ve learned that since my time there and thankful for that.

So me and the superintendent trekked our way to Imperial, Nebraska. We arrived seeing members shoveling the snow, the sidewalk to the church, many coming out to worship that day. Among those was a couple celebrating seventy-three years of marriage. The youth led worship via recordings, and there was more than a dozen children there. Folks gathered to set up worship, and we were having a wonderful time. The people were happy, and I could tell what they meant when they said it was to believe in Christ and all that was important to their faith that kept them there as United Methodists.

Lastly, the author talks about what it means for us to imitate, to imitate the faith of those who came before us. So we sit here this week, a little over seven hundred people that make up this body, hundreds of others with us, guests, people watching, representing various constituencies. We come from four continents, speak in ten languages, and we come with the commonality and belief and service to Jesus Christ and the world. And I believe we are also here because we believe in the life and future of this United Methodist Church. And my friends, we have much more in common than not.

Last fall I was invited to dinner by one of our clergy from the Great Plains Conference. We had a wonderful meal and conversations sitting around that table—Kenyans, Koreans, Anglos, and myself at that table. And so we shared our histories and lives together. And later I would visit with the host, Rev. Dr. Anne Gatobu, who is from Kenya and is also a delegate with us this week. And Anne would share with me the African Christian perspective of what it meant to love your neighbor. She talks about *Ubuntu*. Many of you know that already.

She shared with me that *Ubuntu* means the humanness that is found in being with one another. And Anne said, “Bishop, when one pulls away from others in individualistic endeavors that are self-focused, they lose the essence of what makes one person a human being: the life-giving force that is found in the interwovenness of life experiences with each other.” And she said because of *Ubuntu*, the message of love in Africa has been preached with great ease and effectiveness as it resonates with the innermost being of people. What a wonderful image, a powerful image, my friends, to think about that. So I leave us with this question: What does it mean for us to imitate the faith in our lives to affect the next generations? So in case I didn’t make it through this morning, I brought a prop for us this morning: my

crozier that was made for friends of mine from my small church in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and a longtime Cherokee friend who did this beautiful beadwork. When I arrived, I was walking into the hotel and ran into Bishop Schnase.

He said, “Bishop, do you carry your crozier with you everywhere you go?”

(laughter)

And I said, “No, I don’t.” So you can imagine me walking over this morning carrying this as well. I thought about the songs that my friend’s relatives sang this morning, and I drove over to this place, and I as I was driving into the hills of North Carolina, the Cherokee people who are still there, but thinking about my ancestors, the Cherokee people, who were removed from that part of the country to what is now Oklahoma. I thought about their faithfulness and their stories and the songs that were sung this morning. Those were songs that were composed on the Trail of Tears of our Native people, coming to a new land. We had accepted Christianity in 1820s and become faithful Christians, built churches, and a few years later the government—and the church, my friends—drove us from our homelands. And along that Trail, going to land knowing nothing about what was going to happen, losing a third of our people along the journey to death, not even enough time to stop and bury their bodies. The soldiers would tell the people, “Throw a blanket,” and that’s all you can do, and left them there.

And so these songs—think about these songs of faith, and it’s a song that Eli sang, composed on the Trail of Tears. It said, “We will sing hallelujah,” not knowing where we’re going, but we know wherever we get to, we’re going to see some day our fathers and our mothers, our grandparents, our ministers, others for that.

My friends, think about the faithfulness of those people, facing death, still holding out for their faith in Jesus Christ. So I brought this this morning—my friend who made this—in the middle of course is the cross and flame, and all their footsteps. The footsteps representing our Indian people, our Native people, who—so many were removed from our homelands. And I carry this—this is so special because it reminds me of those who came before me, those who imitated their faith, and those on whose lives I stand on today.

So I think about that, my friends, and in closing—in this country, there are six tribal nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in the upper northeastern part of this country. The oral tradition says that this confederacy has existed since time immemorial. This country modeled its U.S. constitution after their confederacy constitution. Oren Lyons is a faith keeper of the Onondaga nation, and he wrote about their philosophy and how they operate in the world, and he said, “This seventh generation philosophy is integral to the Haudenosaunee life. It intensifies the bond of community, promotes stability and provides concrete values with which every person can test his or her everyday actions. And although this practice is ancient traditions, the culture is not frozen in the past. So their ability to adapt to dramatic change on surviving on their own terms is historically proven, but they are equally focused on the security of future generations.”

So I call my longtime friend and former delegate and retired pastor, Rev. Dr. Thom White Wolf Fassett. Thom is a member of the Seneca Nation that belongs to the confederacy. He’s also, I believe, a retired member of, I believe, the Upper New York Annual Conference. So I wanted to find out more about this, so I called Thom and he said, “David.” He said, “The Grand Council of Six Nations come together in a

longhouse for action. Their process is from ancient times which is consensus.” And Thom says they believe they are the ones who invented consensus. When they make decisions, their proposals are passed around until the final nation delivers a verdict. And he said if there are disagreements, they work and they compromise until they have a positive answer. And he said the final decision must, must take into account the health and survival of the next seven generations. You heard that right, my friends: the next seven generations.

Peacemaker Oren Lyons put it like this. He said, “When you sit in council for the welfare of the people, you must not think about yourself. You must not think about your own family or your own generation.” He said, “But make your decisions on behalf of the next seven generations coming, so they may enjoy what you had today.”

What beautiful and powerful words, my friends. So I think about what would that look like for the days we have remaining here in Charlotte, North Carolina, if we made plans looking ahead for the next seven generations, so that people can enjoy what we have? Can you imagine how that could impact this denomination and, most importantly, the world?

(applause)

My friends, may we be moved to look ahead seven generations for our future. May we recall what it means to practice and understand *Ubuntu* as a life-giving force that we live life not just on our remaining time here, but all the places that Creator God calls us to throughout the world for the next seven generations. Amen.

(applause)

Thank you. Thank you.

MARY LOU GREENWOOD BOICE (Director of the Advance at the General Board of Global Ministries): Dear friends, offering is a way of worship. Today in remembering all that God is and all that God does, we offer our thanks with gifts to benefit UMCOR’s Global Migration Advance. This project addresses the needs of the millions who seek refuge from violence, who flee from their homes seeking relief from poverty, who migrate seeking opportunity. You are invited to give generously, so your gifts will alleviate suffering and restore hope to so many.

(pause)

(music)

(applause)

(music)

(applause)

(pause)

LAURA NYAMAI (Kenya-Ethiopia): These were our dreamers.

JON COPELAND (Missouri): Our prayer warriors.

STEPH DODGE (Tennessee): Our planners.

NYAMAI: These were our martyrs.

COPELAND: Our scholars.

DODGE: Our conscience.

NYAMAI: These were our future.

COPELAND: Our present.

DODGE: Our future—our history.

NYAMAI: Let us hear these names and remember.

COPELAND: Let us listen to these voices and honor their memory.

DODGE: Let us ponder these names and hold them in our hearts.

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary of the General Conference): These are the bishops and spouses who have died since we were last together:

(chime sounds after each name)

Bishop William Wesley Morris

Julia Wilke

Eunice Matthews

Bishop Federico J. Pagura was elected in 1969 to The United Methodist Church but became a bishop of an autonomous church when that area changed its status in 2016

Louise Baird Short

Kathleen Thomas-Sano

Bishop Franz W. Schäfer

Bishop Emerson Colaw

Ruth Thomas

Bishop Felton May

Gwen White

Bishop Moisés Fernandes

Thelma H. Newman

Bishop John Wesley Hardt

Angelina Nacpil

Dorothy S. Lee

Bishop Ruediger Minor

Jean Stockton

Lucille Wheatley

Bishop Bevel L. Jones III

Melvena Nagbe

Mary Ann Hunt

Bishop Benjamin Chamness

Bishop William B. Oden

Mary Jean Russell
Bishop Judith Craig
Bishop Dale White
Bishop Kenneth W. Hicks
Lila Elaine Hicks
Linda Carder
Bishop R. Kern Eutsler
Bishop Mike Coyner
Virginia Clymer
Sherri Dobbs Johnson
Marie Webb
Betty Boulton
Ruth Handy
Bishop John K. Yambasu
Martha Carson Hardt
Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn
Ina Schowengert
Polly Hodapp
Anne Hearn
Brad Kieseey
Bishop F. Herbert Skeete
Bishop Daniel C. Arichea Jr.
Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel
Bishop Beverly J. Shamana
Jeffrey Swenson
Dania Aben Soriano
Jack D. Middleton
Bishop Wilbur Choy
Marji Tuell
Rose King
Shimba Ntambo
Annegret Klaiber
Bishop John Russell
Bishop Robert H. Spain
Christina [Christiana] K. Dabale
Socorro Granadosin
Syble Spain
Zoe Wilson
Bishop Marshall (Jack) Meadors Jr.
Etta Mae Mutti
Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar
Bishop Melvin Talbert
Lurleen J. [L.] Juan
Bishop Thomas Stockton

Bishop João S. Machado
Bishop William Boyd Grove
Bishop Calvin D. McConnell
Bishop Solito K. Toquero
Velma McConnell
Bishop Timothy Whitaker

Our next list will be those delegates whose deaths have been reported to us since their election:

(chime sounds after each name)

Yed Esaie Angoran
Doudoue Gabriel Basse
Eugene Niagne Lasme
Susan Elizabeth Brown
Junius Boyd Dotson
Nathan David Stanton
Anna K. Kpaan
Cyprus Saye
Chijika Clement Kongolo
Fidele Mpwej Ngandu
Autura Eason-Williams
Turner Arant
Américo Julião Nhassengo
Heath Andrew Husted
Glenn Leland Ethridge
Gypson Kyenge Nsungu Ilunga
Rebecca Kamwang Mwad
John Herschel Beard
Norico Yokokawa Lao
Ntshakal Yav
Cornelia Anne (Connie) Clark
Donna Fay West
Darlene Vancamp Amon
Carl Lee Moravitz
Allen Alvaro
Betty Spiwe Katiyo
Themba Siwela
Clara Zamchiya
John Mark Lawson

And previous staff or volunteer staff of the General Conference:

(chime sounds after each name)

David Atkinson
DeWayne Woodring

Faith Richardson
Beth Steed
Debra Tyree
Leonard (Len) Young
Ellen Natt
Mary Catherine Dean

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Let us pray.

