



Laura Witkowski, The Michigan Conference Associate Director of Lay Leadership Development, preached on Friday, May 31. (See story page 2.) Later in the morning she was the first person elected to the 2020 Michigan Conference Delegation to General Conference. ~ mic photo/Jonathan Trites

## Today's Highlights

- 8:30 AM Worship
- 10:00 AM Teaching - Kristen Grauer
- 11:00 AM Plenary Session
- 1:30 PM Celebrating the Journey of Ministry
- 4:15 PM Plenary Session
- 7:00 PM Plenary Session
- 10:00 PM Q & A with Bishop



## 60° SHOWERS

*“Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”*

- ESTHER 4:14 *NRSV*

## GC-JC ELECTIONS WELL UNDERWAY

ACME, Mich. (MIC) – There was one election on the first ballot taken before lunch on Friday, May 31. Laura Witkowski, the morning's preacher, was chosen by the laity in Governors' Hall. By the end of the day, members of The Michigan Annual Conference had elected all but three of its delegates for the 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences. In the afternoon the laity and the clergy continued using the first-time electronic balloting, moving through the slate as follows, in order of election:

GC Laity: Laura Witkowski, Diane Brown, Jennifer Peters, Nichea Ver Veer Guy

GC Clergy: Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, Paul Perez, Joy Barrett, Megan Walther

JC Laity: Ruby Anderson, Hoon-Yung Hopgood

JC Clergy: Charles Boayue, Christina Wright, Joel Fitzgerald

This leaves two jurisdictional lay delegates to elect on Saturday; one jurisdictional clergy delegate. Once the full 16-member delegation is elected, one more ballot will be taken and the top two vote-getters on the lay ballot and clergy ballot will serve as alternates to Jurisdictional Conference. The delegation as it stands on Saturday morning is a mix of gender, race, and age, from young to older adult. While youth were nominated from the floor, none were elected on Friday.

The Michigan delegation for the 2016/2019 General Conferences was a combined group of persons elected by the West Michigan and Detroit conferences. The 2020 delegation is the first to be elected by the new Michigan Conference. General Conference will be held in Minneapolis, MN, May 5-15, 2020. Ft. Wayne, IN is the site of Jurisdictional Conference, July 15-18, 2020. Please begin your prayers now for the important work ahead of The Michigan Conference delegation.

# Saturday



Becca Farnum returned to her home conference on Friday to share observations about courage from Feminist Standpoint Theory. ~ mic photo/Jonathan Trites

## TAKING A LEAP OF COURAGE

The aspects of Bold and Effective Leadership – Wisdom, Courage, Heart – provide the focus of daily worship at the 2019 Michigan Annual Conference. Bishop David Bard spoke of wisdom on Thursday and courage took the stage on Friday. The preacher for morning worship was Laura Witkowski, the Michigan Conference Assoc. Director of Lay Leadership Development. She talked about ordinary courage and vulnerability, using three examples: Global Mission Fellow, Grace Okerson, serving NOAH Project in Detroit; the disciple Peter getting out of the boat when he saw Jesus as told in Matthew 14:22-33; and wives of sanitation workers on strike in Memphis, TN in 1968. Laura encouraged members to claim their courage. “If you’re hanging out in your boat and aren’t sure how to take that first step. #1: Ask Jesus to invite you out on the water. # 2: have conversations with those who have stepped out of the boat. # 3: Take the step!” She concluded, “The water is where Jesus is; the water is a task too big for us to do alone. Be ridiculous like Peter. Be more like Jesus. Find your ordinary courage. Get out of the boat.”

In the afternoon, the spotlight remained on courage as members welcomed a daughter of the conference, Becca Farnum. A peacebuilding educator, who has taught in 20 countries, Farnum is currently based at Syracuse University in London. Her lessons in courageous leadership offered perspectives from her experiences from Scandinavia to Morocco and places between. Her points about effective leaders: Collaborate, Open minds and doors, Understand own privilege and bias, Respect other journeys, Act in abundance, Give generously, Evangelize. What does it spell ... COURAGE.

She thanked Michigan United Methodists for their nurture. “I am a product of the leadership greenhouse that Bishop Bard talked about.” However, she reminded her listeners, “You cannot expect every plant to thrive in the same greenhouse ... Plant different kinds of seeds. See the beauty in other kinds of plants.”

## EMMERT PITCHES ‘PERFECT GAME’

It was a big morning for Michigan Annual Conference Ace Don Emmert. Using images and metaphors from the 1968 World Series Champion Detroit Tigers, the Director of Benefits and Human Resources spoke of “a tremendously successful season” in the benefits office since last Annual Conference. He also acknowledged, “It has not been perfect pitches and home runs so far. We have experienced setbacks but, the 68 Tigers came from behind 28 times.”

After putting on a hat like the one worn by Dick McAuliffe in a photo holding the World Series trophy, Don spoke of the Vital Incite report around clergy health and encouraged some lifestyle changes. “We have a season to play. We have a great lineup. We have exceptional supporting plans to help us celebrate and live our lives to their potential. The ball is in our hands.”

After Emmert’s report was completed, Conference Lay Leaders Anne Soles and John Wharton presented him with the John Buxton Award. First conferred in the Detroit Conference in 1996, this honor recognizes creative leadership. On the conference staff since 2000, Emmert has helped establish best practices in Pensions and Benefits. “He goes unnoticed for most of the work, but if you have ever been in need you know he goes above and beyond. He truly knows everyone in this Conference,” Soles said.



On Friday evening indigenous peoples from around the state of Michigan demonstrated dance as a form of prayer. Bishop David Bard has called the Michigan Conference to increase their understanding of our Native American brothers and sisters. ~ mic photo/Jonathan Trites