



Lay members to Michigan Annual Conference, Jack Day, Josh Dixon and Rev. Ray McGee use classic voting cards when electronic handsets were not available ~ mic photo/ Jonathan Trites

## MICHIGAN ANNUAL CONFERENCE TESTS 2020 WATERS

ACME, Mich. (MIC) – In the midst of the global debate on the future direction of The United Methodist Church, members to the Annual Conference indicated a need to test the waters to learn where those in attendance stood on decisions made during the General Conference in St. Louis, MO last February. Three times, clergy and

laity members voted on measures that would provide Bishop Bard and conference leadership with aspirations for the direction of the Michigan Conference.

The body approved **GCR 2019-2**. Aspirations for The Michigan Annual Conference; “The Michigan Annual Conference aspires to live into an expression of Methodism that includes LGTQIA people in full life and membership of the UMC.” By more than a two-thirds margin, 819 (68%) to 377 (32%), the measure aspires to promote reconciliation, and focus resources on mission not trials and investigations based on sexual orientation. A declaratory decision on the constitutionality of this resolution was requested and will be acted upon by Bishop Bard within 30 days.

The members also approved the taking of a non-binding straw poll, **GCR 2019-3**. Prior to talking the vote, Amy Mayo-Moyle, chair of the Conference Leadership Council who brought the resolution to take a straw poll, said, “We are in a hard place... but we are at a place where we must best discern how to go forward. The reality is we very well may be facing schism. We don’t know what is to come. This will help us know the sense of the Annual Conference.”

The result of the straw poll indicated a two-thirds preference for “a United Methodist Conference whose policies allow for but do not require clergy to officiate at same-gender weddings, allow for consideration for ordained ministry of persons regardless of sexual orientation, and in which appointments are made with consideration given to the full range of contextual realities.” 350 members (31%) of Annual Conference

### Today’s Highlights

- 9:00 AM Special Worship:
  - Budget Vote
  - Dean’s Report
  - DS Installation
- 10:45 AM Appointments
- 2:00 PM Recognition, Commissioning & Ordination
- 4:00 PM Reception
- 5:00 PM Coach Buses Depart

 **56° SUNNY**

“... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.”

- HEBREWS 12:1 NRSV

2020 WATERS continued on back

# Sunday



2020 WATERS continued on back

members favored instead “a United Methodist Conference whose policies include the current Book of Discipline language on “homosexuality,” same-gender marriage and LGBTQIA+ ordination along with enhanced enforcement of those policies determined constitutional by the Judicial Council.” At the conclusion of the vote, Bishop David Bard made clear this straw vote was only one indicator of where members stand. “It does matter how this poll is interpreted.” He said, “This is a vote of the people gathered, lay and clergy, in this particular place in this particular time.” The Bishop acknowledged the pain and difficulty of taking the poll and the importance of caring for everyone’s feelings, saying “Jesus of the parables cares as much about the 70% as the 30%. I encourage us to continue to do the hard work.”

Finally, by a nearly identical margin, the members also approved **GCP #2019-4**, a resolution that recommends to General Conference 2020 the creation of a Central Conference in North America. The resolution was referred to General Conference by a vote of 705-336. If adopted by GC 2020 this would “provide for the creation of a Central Conference encompassing North America,” allowing more contextualized ministry and mission.

Another large part of Saturday’s focus was continued balloting for delegates to the 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences. The election of the Delegation was completed on Saturday evening at 7:45 PM. The clergy election took nine ballots; laity thirteen ballots. On Saturday laity elected JC delegates Ruth Sutton and Lisa Hahn, thus adding a youth to Michigan’s ranks. JC Lay Alternates are Brenda Dupree and Gordon Grigg III. Brad Bartelmay was elected by clergy as their final JC delegate; JC Clergy Alternates are Sherri Swanson and Matt Weiler.



Kristen Grauer, a Preacher’s Kid, reflected on how her life in Michigan churches “gave me skills to succeed anywhere on earth.” Who knows what grown-up life will hold for 3-year-old Liam Mannschreck, who participated in the morning worship service with his family.

## GOD NEEDS YOU. CHRIST NEEDS YOU. THE CHURCH NEEDS YOU.

A bold and effective preacher and a bold and effective preacher’s kid shared the word on Saturday morning. Rev. Dr. Jennie Browne, Conference Director of Clergy Excellence, began with a spirited retelling of the story of Esther. Children at her feet and the members in the seats supplied sounds that brought characters to life. She related how Esther – stomach muscles tightening and breath going short -- “went to the heart of an empire to save her people.” Browne described how God “shows up in the gaps” then offered a challenge to God’s people in the hall. “Esther did not have everything, but she had enough. So do you. She used what she had – courage, spiritual discipline, patience, strategy, community. So can you. . . . God needs you. Christ needs you. The church needs you.”

The day’s teaching moment followed, bringing to the stage a woman, Kristen Grauer, who grew up in the Michigan Area. Making clear that she was speaking as the daughter of the Rev. Charles and Pat Grauer, and not as a foreign service officer of the U.S. Department of State, Grauer related cherished moments in her life in the parsonage . . . baptism, CROP walks, VIM trips, and summer camp. She shared a quick trip around her tours of service, starting in Benin as a 23-year-old to her next assignment in France. She concluded with “Six reasons why being a PK in small-town Michigan gave me skills to succeed anywhere on earth.” 1) It’s a Calling. 2) Internal Community is our strength 3) External Connections. 4) Communications must be Continuous. 5) Coping with Crisis and Conflict. 6) Character is everything.

## SWEET TWEET #MIUMC19