ALL: You who love the whole body of Christ, we give you thanks for those whom you have used to reflect your presence in the world. Help us remember their words, their enthusiasm, their acts of devotion have taught us. Keep us mindful of their legacy we now hold in sacred trust. Give us joy as we wholeheartedly embrace those you are raising up to continue our quest to make the world our parish as we share your grace with all. Amen.

(pause)

(music)

(applause)

BISHOP WILSON: My friends, as we go into this new day, may we take with us a reminder of *Ubuntu*, caring for one another, a reminder to look ahead to the next generations that Creator God has given us. Amen.

(music)

(applause)

Plenary 1

(pause)

BISHOP SHARMA D. LEWIS: Good morning, delegates. We will begin in three minutes.

(pause)

(music)

Delegates, will you please take your seats?

(pause)

Delegates, will you please take your seats?

The eighth plenary session of the postponed 2020 General Conference is called now to order.

My name is Sharma Denise Lewis, a cradle Methodist, born and raised in Statesboro, Georgia, known to some as “the Boro,” who has the wonderful opportunity with the direction of the Holy Spirit, to lead the Mississippi Episcopal Area, known as “the Sip.” Today, we celebrate Methodist Day. We thank you for Methodists who are our invited guests today and Methodists who are joining us globally. Yesterday we

can say that there were many historic moments: passing of the gavel to Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, the first African American woman to lead The United Methodist Church—

(applause)

—the vote to join in full communion with the Episcopal Church, just to name a few.

The Bible reminds us in Lamentations 3:22 and 23, it is our Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because God's compassion fail not. They are new every morning because we know great is thy faithfulness. And I know that I have heard that many delegates and people feel a little anxious, with all the petitions and everything that we're doing. But the Lord led in my spirit this morning to Philippians 4:6-7, a very familiar passage of scripture. Say with me: Do not

ALL: Do not

BISHOP LEWIS: be anxious

ALL: be anxious

BISHOP LEWIS: about anything

ALL: about anything

BISHOP LEWIS: but in every situation

ALL: but in every situation

BISHOP LEWIS: by prayer

ALL: by prayer

BISHOP LEWIS: and petition

ALL: and petition

BISHOP LEWIS: with thanksgiving

ALL: with thanksgiving

BISHOP LEWIS: present your request to God

ALL: present your request to God

BISHOP LEWIS: and the peace of God

ALL: and the peace of God

BISHOP LEWIS: which transcends all understanding

ALL: which transcends all understanding

BISHOP LEWIS: will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

ALL: will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

BISHOP LEWIS: Think about that for a moment.

I am blessed to have my two backup bishops as we are calling them “our triad,” Bishop Connie Shelton and Bishop Robert (Bob) Farr.

(applause)

Amen.

Let us pray, but I also would like to share with you that it has been brought to my attention as well as I saw it on his wife’s Facebook post, and I am sensitive to this as well, that retired bishop, G. Lindsey Davis, will be having hip replacement surgery today, this morning. So let us pray.

Almighty God, your word in Psalm 46:10 states to be still and know I am God. So for just a second, let us center ourselves and be still.

(pause)

Almighty God, let us remember in all of our discussions and conversations today that we trust in you with all of our hearts and lean not to our own understanding. In all of our ways submit to God, and God will make our paths straight. Holy Spirit, guide us in our work today. Holy Spirit, guide us in our work today. What we think we can’t accomplish or even finish, let us know that the Bible says, in Matthew 19:26, “With man and woman this is impossible. But with God all things are possible.” In the name of Jesus the Christ, and all God’s children said amen. Amen. And Amen.

Monitoring Report

BISHOP LEWIS: At this time, the chair invites Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, General Secretary of the Commission on Religion and Race, and Judge Dawn Wiggins Hare, General Secretary of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women, to provide a monitoring report this morning.

DAWN WIGGINS HARE (Alabama-West Florida, General Secretary of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women): Thank you.

GIOVANNI ARROYO (Baltimore-Washington, General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race): Thank you.

¡Buenos días!

ALL: *¡Buenos días!*

WIGGINS HARE: Good morning! I am General Secretary Dawn Wiggins Hare, Alabama-West Florida Conference, laywoman, White, older adult.

ARROYO: General Secretary Giovanni Arroyo, Baltimore-Washington Conference, Latinx, clergyman, adult.

WIGGINS HARE: Gio, there were questions about whether we were coordinating our wardrobe yet. I think we need to answer that.

BOTH: Nope.

WIGGINS HARE: OK.

ARROYO: Friends, we want to thank you for helping us to honor our mandates in *The Book of Discipline* in collecting data to challenge the church for the full inclusion of woman, racial, ethnic, and tribal people at all levels of power and policymaking in the church in our being able to examine the equitable inclusion of persons across the spectrum of leadership in the church.

WIGGINS HARE: Why is this important? Because it is our statement as The United Methodist Church, that all persons are created in the image of God, and y'all this is our witness to the world. So, church, as we continue on this journey, in our analysis of self-awareness and caring for others, what is our report card of the day? Well, looking at the data from yesterday and just a little note, our data collection stops about 4:00 P.M. because we have a hard deadline to the DCA of 5:00 P.M. You got a little bit better grade than the day before, but there is still a long way to go to see perfection. Male speakers from the floor were 63.3 percent. Female 60—excuse me, 36.7 percent.

ARROYO: So what is our opportunity for the day? That is very simple. We have a full day of elections, sharing equally in the power and policymaking at all levels of the church. As you consider slates of nominees and as you contemplate selecting who will lead this church over the next four years in the various areas, consider the following questions: Is the slate of the nominees inclusive? What is the real power, or perceived power, of this position? Do we have an implicit bias towards a particular gender or ethnicity as to qualifications needed for the particular role? And I invite us to pause and pray for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the opportunities ahead of us.

WIGGINS HARE: This is the day that God has made.

ARROYO: This is the day to see everyone as created in the image of God.

WIGGINS HARE: This is the day for all voices to be heard.

ARROYO: This is the day for all persons to be at the table.

WIGGINS HARE: This is the day to do good work.

BOTH: May it be so. Amen.

BISHOP LEWIS: Thank you all for your report.

Methodist Family Day

BISHOP LEWIS: The next item of business is the Methodist Family Report. The chair recognizes the following individuals to provide this report: Bishop Sally Dyck, Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst, Dr. David Field, and Bishop Jeffrey Leath.

BISHOP SALLY DYCK: Good morning, church.

ALL: Good morning

BISHOP DYCK: After General Conference of 2016, it was suggested that we have a special Methodist Family Day recognition. We began this morning with our Methodist family at breakfast, where each of our Methodist-related delegates had an opportunity to sit at table with each other and get to know one another better.

This recognition has caused me to ask, “Who is family?” and “Who is our Methodist family?” At least in the United States, and I think all over the world, families constitute many different configurations of people. Some are related by blood, by marriage, by longtime association, by adoption, formal or otherwise, fostering, or by strong emotional ties. Globally I’m sure there are many categories of what constitutes a family. Overall, families are closely bound by their love and concern for the welfare of each other.

Just like Jesus said when he prayed for his “family,” if you will. He didn’t call us family in John 17, but he did imply that we are to love and care for each other as followers so that the world may believe.

As the Methodist family, we all share a founder in John Wesley and a Wesleyan tradition. We share Wesleyan hymns and Wesleyan practices, means of grace, and all of our Methodist documents. We have Wesleyan roots. And like plants, you can take those roots any place in the world, set them down, and soon they grow, blossom, and produce the fruit of the gospel.

However, wherever those roots are planted, something unique exists in the expression of Methodism coming out of our common root.

Dr. David Field, an ecumenical staff officer, will share a little bit about how and what these expressions of Methodist and Wesleyan roots are.

DAVID FIELD (Ecumenical Staff Officer for Faith & Order and Theological Dialogue): The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations established a variety of relationships with other Methodists. These relationships developed over time; at various stages these categories of relationships were introduced into our *Book of Discipline*. Unfortunately, this was not always done in a coherent way, as one General Conference did not quite listen to what another General Conference had decided, so there’s some overlap and, perhaps, some confusion. I will now describe some of these relationships as they are set out in *The Book of Discipline*, and we’ve asked our Methodist family partners to stand when their categories are called. You will also see them on PowerPoint behind me.

So the first category is our pan-Methodist, full-communion partners. These are members of the Pan-Methodist Commission, which consists of The United Methodist Church the historically African American Methodist churches. They are our guests to General Conference.

The second category are our concordat partners, Methodist churches with whom The UMC has a concordat that enables mutual representation with voice and vote at each other’s General Conference or equivalent bodies.

Then we have affiliated autonomous Methodist churches. These are Methodist churches that have their origins in the predecessor denominations of The UMC or The UMC itself and have entered into an agreement with The UMC, and they have delegates with voice to General Conference.

There are also affiliated united churches. These are united churches that have part of their origin in our predecessor denominations or The UMC and have entered into an agreement with The UMC that gives them delegates with voice to the General Conference.

We then also have a full communion partner with voice at General Conference just to confuse things slightly. This is a church that was an affiliated united church and then entered into full communion agreement with The UMC and retained the right to voice at General Conference.

Then we have the category of covenant churches. These are mostly Methodist and united churches which have entered into a covenant relationship with The UMC. And they are guests at General Conference without voice or vote.

And then, finally, we have autonomous Methodist churches. These are Methodist and united churches that do not have a formal relationship with us but they are our guests here at—some of them are our guests at our General Conference without voice or vote. Thank you.

(applause)

JEAN HAWXHURST (Ecumenical Staff Officer for the Council of Bishops): So you can see that Methodism continues to be a vital Christian movement that extends across God's creation, and we want to both celebrate and affirm it. Love is being shared, disciples are being made, and transformation is happening all over God's creation. Methodism may look a little different in different regions but it all stems from our desire, as Wesley said, to extend the right hand of fellowship.

From the African Methodist Council to storm disaster relief in Asia to our brothers and sisters ministering to war-torn Ukraine and in many other places, the movement begun by the Wesleys and their partners continues to serve Jesus the Christ. One powerful example exists in Italy where the Methodist Church of Italy works ecumenically with other church partners to minister to migrants through Mediterranean Hope, giving food and warmth and a loving welcome to all who have traveled long distances to escape violence and poverty.

