



Bishop David Bard began his third Annual Conference in Michigan going down the Yellow Brick Road to Oz singing, “If I only had a brain.” His sermon during Opening Worship on May 30, 2019 elaborated on the theme, “If we only had a better time in which to be the church.” His conclusion, “This is going to be our finest hour.” ~ mic photo/JonathanTrites

Today’s Highlights

- 8:30 AM Opening Worship
- 10:00 AM Plenary Session
- 1:30 PM Teaching - Becca Farnum
- 2:30 PM Plenary Session
- 6:30 PM Strolling Dinner
- 7:30 PM Native American Dance Exhibition

 **73° CLOUDY**

“Immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.’”

- Matthew 14:27 *NRSV*

SEEDS OF LEADERSHIP

ACME, Mich. (MIC) – The 2019 Michigan Annual Conference opened on Thursday morning, May 30, in high spirit. The past was present during the Memorial Service as saints gone on to glory were named and remembered. Hymns long-cherished were sung – *And Are We Yet Alive?* and *The Church’s One Foundation*—reminding members of their spiritual roots. All “a vision glorious” in the words of the song just named.

But the “right here, right now” and the future of The United Methodist Church were very much in focus in the words of Bishop David Bard. He started on a humorous note, leading the gathering in the Scarecrow’s song – *If I only had a brain*-- from the Wizard of Oz. He continued, “How dare I be funny! Don’t I know what’s going on in the world? ... Maybe you are thinking, if we only had a better time in which to be the church!”

The bishop acknowledged that, “The church is kind of a mess. The world is kind of a mess.” He asserted that *reaction* is not the appropriate response to the situation we are in today. “We are where we are, and in this time, we need leaders.” Building on the 2019 Conference theme of Bold and Effective Leaders, Bard then encouraged local churches to be “greenhouses” providing light, water, and warmth.

“If this is something of what leadership of wisdom, heart and courage looks like, and our church and world need this kind of leadership ... We need to be places that

SEEDS continued on back

Friday



Way forward from St. Louis

On Thursday afternoon three persons, present in St. Louis in February for the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, provided members with information of actions taken and implications for The Michigan Conference. Rev. Dr. Charles Boayue, delegation co-chair, outlined the actions taken by the General Conference and Judicial Council on proposals from the Commission on a Way Forward. He noted that those parts of the Traditional Plan passed by GC 2019, deemed constitutional, will take effect on January 1, 2020 in the U.S. The parts of the Discipline affected are those regarding same sex marriage and ordination of LGBTQIA+ individuals. A plan for disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church is in effect now. Nichea Ver Veer Guy, Michigan's co-chair, spoke of responses in the wake of General Conference. "Delegates from around the world began to try to understand the new reality for The United Methodist Church," Guy said. "There will be restructuring. There will be negotiated separations," she added. She encouraged Michigan UMs to, "not let the distraction of a broken system derail our capacity to live into our covenant with God." Bishop David Bard thanked the Michigan delegates for inviting him into their spiritual community. "We are in a difficult time," he said. "As best I can I want to speak honestly about that. In the midst of that we still have choices to make about being church together." While at Annual Conference, the bishop encouraged members to "Express your passionate viewpoints," and "Take a breath and listen."

SWEET TWEET #MIUMC19



Youth enjoy time on the lake during EPIC Middle School Camp at Wesley Woods. In 2019 five of the nine Michigan camps are in operation. ~ Facebook/Michigan Area UM Camping

Conference passionate about camping

It is not often that an account in Volume 1 of the Journal provokes significant discussion on the floor of Annual Conference. During the motion to accept the historic reports, the Rev. George Covintree rose to speak about camping in the Michigan Area. Speaking as a former camper, counselor, and dean, Covintree said, "I've seen what camping has done as an important ministry," Covintree continued. "We as a conference need some sense of oversight." The Rev. Eric Stone then introduced a motion calling for resignation of the present board and the hiring of an outside consultant to design a new organizational structure and strategic plan for camping. The Rev. Benton Heisler, Director of Connectional Ministry, addressed the expressed concerns. He pointed out that the Conference's Committee on Nominations, Council on Finance and Administration, and Leadership Team are taking measures to eliminate partisanship and add skilled executive leadership. "That will do things this motion points to," Heisler added. "We are making decisions now that every other conference in the jurisdiction made ten years ago." The conference did not approve suspension of the rules to act on

SEEDS continued

plant seeds that are skills necessary for such leadership – skills in listening well, skills to tolerate ambiguity and not knowing, skills that help people grow in their self-knowledge in light of knowing that they are loved by God, skills in working with difference and conflict, skills in reading and learning together." The Bishop encouraged his listeners to not wait in this effort. "Be leaders of wisdom, heart and courage right here, right now so we can be about the mission of God to be disciples of Jesus Christ so that the world can be different because the world needs to be different."