Another example lives in Canada where Methodism is a part of a united church and works ecumenically with other Christians. One of the foci of the United Church of Canada is their intentional welcome of Christians migrating to their country, wanting to start diaspora faith communities. Another focus becomes visible through the way love is being shared through ministry and reparations with native persons throughout Canada.

A few of us were blessed to just last week represent you all in Ghana at the Global Christian Forum. We worshiped at the Methodist Cape Coast Cathedral, just up the hill from the fortress from which three million Africans were sent into slavery in the Americas and Europe.

The church serves as a beacon for reconciliation and hope in the face of violence with which humanity continues to treat each other and the creation.

And in the Philippines, one of the ways that looks is through young Methodists coming together ministering to each other and those less fortunate hit by storms. In Davao, for example, there is an ecumenical young adult group who is caring for each other's mental health, having fun together, and serving their neighbors together. Lives are not only being transformed, they are being saved.

The following videos that you're going to get to see of greetings from Methodist leaders from around the world are shared with you as we both celebrate and honor the breadth of Christ's ministry among us.

(video playing in Spanish)

(video playing)

(video playing in Spanish)

(applause)

HAWXHURST: I would like to introduce you now to the ecumenical officer of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Jeffery N. Leath is an excellent ecumenical leader. He is responsible for chaplain endorsements for the AME, serves as vice-chair of Churches Uniting in Christ and on lots of different ecumenical boards, and he is my friend. We welcome you, Bishop Leath.

BISHOP JEFFERY N. LEATH (President of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Council of Bishops): Bishop Lewis; president of the Council, Bishop Tracy Smith Malone; and immediate past president, Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton; Bishop Sally Dyck, beloved, respected, appreciated, ecumenical officer; the Council of Bishops; delegates; observers; friends of this 2020 General Conference now convened in 2024, and to the ecumenical staff and colleagues with whom we labor, both spiritually and temporally, in the visible unity of God's church among those called Methodists. I am appreciative for the honor and opportunity to give voice to greetings for the distinguished officials of the Methodist Family who are present.

This time of fellowship comes with concern, which is called for as we all must know God.

We empathize as you entered, now exist, and will soon exit your present season of special challenges. Be assured, we are bearing each other's burdens through listening, praying, and rising to help where we are able.

We pray for your holy institutional resolve and for your individual spirit. The Methodist family is in sincere and sustained prayer that you would be healed from the hurts of disaffiliation, delivered from the disappointment of changed relationships, live beyond the loss, and gain the grace that will overcome grief. Have hope in new horizons of holiness, be secure in salvation established through the unusual agency of a cross, and confirm through a resurrection community of the fellowship and discipleship of those who heed the call of a savior.

In the words which Bishop Bickerton highlighted in your opening, this is the season for compassion, courage, and companionship. Remember that we are a balanced people who cling to scripture but do not deny reason, tradition, and the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit through experience. This will not fail us in this era.

Let the fire of your love of God kindle the compassion you have for humankind in its particular and general expressions. Show compassion, which is forgiving, open to friend and foe, and acknowledges our universal reliance on mercy and the benefits of grace. Be courageous in celebrating the good and the holy of your past. Courageously question and faithfully walk down new paths of holiness. Courageously live out love without hypocrisy.

Companionship comes with risk, discomfort, and some apprehension. Embrace it, as you embrace the people of God. Do not be afraid to love, trust, serve, and defend as you walk among God's family in various circumstances. Show companionship to be compassion and courage bound through faith, justice, dignity, and mutual respect. Most importantly, know that your Methodist family stands with compassion and courage as your companions in visible unity of mission and ministry.

We are praying. We will collaborate. We will not leave your side. We will walk to the same good news beat sounded by the same eternal drum. We will walk together, children. We will not get weary. We will walk together, children, singing, praying, shouting, studying, growing, serving together.

(applause)

We will walk together, children. There is a great camp meeting on the other side.

God bless you with light on the upward way and strength for the journey. Amen.

(applause)

BISHOP DYCK: That, my friends, is the power of ecumenism. We do not walk alone, and we walk with one another. As you greet and interact with our Methodist family members during this General Conference, I hope you have the opportunity to ask, listen, and learn about what is unique wherever Methodism grows and produces fruit. But also, just what is it that unites us in our common witness and work as Methodists? I pray that you will embrace our wonderful Methodist family and please join me one more time in expressing our love and care for all of the Methodist family.

(applause)

BISHOP LEWIS: Thank you for the report. And I would like to also ask us to recognize again and give God praise for Bishop Sally Dyck as our outgoing ecumenical officer and the ecumenical staff. Can we give them some praise as well?

(applause)

Amen.

Committee on Agenda and Calendar

BISHOP LEWIS: The next item of business is some of our administrative committee reports. The first committee report will be presented by the Committee on Agenda and Calendar. The chair recognizes the chair of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar, Emily Allen, and the coordinator of calendar, Susan Brumbaugh, to present their report.

EMILY ALLEN (California-Nevada, Chair of the Committee on Agenda and Calendar): Thank you, Bishop. Good morning, everyone. Today's schedule is printed on p. 2246 in today's *DCA*. That's p. 2-2-4-6. The Committee on Agenda and Calendar recommends the following changes for the remainder of the today: After the lunch break and the one hundredth anniversary of the United Methodist building presentation, we will celebrate the eightieth anniversary of UMCOR and Migrant Ministries. Bishop, I move the adoption of today's agenda with the changes I have described.

BISHOP LEWIS: It is moved to adopt the agenda with the changes as described. In a moment we will open the pool so that you may wish to speak, you may register. The question is on the adoption of the motion to adopt the agenda with the changes as described. You may now register to speak.

(pause)

I see that there is no one in the pool, and we will continue. We will now proceed to vote. Please take out your devices to be able to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of the agenda with the changes as described.

Those in favor—I see the checkered flags to my left.

(pause)

Those in favor, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. Some of you are ahead of me, but you may now go ahead and vote.

(pause)

If there are checkered flags, please raise them high so that we can help you to vote.

(pause)

Do we have any more checkered flags? Has everything been resolved? We want to make sure that we're giving you the ample time to vote. Seeing none, the voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote?

(pause)

We have yes, 728 votes and no, 7, and of course it's voted to adopt the agenda. The affirmative has it. The motion is adopted and the agenda is adopted.

[Yes, 728; No, 7]

ALLEN: Thank you, Bishop—

BISHOP LEWIS: the changes.

ALLEN: —and thank you, delegates, for your hard work in moving through the items with financial implications yesterday. After we vote on today's consent calendars, we will have sixty-four remaining calendar items before us, fifty-five of which we are required to take action on, under *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 507.10. Today, we plan to hear reports from the following committees: Financial Administration, Independent Commissions, Conferences, Church and Society 2, and Ordained Ministry. Thank you.

Consent Calendar

SUSAN BRUMBAUGH (New Mexico, Coordinator of Calendar): I'm Susan Brumbaugh, Coordinator of the Calendar, New Mexico Annual Conference, lay, female. I'm sure there are other categories, but that will do it for today. We have three consent calendars to vote on today. The first is Consent Calendar A05, which begins on p. 2229. A05, p. 2229. No items were removed and the calendar is correct as printed. Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar A05 as printed.

BISHOP LEWIS: OK, the question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar A05 as printed. Please get your voting devices. We will now proceed to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar A05 as printed. Those in favor, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may now vote.

(pause)

BISHOP LEWIS: There is a flag in front of me. We will help. Delegate. And if you are having any difficulties, please, please, raise your flag high 'cause it is hard to see everyone.

(pause)

I see another flag to my right.

(pause)

The voting is now closed. May we have the results of the voting?

(pause)

692 in the affirmative. 51. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. The Consent Calendar A05 is approved as printed. Thank you.

[Yes, 692; No, 51]

BRUMBAUGH: Our second—

(applause)

BISHOP LEWIS: Can we please hold?

(applause)

Please hold our excitement—

(applause)

—as we continue to work together and do our work.

BRUMBAUGH: Our second consent is B05 on p. 2231. B05, p. 2231. And as I mentioned yesterday, six calendar items were removed, 513 through 518. No other items were removed. Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendar B05, except for the items that were removed.

BISHOP LEWIS: The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar B05, except for the items that were removed. Please get your voting devices out. We will now proceed to vote. This motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of the Consent Agenda B05, except for the items that were removed. Those in favor, press *one (1)*. Those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may now vote, and again if you are having difficulties, please raise your checkered flag high to that we can assist you.

(pause)

The voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote?

(pause)

There are 643 in the affirmative and 88 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Consent Calendar B05 is approved, except for the items that were removed.

[Yes, 643; No, 88]

BRUMBAUGH: Our final consent calendar for today is C05. It begins on p. 2234. C05, p. 2234. No items were removed, and the calendar is correct as printed. Bishop, I move that we accept the actions on Consent Calendars C05, as printed.

BISHOP LEWIS: The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar C05 as printed. Please get your voting device. We will now proceed to vote. This motion also requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of the Consent Calendar C05 as printed. Those in favor, press *one (1)*. Those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now. And, again, if you are having any difficulties please raise your checkered flag.

(pause)

The voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote?

There are 659 in the affirmative and 67 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Consent Calendar C05 is approved as printed.

[Yes, 659; No, 67]

GARY GRAVES (Kentucky, Secretary of the General Conference): Bishop Lewis?

BISHOP LEWIS: Yes?

GRAVES: As we did yesterday, or whatever day it was in the past, when we have moments of significance on the consent calendar, we do want to lift those, and so we asked that retired bishop Hope Morgan Ward join us at the podium for a moment of prayer.

BISHOP HOPE MORGAN WARD: I invite you to place your hand on your heart as you remember those in your location of ministry and service, as we pray: New every day is your love, Great God of Light, and all day long you are working for good in the world. Stir up in us desire to serve you, to live peacefully with our neighbors and with all creation, and to devote this day to your service. We do pray, living Christ, powerful Holy Spirit, eternal God, that you would pour out afresh your Spirit upon your church in this new day. We pray for healing in the memory of our journeys to this place. We give thanks for your expansive love and in-breaking light. And we ask that you would use us as peacemakers and servants in the healing of your world and in the welcoming of all people into the embrace of God. This we pray through the strong power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

BRUMBAUGH: I thought I was going to be telling you that we didn't have any more consent calendars to vote on but there actually is one more consent calendar that printed in today's *DCA* on p. 2251. Consent Calendar B06 on p. 2251 contains exactly one item that had a correction submitted yesterday. We'll vote on that tomorrow unless we receive a request to remove it. Thank you, Bishop. That concludes our report.

BISHOP LEWIS: Thank you.

The next administration committee report.

(pause)

Delegate that's going to microphone that I cannot see, and what purpose are you coming to the microphone?

THOMAS LANK (Greater New Jersey): Thank you, Bishop. Thomas Lank, Greater New Jersey, deacon, adult, White, male. I rise to make a motion. May I proceed?

BISHOP LEWIS: What is your motion, delegate?

LANK: I move that the body adopt all remaining calendar items that received twenty or fewer votes against in committee except those with constitutional impact, a minority report, or those already removed from the Consent Calendar. If I have a second, I will speak to it.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP LEWIS: Delegate, I would like to ask you if you will put your motion in writing, please bring it to the stage, and after the Committee on Journal report, we will then handle it at that time.

LANK: Thank you, Bishop.

Committee on Journal

BISHOP LEWIS: The next administration committee report is the Committee on Journal Reports. The chair recognizes the chair of the Committee on Journal, Rachel Miller.

RACHEL MILLER (West Ohio, Chair of the Committee on Journal): Thank you, Bishop. I'm Rachel Miller, an ordained deacon from West Ohio.

(applause)

But some might say that I've been sent as a missionary up from the bluegrass state of Kentucky from where I was born and raised.

(applause)

I may not still live there, but I remain true to the big blue nation. My patient colleagues in West Ohio know that well, so thank you. On our report for today for the Committee on the Journal, the *errata* can be found on p. 2246 of today's *DCA*, dated May 1, volume 5, no. 8: *DCA*, volume 5, no. 7, p. 2199, "Nomination for General Commission of Archives and History," I have a spelling correction for Michael Wetzel's last name. It should be W-E-T-Z-E-L. And moving to *DCA*, volume 5, no. 6, p. 2107, "Judicial Council Nominations (Updated)" and p. 2113, "Judicial Council Biographical Sketches": Jessica Vittorio, her last name is misspelled. The last letter is not an A but an O. Thank you for your time and care in assisting in perfecting the record. We appreciate that, and this concludes our report this morning. Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP LEWIS: Thank you, thank you for the report. The motion of the delegate has not arrived yet to the desk, and so we are going to continue to proceed with the next report.

Committee on Presiding Officers

BISHOP LEWIS: The next report is the report of the Committee on Presiding Officers. The chair recognizes chair of the committee, Jasmine Smothers, and the vice-chair, Audun Westad, to present their report.

JASMINE ROSE SMOTHERS (North Georgia, Chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers): Well, good morning.

ALL: Good morning!

SMOTHERS: Let's try that again: Well, good morning!

ALL: Good morning!

SMOTHERS: Yes, and praise the Lord, y'all. We made it to Wednesday of week two. I'm Jasmine Rose Smothers, clergy, African American, female, adult, delegate from the North Georgia Conference—

(cheering)

I love y'all—in the United States. My pronouns are she and her. Audun Westad and I lead the Committee on Presiding Officers, the team tasked with selecting and notifying our presiding officers for each plenary session.

AUDUN WESTAD (Norway, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Presiding Officers): *God morgen*. My name is Audun Westad, lay delegate of the Norway Annual Conference. Today is May 1, the International Worker's Day, a day celebrated in Norway and many countries across the world. It's a day we celebrate and honor for those who worked for equal rights for everyone, acknowledging that no one is free until all is free. So I greet you in the way that I would greet my friends back home on this day. And I say *(speaking in Norwegian)*. Happy May 1 to all of you We want to thank you all and thank our preceding officers for helping us move us in our plenary session forward in a significant way yesterday.

SMOTHERS: Tomorrow we will welcome Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai from North Central Jurisdiction, Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, Bishop David Graves from the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and Bishop LaTrelle Easterling from the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

(cheering)

WESTAD: So friends, please continue to help our presidors and translators to make our plenary sessions more accessible for all God's children, both in the room and in the livestream by speaking slowly, concisely, respectfully, and directly into the microphone. Thank you for your cooperation with our preceding officers, and we will see you all tomorrow.

BISHOP LEWIS: Thank you. Our order of the day for recess has arrived. We will process the motion that the delegate brought forth after our recess. The chair now recognizes the secretary of the General Conference, Gary Graves, for some announcements.

GRAVES: Bishop, I'm happy to say I don't have any that we have to do at this moment.

BISHOP LEWIS: OK. All right. Delegates and friends, we have reached the time for a break. We will take a recess until 10:27. I want to thank you for allowing me to preside this morning, and I would like to thank Bishop Connie Shelton and Bishop Robert Farr for backing me up. We will resume at 10:27 with Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. will be our presiding officer. Thank you very much.

Plenary 2

(singing)

(applause)

BISHOP RUBEN SAENZ JR. Thank you, Bishop Williamston.

This ninth session of the postponed 2020 General Conference is now called to order. Good morning, and may the grace and peace of Jesus the Christ be with your spirits today.

My name is Ruben Saenz Jr. and I have the privilege and honor of serving as the bishop of the Central and North Texas annual conferences. As we gather for this legislative session today, I'm filled with deep gratitude and joy to be in your presence. Serving as a United Methodist bishop and presiding over this legislative session is really an honor and a privilege.

I want to recognize my two backup bishops that are behind me, and this is Bishop Tracy Malone, from the East Ohio Conference, and Bishop David Wilson, who serves the Great Plains Annual Conference.

But I'd also like to introduce another backup person, they're really not a backup person, but somebody that has walked by me now for many, many years, almost half a decade, and that is my wife, Maria Antonieta Saenz. And today's her birthday,

(cheers)

and so, so, *feliz cumpleaños*, Maye. I told her that we just called all of you together to celebrate her birthday today.

(laughter)

I'm a White, Hispanic American, male, adult. I was born and raised in Rio Grande City, Texas, on the north side of the Rio Grande River. My ancestors have been on the north side of the river, before the United States was the United States, and before Texas was Texas. The river runs from Colorado and empties out and runs along the Texas border all the way down to Brownsville and empties out into the Gulf of Mexico. And it's located in the lower part of the southern border of Texas. I grew up bilingual and bicultural, so I was asked to preside in my native language. I'm more comfortable with, and if I would do that, I'd probably go English and Spanish, for the next hour and a half and I'm not going to do that to you. I love Jesus and people and everything else flows out of that.

So as we begin our deliberations, I invite you to join me in prayer. Just as our founder, John Wesley, sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all matters, let us follow in his footsteps and humbly seek direction for this important decisions we're about to make. I invite you to close your eyes, momentarily, and allow yourselves to be still, and know that God is God. Let's breathe in the presence of God, who surrounds us, and exhale any distractions or concerns weighing on our hearts. Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, fill this place and this space with your peace and comforting embrace. Remind us of our shared purpose and call in Jesus. Holy Spirit, who guided and inspired John Wesley and his followers, descend upon us now. Awaken in us a keen discernment of renewed passion for justice and a genuine love for all your children. Empower and enable us by your Spirit to be tuned to your divine guidance. May our discussions and decisions reflect your grace and mercy as we strive to embody your teachings in our denomination and in our world. We pray for all this and more of your goodness, grace, justice, humility, and mercy, than all we can ever ask or imagine, according to your incredible power at work

within us. To you, O God, be the glory in the church and Jesus Christ throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Calendar Items

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair acknowledges that we have received the motion from Delegate Thomas Lank, regarding a motion to adopt a group of remaining calendar items that have received twenty or few votes against in committee, except those with constitutional impact, a minority report, or those already removed from the Consent Calendar. Although it is a delegate's right to process such a motion at this time, the chair asks for grace, because if it is our desire to process this motion after we return from lunch. We want to make sure that all delegates are aware of what calendar items would consist of so the body can make an informed decision. The chair recognizes the coordinator of the calendar, Susan Brumbaugh, to explain our plan.

SUSAN BRUMBAUGH (New Mexico, Coordinator of Calendar): I thought I was done for the day!

So I'm Susan Brumbaugh, coordinator of the calendar, and by my preliminary count, there are thirty-five calendar items that received twenty or fewer votes against, are not proposed constitutional amendments, do not have a minority report, or were removed from the Consent Calendar.

We need clarification on one set of items. We have four calendar items for which we received a request to present the items to plenary and have been calendared that have twenty or fewer votes against. So these are the items that were brought to floor. These items were not supported by the legislative committee, and until we hear from the presenter of those items, we do not know what their motion would be. Those items also do not require a plenary vote, according to *The Book of Discipline*, paragraph 507.10, which requires only that the plenary take action on items supported by the legislative committee. We've received eight such requests; four of them had twenty or fewer committee votes against them, and we need clarification on whether those items should be included or excluded from the motion, especially since we don't know what the motion of the individual item is.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. So the opportunity is before us to allow these items to be identified, there's thirty-five of them, translated into the different languages and distributed at lunchtime, is that correct, Susan?

BRUMBAUGH: That's correct. In order to make sure I give you the correct list, I would like the maker of the motion to clarify how those four items should be handled.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. Would Thomas Lank please come to the microphone? Mic. 5.

THOMAS LANK (Greater New Jersey): Thank you, Bishop. Thomas Lank, deacon, Greater New Jersey, adult White male.

I would propose that we add those four calendar items mentioned to the exclusions so that those would remain available to the body.

BRUMBAUGH: Thank you for that. And we are preparing a list of those thirty-five items that will have petition titles in all four languages. It'll have the number of votes against so that you have all the information possible before you make that motion or vote on that motion.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. We're going to process this motion after lunch so that you can have an opportunity to review the list of calendar items that we'll be voting on so that you can make your best decision and do our good work.

Yesterday, Bishop Schol indicated to Delegate Olandor Boyce from Libya [Liberia] that he would be recognized to offer a motion to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council. Delegate Olandor Boyce is recognized to go to mic. 1. From Liberia. Chair believes this will be a quick item because it is a non-debatable motion.

L OLANDOR BOYCE (Liberia): Thank you, Bishop. I'm L Olandor Boyce. First, from Liberia, not Libya. Liberia.

BISHOP SAENZ: Sorry.

BOYCE: Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. Thank you for the correction.

BOYCE: Bishop, I move to make, to request a declaratory decision in accordance with paragraph 2610.1. The General Conference requests a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council on the meaning, application, and effect of paragraph 408(1)(b) and paragraph 357.1 with regards to the following question:

One, does the provision of mandatory retirement for ordained elders in paragraph 357.1 apply to bishops?

If so, should bishop have current, should bishop who have currently passed the mandatory retirement age be immediately replaced in the retired relation with the Council of Bishops providing alternative episcopal oversight for the affected annual conferences?

Three, if a central conference bishop fits the requirement of paragraph 408(1)(b) for a retirement, must they be replaced in the retired relationship as of August 4, 2024, even if their central conference is being held after that date?

And if so, must the Council of Bishops provide alternative episcopal oversight for the effective annual conferences until a new bishops are elected and consecrated?

If one or more bishops in the central conference are retiring under 408(1)(b), must the central conference be held in enough time to allow the newly elected bishops to take office by September 1, 2024?

BISHOP SAENZ: Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right.

BOYCE: Yes? I can speak to that?

BISHOP SAENZ: Yes. Excuse me a second.

(pause)

This motion is not debatable. The motion requires a one-fifth vote, which is 20 percent of the General Conference delegates, to be adopted. The delegate is allowed to state the reason for their declaratory decision. Before the delegate speaks, the chair asks the delegate to refrain from making any remarks that would be considered debate. Please keep your statement limited to the reason you are requesting this declaratory decision. You have two minutes.

BOYCE: Thank you, Bishop. There are some bishops in Africa that have passed the mandatory retirement age in line with paragraph 408(b) but they are still serving due to the COVID pandemic, which is understandable, Bishop. However, there is a confusion when some central conferences bishop are required to step down in line with paragraph 408, given that the central conference meets in Africa as we are hearing it's scheduled for December 2024 and 2025, when the *Discipline* mandate retirement in August, three months after General Conference, as per paragraph 408(b). Therefore, clarity in this matter through the decision from the Judicial Council is needed with regards to central conferences bishop by, if I can give a time, by tomorrow afternoon or in line with the rules for the Judicial Council to report on such requests. I submit.

BISHOP SAENZ: We will now proceed to vote. Please get your devices ready.

The question is on the adoption of the motion that the General Conference requests a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council on an issue regarding retired bishops.

If you wish to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council, you may press *one (1)*. If you do not wish to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council, you may press *two (2)*. You may now vote.

(pause)

I don't see any flags. Have all voted who wish to do so? Voting is now closed. All right, please show the results.

There are 563 in the affirmative and 107 in the negative.

[Yes, 563; No, 107]

There is one-fifth in the affirmative and the motion is adopted.

The Judicial Council will respond to the request for a declaratory decision.

The chair recognizes Delegate Bonnie Marden at mic. 1 with other parliamentary motion.

BONNIE MARDEN (New England): Thank you Bishop. Bonnie Marden, New England Conference, lay delegate, female, adult.

I rise to ask the General Conference to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council related to Petition 20299, which was adopted on April 30, 2024, on the Consent Calendar. The question is: Does eliminating travel costs for retired bishops conflict with our Social Principles and Constitution by creating a standard that inhibits some members' participation due to their age from attending membership meetings by requiring them to pay their own travel expenses for global leadership?

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, you may speak to the—.

MARDEN: Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: The motion is not debatable. The motion requires a one-fifth vote, which is 20 percent of the General Conference delegates, to be adopted. The delegate is allowed to state the reason for the declaratory decision. Before the delegate speaks, the chair asks the delegate to refrain from making any remarks that would be considered debate. Please keep your statement limited to the reason you are requesting the declaratory decision. You have two minutes.

MARDEN: The declaratory decision we just referred to the Judicial Council is a great preamble to this request as the number of bishops needed to provide support globally and as the number of bishops decreases in our pool, retirees will be critical to the administrative, connectional, and programmatic ministries of the denomination. This also appears to be another example of a petition with financial impact that was coded as no impact. I'd be grateful for the Judicial Council's review of the actions we've taken and for consideration of it in terms of our Social Principles, our Constitution, and the reality of the workload that lies ahead for those who remain in the episcopal leadership position, either active and retired, as the future unfolds.

BISHOP SAENZ: We'll now proceed to vote. Please get your voting devices ready.

The question is on the adoption of the motion that the General Conference requests a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council on Petition No. 2029[9].

If you wish to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council, you may press *one (1)*. If you do not wish to request a declaratory decision from the Judicial Council, you may press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

Voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote.

There are 493 in the affirmative and 188 in the negative.

[Yes, 493; No, 188]

There is one-fifth in the affirmative and the motion is adopted.

The Judicial Council will respond to the request, Petition 20299.

The next item of business is our calendar items. Please get your *Daily Christian Advocate* materials ready. And keep your devices nearby as well.

The chair would like to make an announcement to all committee chairs that will guide us throughout the rest of the General Conference.

Yesterday a question was raised for a parliamentary inquiry asking if there was a time limit for the committee chairs to introduce each calendar item. The work that occurs in the legislative committee is important business and therefore we have not historically had a time limit. However, the chair is asking

all legislative chairs to be aware of the time of their report. If they can limit the introduction of each calendar item to no longer than three minutes. Please don't interrupt this if you need to use—Please don't interpret this if you need to use the three minutes. The chair asks if you can limit it to three minutes, that would help us get through the business of the day.

First calendar item will be presented by Scott Brewer from the Financial Administration Committee.

SCOTT BREWER (Great Plains Conference): Thank you, Bishop. Good morning, friends. I am Scott Brewer, a cisgendered, White lay male delegate from the Great Plains Conference. Insert age joke here.

(laughter)

Sorry, I meant to add an obligatory joke on age there. I'm an adult, really. OK, let's move on!

(laughter)

My first item for your consideration is the Compass Retirement Plan, Calendar Item 264, Petition No. 2[0]946. This petition was removed from the Consent Calendar. The Financial Administration Legislative Committee recommend adoption of this legislation by a vote of 55 in favor, 9 against.

As Andy Hendren of Wespath explained on Monday, the primary reason for closing the current clergy retirement plan and replacing it with Compass is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the clergy retirement plan in the jurisdictions. Although our current plan is adequately funded today, continuing to make new long-term pension promises under that plan would add to the financial strain of the church.

Compass was designed over a multiyear study with stakeholders from across the church utilizing five foundational values. They are sustainability, affordability, adequacy of retirement income, equity, meaning fairness, especially for lower paid clergy, and flexibility regarding how benefits may be paid out or left to others.

While various types of retirement plans were considered, an account-based retirement plan, also known as a defined benefit, excuse me, defined contribution plan was ultimately proposed as it offers the best balance among those five foundational values. The proposed plan design will enhance the sustainability of the retirement plan. It will help to ensure improved affordability for annual conferences and local churches. It achieves retirement income adequacy. Note that Compass's contribution formula is modeled to provide clergy of all income ranges an income replacement in retirement in the range of 75 to 90 percent of their pre-retirement income when coupled with Social Security.

It is intended to provide equity as Compass incorporates features that benefit lower paid clergy, in particular a flat \$150 per month mandatory contribution for all pastors regardless of their compensation as well as an increase in the deemed value of parsonages provided to clergy from 25 percent of planned compensation to 35 percent. These features lead to higher contributions for those clergy. Compass also permits contributions of up to 4 percent to be made not only on personal contributions to the plan, but on student loan payments made outside of the plan, which will help clergy receiving the matching contribution even if they have difficulty making personal contributions due to student debt. It also increases flexibility as clergy are able to leave any remaining account balances upon their death to the beneficiaries of their choice.

And, Bishop, one final minor technical point. Yesterday morning, you approved Consent Calendar A04, which included Calendar Item 281. That legislation closes the Clergy Retirement Security Program, or CRSP, at the end of 2025. Meaning that at the end of 2025, and, yes, this time I really mean 2025, we will no longer have a pension plan in place for clergy serving in the jurisdictions.

So to remedy this and for the reasons I have already outlined, the Financial Administration Legislative Committee recommends adoption of Calendar Item 264, the Compass Retirement Plan.

BISHOP SAENZ: It is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 264. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 264. You may register now to speak. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

The chair recognizes Anna Guillozet from the West Ohio Conference at mic. 3.

ANNA GUILLOZET (West Ohio): Bishop, thank you for your recognition. My name is Anna Guillozet, but you did get closer than most people do with the pronunciation. I am an ordained elder in the West Ohio Conference. I use she/her pronouns and I am a White adult women.

I have had the privilege of serving on Wespath's young leaders advisory board in its inaugural class, and I serve as the chair of West Ohio Conference's Board of Pension and Health Benefits. Before serving in both of these roles, I have to admit that I was a bit naive to what went into striking the balance of retirement plans that were caring for plan participants and their family and what was sustainable for the long term.

Now is the time for this plan. It is designed to engage participants giving them ownership of their plan by leveraging their contributions including student loan payments, which I have many of.

Overall over 85 percent of full-time pastors contribute to their retirement. With most contributing the 4 percent or more that Compass requires for a full match. To be clear, most pastors are well prepared for Compass already.

I know personally that when conference benefit officers and clergy work together, we can raise those contribution rates. Pay equity issues are real. We know that female clergy, minority clergy, and rural clergy are often paid lower, and those with intersectional identities feel pay discrepancies in a very real way. And while these inequities need to be addressed, a retirement plan is not the place to start such work. As I heard in General Secretary Hendren's address yesterday, Wespath is committed to providing the church with reliable data on pay issues. As an Annual Conference Board of Pensions chair, I feel confident with the adoption of Compass, and I share that confidence as a local church pastor too.

Please support the Compass plan. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: There is no one in the pool speaking against. The chair recognizes Emily Allen, from California-Nevada, mic. 5. Other parliamentary inquiry.

EMILY ALLEN (California-Nevada): Other parliamentary business, I hope, rather than inquiry.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right.

ALLEN: Bishop, I am Emily Allen, layperson, California-Nevada Annual Conference. I move that we refer this petition back to Wespath. And if I have a second, I will speak to it.

BISHOP SAENZ: Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Second.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right.

ALLEN: Thank you. First, to be clear if this motion to refer passes, I or one of my colleagues will then bring a motion to reopen CRSP until Wespath brings back a revised plan.

Wespath has enjoyed the trust of The United Methodist Church in the United States for generations. So we often pass their proposed legislation with a glance and gratitude. However, the Compass plan is different. I heard Anna speak about the differences in pay between women and men, between racial ethnic clergy and White clergy. She said this is not the place to start that work, but I argue this is the place where the end of that work will have impact. Clergy's retirement account balances will be based on the discriminatory pay that they receive. The systemic racism and sexism in our salary system for clergy will impact their retirement.

For example, according to a General Commission on the Status and Role of Women 2020 clergy salary study, the average compensation was about \$62,000 but the maximum recorded compensation was over \$1 million. That means that church contributions to those plans would vary between about 6,000 per year for the one and 73,000 per year for the other. I do not believe that baking in these salary inequities will lead to fairness for our clergy when they retire.

Please adopt this motion to refer so they can further address the impacts on our clergy. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. The chair asks the tech team to begin a new speaker recognition pool, so we can open a new speaker pool to speak to the motion to refer. It is moved and seconded to refer the Calendar Item No. 264 to Wespath. In a moment, we will open the pool so that if you wish to speak, you may register. You may register to speak now. The chair recognizes Bill Brownson from West Ohio, mic. 3.

BILL BROWNSON (West Ohio): Bill Brownson, lay. West Ohio Conference. Everything that Anna said and that was made in the motion to refer about compensation, I trust to be true. The place at which to address that starts with the compensation level and needs to address it, not the pension plan. Even CRSP is based on, at some level, compensation. So Compass also includes some foundational support for folks at the lower compensation levels. We absolutely have work to do on pay equity. As we make progress on that work, the pensions also, whatever form they take, will benefit and improve. Compass's is a good plan. It has been studied. It's been through years of review with annual conference boards of pension. And Wespath, as I understand, acknowledges the need to better understand and to share data about how certain persons and groups are affected by this plan. And I trust them to do so. Time has come to continue with the debate about whether or not Compass should become the denomination's plan in 2026. I encourage a vote against the vote to defer, or the motion to defer.

BISHOP SAENZ: We have one speech in favor of referring, we have one speech against. The chair recognizes Michael Hsu, California-Nevada Conference, mic. 5. Could the maker please get their motion in writing? The General Secretary—

MICHAEL HSU (California-Nevada): Michael Hsu. Laity. California-Nevada. East Asian. Young adult. I support the motion to refer. While I appreciate Wespath's work in planning for the future of our denomination and addressing the need to continue to take care of our clergy, this plan poses significant

equity issues that still needs to be addressed. I appreciate all the work and the speakers that have addressed this plan, however, in the world where clergywomen on average make 11 percent less than clergymen make, and where clergy of color make 13 percent less than White clergy, a retirement plan that varies by income is unjust and systematically racist and sexist. We ask clergy to pay for theological education, to serve for usually modest wages, and to itinerate, uprooting their whole families to go where sent by their bishops, with no final say. I also ask the body to consider the unintentional consequences. For example, will we create a situation where our church becomes more individualistic or pastors compete for appointments from wealthier churches? Or the clergy's *esprit de corps* erodes. This proposed plan right now is antithetical to who we are as Methodists. Therefore I ask you to refer this plan back to Wespath so that they can address further the equity issues present in the proposed plan. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes Amy King, North Georgia Conference, mic. 5, speech against.

AMY KING (North Georgia): Can I speak at mic. 6, please?

BISHOP SAENZ: Yes.

KING: Thank you. Amy King, North Georgia, laity, adult. I am here once again speaking on behalf of the local church. In the local church, the people who are paying tithes and as such are paying for the retirement plans—if they even have a retirement plan, they have a plan just like this, probably less generous. And they are supporting the clergy. Now, I was the Conference Benefits Officer for North Georgia, and I was on the Equitable Comp Committee as the staff representative, and I have seen the pay equity issues myself. I have researched minimum comp across the connection and I am fully aware that it is very low and very inequity—has a lot of inequity for our younger clergy, our clergy of color, and our female clergy. But a retirement plan is not how you fix that.

This plan is incredibly generous. It provides for younger clergy to have their match met by student loan payments, which pretty much all of our clergy do have. And by not passing this, we're missing out on our clergy being able to earn funds in these years in their accounts. And I think we're at the point now that we have to do something about pay equity, but this is not the place. So I vote that we do not refer and urge you to do the same. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes Carol Zaagsma, Minnesota Conference, mic. 1.

CAROL ZAAGSMA (Minnesota): Thank you, Bishop. Would a motion to amend be in order? To amend the referral?

BISHOP SAENZ: Let's hear you motion, first, and then—go ahead.

ZAAGSMA: My name is Carol Zaagsma, clergy delegate from Minnesota. White, female, gay adult with pronouns she and her. I would change the motion to refer this petition to Wespath to perform a comparative study of the impact of the Compass Retirement Plan on local churches and clergypersons to be reported to this body. If a comparative study has already been done, otherwise, to the next General Conference or U.S. Regional Conference, whichever occurs first. This study would include such analysis as follows: impact, if the Compass plan included monthly, non-matching flat contributions by the church in the amount of \$250, \$350, and \$500, along with the original contributions proposed at \$150, as well as variations on the 3 percentage non-matching percentage contribution by the local church. While

retaining the dollar-for-dollar match, at the proposed maximum of 4 percent, as well as 3 percent. While assuming average denominational compensation for clergy with a parsonage and with a housing allowance. It is recommended that this study show projected balances at years ten, twenty, thirty, and forty to evaluate adequacy, assuming a moderate rate of return on investment.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. That type of amendment to refer would not be in order because it changes the intent of the impending motion, which is to refer. You could only modify a motion to refer such as changing the group it is referred to, or giving that group instructions.

ZAAGSMA: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. The chair recognizes Arnaldo Estrella, Northwest Minnesota, Philippines—North Mindanao Philippines, sorry.

ARNALDO ESTRELLA (Northwest Mindanao Philippines): Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: Mic. 2.

ESTRELLA: My name is Arnaldo Estrella from Northwest Mindanao Philippines. I rise to move to close the debate, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. There's a second. It is moved and seconded that debate be closed. We have given the opportunity for two speeches for and two speeches against. Therefore the motion to close debate is in order. The motion is not debatable. In accordance with Rule 7.3, the chair informs the delegates that there are the following individuals currently in the pool. There's one person with speeches in favor and five people with speeches against and zero persons proposing amendments. We will be closing debate on the motion to refer. This motion requires a two-thirds vote. We will now proceed to vote. The question is on closing debate on the motion to refer. Those in favor of closing debate, press *one (1)*; those opposed to closing debate, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

Have all voted who wish to do so? Voting is now closed, and we have the results of the vote. There are 670 in the affirmative and 44 in the negative. Debate is closed.

[Yes, 670; No, 44]

We will proceed to vote on the motion to refer.

(pause)

BREWER: Thank you, Bishop. Simply, we'll remind delegates that from the committee, the primary driver for presenting this plan is to replace our current plan to ensure the financial sustainability of our pension. It does not, I believe, serve any of our annual conferences' best interest by continuing to keep the CRSP Plan open and continue to accumulate those liabilities.

BISHOP SAENZ: Right. We'll proceed to vote on the motion to refer. Please get your devices ready. Those in favor of the motion to refer, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

All right. Voting is now closed. May we have the results? There are 262 in the affirmative and 461 in the negative. The motion to refer is not adopted.

[Yes, 262; No, 461]

Can the tech team please clear the pool? We are back to the original Calendar Item No. 264. Chair recognizes Vittorio, Jessica Vittorio, North Texas, mic. 1.

JESSICA VITTORIO (North Texas): Jessica Vittorio, laity, North Texas Annual Conference, Young Adult, female, and for the sake of transparency, I'm also a board member of Wespath. So I know that there are concerns related to equity that have been raised and I think those concerns are important. I think it's important we hear those, and I think Wespath has heard those, and I trust that Wespath is committed to continuing to reevaluate the impact of this plan in light of those concerns going forward. That being said, I think we need to have a realistic conversation about what happens if this fails to pass. CRSP was closed on the Consent Calendar several days ago. If someone were to say we could reconsider that, we would have to reconsider the entire Consent Calendar on which that was passed. So CRSP has been closed. If this fails to pass, clergy and staff will have no retirement plan until General Conference can reconvene in 2028. That's, to me, as a layperson, as someone who benefits from the service of our clergy and staff, extremely concerning and I could not in good faith go back to my annual conference knowing we had both closed CRSP and failed to adopt an alternative plan. Thereby putting our clergy and staff in that position for the next two years or four years, but two years until the close of CRSP. I couldn't live with myself knowing that we put them in that position so I strongly urge you to support this petition. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. The chair recognizes Johnson Dodla, Eastern Pennsylvania, mic. 5 with an inquiry.

Johnson Dodla (Eastern Pennsylvania): Johnson Dodla, Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference, clergy, adult male. Bishop, I rise to ask this question: how has the compass plan going to negatively or positively affect women clergy and BIPOC clergy who are historically paid lower than others? Has there been any data?

BISHOP SAENZ: Is Andy Hendren? General Secretary, Andy Hendren, Wespath, is he in plenary? Where's Andy? If Andy could come. Could you come to mic. 4, please? Andy, do you need to have the question restated?

ANDY HENDREN: Yes, please.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. Johnson?

Dodla: I rise to ask the question, how is the compass land going to negatively or positively affect women clergy and BIPOC clergy who are historically paid lower than others? Has there been data that you can report to or speak to?

HENDREN: Thank you. Again, my name is Andy Hendren, White, male, straight, adult. We, at Wespath, we have data record keeping systems. We do have gender data. We don't have race or ethnic data in our record keeping system. We haven't had that historically and we have heard these questions and we will gather it. We want to work with our partners in the other agencies to gather that data so we can continue to analyze the equity in this plan.

Our data reflects that women clergy *in* the plan—that’s not all clergy are in the mandatory plan. It’s for full-time clergy, and conferences can choose to cover some part-time clergy. Other part-time clergy are covered in different plans. But for the main plan that we’re discussing today, our data shows that compensation by gender in the full-time plan \$74,000 annually for females, \$79,000 annually for males. That’s not as big of a discrepancy as the broader system. For lower-paid clergy, we did use income as a proxy for gender and BIPOC status. That’s not a perfect proxy. But it’s what we could use.

We believe that there will be minimal impact on replacement income in retirement for clergy at the lower ends of the income spectrum with the new plan. However, that assumes everyone is going to make the 4 percent personal contribution to maximize the plan. Without understanding how clergy live in to this, how successful we are at getting full match contributions, we can’t really project accurately how the plan will replace income. We want to have some time to see how we live into that. This plan is not immutable. 2028 is only two years of contributions in the new plan. By 2028, we can see how well we have done for the first year-and-a-half and bring improvements to the next General Conference.

Does that answer the question?

Dodla: Can I speak to that? Am I in order?

BISHOP SAENZ: No, you—you’ve already been recognized. The rules do not allow—

Dodla: Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: —a follow-up.

Dodla: Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes Staci Current, California-Nevada, mic. 5, for a point of info/inquiry.

STACI CURRENT (California-Nevada): Good morning, Bishop. My name is Staci Current, California-Nevada, clergy, Black woman. I have a point of—asking for a point of information. When Wespath has modeled this out, based on denominational average compensation, can someone give us an idea of what the participant would receive in income after forty years in Compass versus what they would receive after forty years in CRSP? I think that information is critical to compare what a participant would receive in forty years on Compass versus CRSP, and I’m sure Wespath has modeled that out and they have numbers or percentage differentials. That would really be helpful.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, the chair recognizes General Secretary Andy Hendren to mic. 4, please, to answer the question.

Would you please remain by the microphone so that you can restate the question?

(pause)

Staci, please restate the question.

CURRENT: Sure. When Wespath has modeled out the Compass plan for a projected forty years, could they give us some of what—based on the denominational average compensation, what would a participant receive in the Compass plan versus the CRSP for forty years, for forty years, modeling out? In numbers, or in percentage differential, because, you know, that helps us. Thank you.

HENDREN: If it pleases the chair, I'm going to ask my colleague, Martin Bauer, to speak to that question.

BISHOP SAENZ: Yes, go ahead.

HENDREN: Thank you.

MARTIN BAUER (Senior Managing Director of Benefit Plans, Wespah): Good morning. My name is Martin Bauer, I serve as the Senior Managing Directors of Benefit Plans for Wespah. I am White, originally from Germany, male, adult. I do not have the exact number for this specific question. However, the closest that I can give is how the plan impacts a clergy at \$80,000 in salary, in other words very close to the denominational average compensation, who is currently age thirty-five, who started five years ago at age thirty, in other words, has almost their entire thirty-seven-year career up to age sixty-seven ahead of them. Under the—assuming Compass as being adopted, the replacement ratio would be 112 percent of pay. Assuming Compass does not get adopted, it would be 110 percent of pay. In other words, the two are extremely close. There are a few other assumptions that go into this calculation, such as a 6 percent earnings rate, but that is the closest numbers that we have to address this question.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you.

CURRENT: OK.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes—and I'm going to try this—Stefan. Stefan *Shrunkefuchs* from Austria Provisional, mic. 5.

STEFAN SCHRÖCKENFUCHS (Austria Provisional): Chair, my name is Stefan Schröckenfuchs, Austria Provisional Annual Conference. Native European. I move to end debate. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. The chair has provided—is there a second?

OK, the chair has provided the opportunity for speakers to speak in favor and against. Therefore the motion to close debate is in order. It is moved and seconded that the debate is closed. This motion is not debatable. There are, one person in the pool who wish to speak in favor, zero who wish to speak against, and zero who wish to propose amendments. This motion to close debates requires a two-thirds vote. We will now proceed to vote. The question is on closing debate on Calendar Item No. 264. Those in favor of closing debate, press *one (1)*; those opposed to closing debate, press *two (2)*. You may now vote.

(pause)

All right, voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote? There are 684 in the affirmative, and 30 in the negative.

[Yes, 684; No, 30]

The chair recognizes Scott Brewer for final remarks.

BREWER: Thank you, Bishop. Wespah staff did not bring this plan down on stone tablets from the top of the mountain. And by your action today, if you adopt it, we are not going to put it on stone tablets. As the General Secretary, Andy Hendren, mentioned, this will come back to us in 2028 for continued adjustment. It is my hope and prayer that not only do we remember the conversation that we've had

today around equity related to our pension plan, but that we take these concerns back to our own annual conferences, where we need to do serious work on equity as it relates to compensation for our clergy. We recommend adoption of the plan.

BISHOP SAENZ: We will now proceed to vote. The motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 264. Those in favor, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

All right, voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote. There are 658 votes in the affirmative and 64 votes in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Calendar Item No. 264 is adopted.

[Yes, 658; No, 64]

Please proceed to the next calendar item.

BREWER: Thank you, Bishop. My second and, God willing, final item coming from Financial Administration is Calendar Item 451. It's Petition 21099 as printed on p. 2178 of your *Daily Christian Advocate*. This petition, originally proposed by the General Council on Finance and Administration, amends paragraph 807 by inserting a new paragraph 18 that authorizes the Council to "offer administrative services and to charge reasonable and appropriate fees for such services to other, non-United Methodist Churches and religious organizations. The council shall not expend general church funds in the provision of such services." This petition gives GCFA the liberty to extend services that it currently already provides to many of our agencies and to our annual conferences to many of our partner congregations and organizations we're in relationship with, such as our pan-Methodist siblings, who we recognized earlier this morning.

The committee voted adoption of this petition with 51 votes in favor, 12 votes against. We, therefore, recommend adoption of Calendar Item 451.

BISHOP SAENZ: It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 451. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 451. You may now register to speak, is there any discussion?

(pause)

The chair recognizes Sharri Hiller. Please give us your name and annual conference.

SHARRI HILLER (Oklahoma): Thank you, Bishop. Sharri Hiller. Oklahoma Annual Conference. Laity. White adult female. I rise to support this petition. I think it's fiscally responsible and would encourage people to vote for it. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you.

(pause)

The chair doesn't see anyone else in the pool wishing to speak either in favor or against the motion. We will now proceed to vote. The motion requires a majority vote. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 451. Those in favor, press *one (1)*. Those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

Voting is now closed. May we have the results of the vote? There are 674 in the affirmative and 42 in the negative. The affirmative has it. The motion is adopted. Calendar Item No. 451 is adopted. Thank you, Scott.

[Yes, 674; No, 42]

BREWER: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes Judith Pierre-Okerson from Independent Commissions to present our next calendar item.

(pause)

JUDITH PIERRE-OKERSON (Florida): Thank you, Bishop. Good morning!

ALL: Good morning!

PIERRE-OKERSON: *Bonjour!* I am Judith Pierre-Okerson, lay delegate from the Florida Annual Conference. I am a deaconess. I am Black, Haitian-American woman. Adult. I think that's it for demographic.

I was elected to serve as the chair of the Independent Commission with Bethany Amey serving as the vice-chair, Jesi Lipp as secretary, and subcommittee chairs Ophelia Kennedy and Henoc Mwenze. The first item before is found on p. 2159 of the *DCA*. Calendar Item 308. Or p. 881 [in the *ADCA*]. Bishop, on behalf of the legislative committee, I move to adopt the Petition as submitted.

BISHOP SAENZ: It is moved to adopt Calendar Item 308. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 308. You may register now to speak.

(pause)

Chair sees no one in the pool. We will now proceed to vote.

I'm sorry. All right. Chair recognizes Denise Smartt. Denise please identify your—mic. 3. Identify yourself and your annual conference.

DENISE SMARTT (New York): Yes, Bishop. Denise Smartt-Sears. Woman. Black woman. Adult. New York Annual Conference. U.S.A. Bishop, I'd like to make a motion to refer Calendar Item 308 on p. 2159 to GCFA for an analysis of the financial implications on the budget.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, is there a second? It's been seconded. Would the techs please clear the pool? Would you like to speak to the motion?

SMARTT: Bishop, we appreciate—the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women appreciates all that the committee was working to do, but we feel at this time that this matter needs to go to GCFA.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right. Is there any discussion on the motion to refer? Seeing no one in the pool, we're going to proceed to vote. Those in favor of referring Item No. 308, press *one* (1). Those opposed, press *two* (2). You may vote now.

(pause)

All right, the poll is now closed. We will see the results, there are 452 in the affirmative, 260 in the negative. The motion to refer is adopted. Motion 308 is referred.

[Yes, 452; No, 260]

Chair recognizes Ophelia Kennedy, for the next item.

OPHELIA KENNEDY (Liberia): Good morning, Christian siblings. I am Ophelia Kennedy, a lay delegate from the Liberia Episcopal area. A women activist, Assistant Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Republic of Liberia. A member of the independent committee and chair of subcommittee. Thank you.

The item before us is found on p. 2099 on the *DCA* calendar, Item 241, p. 881, volume 2, *ADCA* petition title COSROW Support for Central Conference Women. The committee made an amendment out of concern for the agency capacity to fulfill this reasonability quarterly visit by changing the word *quarterly* to a *portion of its work*. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, it is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 241, the question is in the adoption of Calendar Item No. 241. You may register now to speak. Chair recognizes Alberto Hidalgo, Indiana Annual Conference, mic. 2.

ALBERTO HIDALGO (Indiana): Thank you Bishop, Alberto Hidalgo, lay delegate from Indiana, gay man, he/him. I am also incredibly cold, as are so many of my colleagues, so I'm asking as a point of inquiry if we can turn the temperature up? Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right we will take care of that. No one is in the queue; we will now proceed to vote. The motion requires majority vote. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 241. Those in favor, press *one (1)*; those opposed, press *two (2)*. You may vote now.

(pause)

The vote is now closed; may we have the result of the vote? There are 646 in the affirmative, and 63 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the motion is adopted. Calendar Item No. 241 is adopted.

[Yes, 646; No, 63]

Chair recognizes—

KENNEDY: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you so much. Chair recognizes Lonnie Chafin, Conferences.

LONNIE CHAFIN (Northern Illinois): Thank you, Bishop. Good morning, General Conference. Thank you. I bring you three calendar items. The first is Calendar Item No. 442. This petition would delete paragraph 2553 from *The Book of Discipline*.

The season of disaffiliation ends today. 2553 has been a wrenching experience for the church. Congregations have been in conflict, conferences have had to divert attention away from our mission and spend considerable time and energy on disaffiliation. So many of us have had relationships of deep

meaning broken. We have heard disinformation, suffered defamation, been mischaracterized. We have watched congregations be weakened by toxicity. Overall, 32 percent of the churches in the United States have left. Approximately 9,600 closers or disaffiliations, of which 7,600 are clearly disaffiliations. Conferences are setting about resetting to our current capacity and cannot wait for the possibility of more separations.

Central conference voices in our community point out that paragraph 2553 was never operative in those contexts. And yet, as the Russian departure earlier in this session demonstrates, there are already some pathways available for central conferences. And, if there is a need, central conferences have the authority to structure disaffiliation processes that conform to national laws and the needs of the church. *(speaking in Korean)*

We cannot continue to center the voices of distrust. Now we must focus on that spirit that is calling us deeper toward fruitful ministry. Passing this petition will mean that paragraph 2553 will never appear in printed *Book of Discipline*. Send a message to the congregations that it is time to speak of how we come together, for the love of God. For us to move forward, the season of disaffiliation must end today. Please support the petition.

BISHOP SAENZ: It is moved to adopt Calendar Item No. 442. The question is on the adoption of Calendar Item No. 442. You may register to speak. Is there any discussion? The chair recognizes Jerry Kulah. It disappeared.

Chair recognizes Jørgen Thaarup from Denmark, mic. 2.

BISHOP SAENZ: Mic. 3. I'm sorry. 2. Jørgen, are you at mic. 2?

JØRGEN THAARUP (Denmark): Thank you, I'm Jørgen Thaarup, mic. 2. Jørgen Thaarup, Denmark Annual Conference, native European. I want to speak in favor of this petition to delete the paragraph about disaffiliation. We should never have had a paragraph like this. We should have been much more clear to point out that all kind of splitting the church is a sin. When we are looking at, Jesus voices to us that it is so important for us to stay together, to be united, to be one church. And also, to see what wrong decision we made during the long time of reformation. We need to recognize that all open door to splitting the church, it is wrong. It is a sin. Thank you for this petition. We need to approve it.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. The chair recognizes Roger Grace.

JERRY KULAH (Liberia): I thought you recognized me earlier. So, I can have my seat if you did not recognize me.

BISHOP SAENZ: I did recognize you, but your name dropped from the pool. Do you still wish to speak against?

KULAH: Yes, yes.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, mic. 1. Jerry Kulah.

KULAH: OK, I'm Jerry Kulah from Liberia. The first thing I want to say is that 2019 when we carved this petition into our document—official document, we did not do it for the United States. It was designed and intended to impart the entire church. So to limit its function to the United States United Methodist Church, I mean, that's a form of disfavor for the church in Africa. Secondly, this whole issue about

disaffiliation, my concern is that we are not addressing the root cause, or the causes of the problem. Besides that, the Bible is very emphatic about people who will work together and at a certain point in time when they differ and they need to go separate—their separate ways, they do so. We know the story of Lot and Abraham, who had differences about the location where they were. And Abraham offer Lot an opportunity to leave and move onto another area. We also know the situation about, you know, Paul and Barnabas, in Acts 15. The period I mention before has to do with Genesis. Genesis 13. This one has to do with Acts 15, where Paul and Barnabas did ministry and it was time for them to move to go and do some additional research. They had differences, and they agree to go their separate ways and still fulfill ministry. So I disagree that a form of disaffiliation that allow us to go and do ministry to the glory of God is sin. And so I vote against this petition. Thank you.

BISHOP SAENZ: Thank you. The chair recognizes Stephen Quigg, Greater New Jersey, mic. 5. The chair believes the delegate is going to the microphone to provide an amendment. If this is the case, we ask the tech team to create a new speaker recognition pool if it is determined that the amendment is in order.

STEPHEN QUIGG (Greater New Jersey): Good morning, Bishop, thank you. Stephen Quigg—mic. 5. Stephen Quigg, White, greying, older adult, layperson, from Greater New Jersey. I might need a little bit of help with this Bishop, so I ask for your help. I would like to amend this petition by substituting Petition 21050 in its place.

BISHOP SAENZ: Could you repeat that again, please?

QUIGG: I'd like to amend by substituting Petition 21050, which is found on ADCA p. 1063.

BISHOP SAENZ: Could you please repeat the page number again?

QUIGG: Yes sir, it's ADCA p. 1063.

BISHOP SAENZ: Just pause for a second, and we're going to consult.

[pause]

CHAFIN: Bishop, (*indecipherable*) it's 21050.

(pause)

BISHOP SAENZ: We're conferring, give us a moment.

(pause)

Petition No. 21050 on p. 1603 was not supported in legislative committee. So are you proposing to—
What are you proposing?

QUIGG: Yes, thank you, and I am beholden upon your advice here. So I would like to take the language from that petition and substitute it for the present petition, if that is possible.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, it is moved and seconded to—is there a second? I hear a second. It is moved and seconded to amend by substituting for the pending motion. The motion offered is moved and seconded to amend by substituting the text indicated on Petition No. 21050 on p. 1603 of the *Daily Christian Advocate*. If the conference agrees to the substitution, then the substitute will be the item of

business before the Conference. If the Conference does not agree to amend by substitution, then we will continue with the main motion, the current petition. The question on substitution is debatable but only as to the wisdom of making the substitution. In a moment, we will open the pool so that if you wish to speak, you may register.

The question is on the motion to amend by substituting for the pending motion offered by the delegate. You may now register to speak. Is there any discussion?

(pause)

Just pause for a second.

(pause)

We're pausing because we've only referenced the English page number. We need to let every delegate know. The page number in their own language.

(pause)

The chair recognizes the chair of the General Conference, Gary Graves.

GARY GRAVES (General Secretary, General Conference): Thank you Bishop. We want to draw your attention to the tracking of all the actions taken on Petition 21050. It was calendared or it became a committee item as Local Church Item No. 16.—LC16. That is reported p. 2228. In the left column, fourth item down.

This item was not supported in legislative committee. And, therefore, if offered as a substitute, is it a negation of the action taken? Is the item under consideration? And, I believe, the chair will have a ruling on that.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, here's where we are. Based upon the information provided by the Secretary of the General Conference, now that we've taken additional time to research this, we have determined that this would negate the pending calendar item. Amendments offered cannot propose something completely different. Therefore, the chair corrects himself and rules the substitution is not in order.

We will return to the original calendar item as presented by the committee chair.

CHAFIN: Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAENZ: The chair recognizes Roger Grace, West Ohio, mic. 3.

ROGER GRACE (West Ohio): Thank you, Bishop. Roger Grace, clergy, West Ohio Conference, White, male, experienced adult. I stand to affirm the motion to delete the paragraph from *The Book of Discipline*. I had the duty of convening a number of the church conferences and I saw splits both for those who wanted to leave and those who wanted to stay. Many churches and families were devastated by 2553 and I would like to see it removed and never come back.

BISHOP SAENZ: Chair recognizes Guy Nyembo, North Katanga, mic. 6.

Guy, mic. 6.

GUY NYEMBO (North Katanga): (*simultaneous interpretation from French*) Thank you, Bishop. I think, here I am at mic. 6. Thank you, Bishop. I would like to say something. We know that living in the church, we have in the church we have differences. The church is like a marriage where we can live together but we are not identical. Man and woman have two different personalities. Different in their education, different in their emotions, different in their feelings, and different in many other ways. We have decided to remain United Methodist because we are the products of Methodism. And we plan to stay. However, we would like to ask the General Conference to free us from some things that do not work that have to do with cultural differences that can kill our church. In the *Discipline*, in this process, that could kill the church, it could kill the church. Don't do things out of enthusiasm or a spirit of victory, let's work together so that we can progress. Some things can be treated in regional conferences to protect the entirety of the church.

BISHOP SAENZ: I am going to ask you to pause for a second, we have a point of order. And the chair calls on Charlene Johnson, Florida, mic. 7.

CARLENE JOHNSON (Florida): Thank you, Bishop. Carlene Johnson, Florida, lay, youngish adult.

BISHOP SAENZ: What rule are you citing?

JOHNSON: We have reached an order of the day about eleven minutes ago. So, my point of order is that we are not actually following our order of the day, and I would respectfully ask that we do that because I do my best work when I'm not hungry, and I would appreciate lunch.

BISHOP SAENZ: All right, it only takes one person to call for an order of the day. So we are at our lunch break.

Before we go to lunch, the chair recognizes the Secretary of the G—

We are at the orders of the day, so we are going to break for lunch, we are going to take a recess. When we return, we will continue with your motion and debate.

The chair recognizes the Secretary of the General Conference for some announcements.

GRAVES: Thank you Bishop. This morning during opening worship, as we held our memorial service, and we remembered those who have died in our midst. There was failure to include the name of a member of the Judicial Council who died during that time, and we would like to lift up the name of Ruben T. Reyes as we all remember him in this moment.

A report on the offering from this morning, you collected \$8,877.20-something to Migration Advance No. 3022144.

On the internet you can find a calendar with a day for just about anything, but someone made me aware that today is National Interpreter Day on one of those. And so we lift up our interpreters.

We would like to remind you of the lunchtime Holy Communion services outside the prayer room, E222, and today being May 1, I believe, it is Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank with Bishop Robert Hoshibata who will be leading the service.

We have been asked to let you know that there are unofficially some reports of illness in the body, and we would like for you to be aware if you need to be reminded of using hand sanitizer, of washing your

hands, if you feel appropriate to wear a mask, feel free to do that. It is also one of reason why we are keeping air moving as much as we can in the room. It is one of the pieces that we have had as part of the advice that stale air that sits still is not healthy in a body of this size, and so we are trying to keep the air moving to try to watch your health on one side. If that means you need to bring a blanket, please balance it by doing so.

BISHOP SAENZ: Friends, we have reached that time for out lunch break, we'll take a recess until 1:30 P.M. The chair would like to thank you for your grace, and I would like to thank my backups, Bishop Tracey Malone and David Wilson. When we resume, Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson will be our presiding officer. We are in recess until 1:30 P.M.