

1021-08

Request for an episcopal rulings from a member of the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference [written submission]

*[exact wording set forth herein below in compliance with the requirement added to
Discipline ¶ 2608.1 by the 2012 General Conference]*

I move for a bishop's decision of law as to the constitutionality of the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn PCB Church, Inc. and entering into a non-disclosure agreement prior to the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Annual Conference in light of ¶ 33 of the Constitution of The United Methodist Church, and Judicial Council decision 1379 which states, "Under ¶ 33 of the Constitution, the annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries."



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA EPISCOPAL AREA
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DAVID W. GRAVES
RESIDENT BISHOP

June 23, 2021

On Tuesday, June 8, 2021, at approximately 11:56 a.m., the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church was in session and working through the business of the annual conference as outlined in our agenda. Rev. Dr. Olivia Poole, chair of the Conference Board of Trustees, came to the microphone to give welcome and begin her report. As her report was underway, Roy Roane, lay member to the annual conference from Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church, broke in with a point of order asking for a ruling of law. The written request was worded as follows:

I move for a bishop's decision of law as to the constitutionality of the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn Pcb Church, Inc. and entering into a non-disclosure agreement prior to the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Annual Conference in light of paragraph 33 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, and Judicial Council decision 1379 which states, "Under paragraph 33 of the Constitution, the annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries."

The written request for the decision was sent to me and to the conference secretary by email at 11:57 a.m. that morning. This was well after the actions by the trustees should have begun, however we were delayed due to a mass Internet outage at our host church that morning.

Having heard the point of order and having received the written statement, I asked Mr. Roane to allow the trustees to finish their report. Following the report, I asked Mr. Roane if he would agree for me to lay the request for a decision of law on the table overnight for me to have some time to think about it and discuss it with legal counsel. He did not agree to that arrangement. It seemed that business of the annual conference would not be able to move forward until I ruled. At 12:25 p.m., I told the annual conference we would be on a break until 1:00 p.m. when I would return with a ruling.

During the break, I conferred with the conference chancellor and conference leadership. One item that puzzled me was the reference to paragraph 33 of the Constitution which, when read, does not read the way it is stated in the motion. I returned at 1:00 p.m. to rule that the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to the sale of Woodlawn United Methodist Church was constitutional. This is my rationale for the decision.

The 2019 Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference approved a disaffiliation agreement based on the GCFA template for such agreements. There was little to no discussion on the additions added to that

agreement by our annual conference during the 2019 session. Over the last two years, I was informed as our Trustees moved forward with negotiations on all disaffiliations, including the disaffiliation of Woodlawn United Methodist Church. I was also involved in going to Woodlawn UMC for in-person meetings early in the process. The trustees have followed the disaffiliation agreement precisely with all disaffiliating churches. They had followed it precisely in this conference year and to the point of my ruling when there was remaining conference business related to disaffiliation (Report of the Cabinet).

On Wednesday morning of our annual conference this year, Rev. June Jernigan rose to give the report of the cabinet at 10:04 a.m. Her report included all the disaffiliating churches, as it did in 2020. There were no objections to the report. The report of the cabinet passed 438 to 4. To my understanding, this vote by the annual conference on the disaffiliating churches is the final piece of ratification needed to complete the disaffiliation agreement. Our conference chancellor was prepared to discuss in detail the confidentiality agreement with Woodlawn with the elected body. However, no objections were raised.

I believe that I was more than gracious with Mr. Roane. I had 30 days to rule, but I felt my ruling would have been the same in 30 days as it was on Tuesday, June 8. I believe that the Conference Board of Trustees and chancellor of our conference have acted in accordance with what they have been entrusted to do through the disaffiliation agreement. Hence, I find their actions constitutional. I do not believe that the trustees have taken away any of the authority of the annual conference as the basic unit of the church. The annual conference approved the disaffiliation agreement, the trustees carried out the process set by annual conference, and the annual conference ratified the disaffiliation of Woodlawn UMC.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David W. Graves".

Bishop David W. Graves



Table of Contents

- I. Report of the Chancellor
- II. 2021 Annual Conference Working Agenda
- III. 2021 Minutes of the Annual Conference
- IV. Email Correspondence
 - Initial email received from Roy Roane at 11:57am on 6/8/21
- V. Request for Decision by Roy Roane
- VI. Disaffiliation Agreement
- VII. Pages 247-249 of 2019 Alabama-West Florida Conference *Journal*
 - re: Vote on Disaffiliation Agreement
- VIII. Contact Information for Roy Roane
- IX. Leadership Profile for Roy Roane

REPORT OF THE CHANCELLOR ON THE WOODLAWN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH DISAFFILIATION

- The Book of Discipline was amended at General Conference in 2019 with the passage of paragraph 2553 which is intended to allow for a simplified and graceful process for disaffiliation based on the human sexuality issue. The GCFA was authorized to draft a template for a disaffiliation agreement for all annual conferences to use and while conferences could thereafter add language thereto, they could not delete required provisions from the template.
- Paragraph 2553 is silent as to whether an annual conference may require a local church to pay for church property upon disaffiliation. The GCFA template provides an “either/or” option for conferences as to whether to require payment or not, but no specific amount or percentage is mentioned. Both allow discretion to annual conferences on that and other issues pursuant to section 5 of 2553.
- The Alabama-West Florida Conference (“AWFC”) approved its version of the disaffiliation agreement in 2019, without debate. Like the GCFA template, the AWFC agreement requires prescribed payments for apportionments and pension fund liability consistent with 2553 but also added a requirement for insurance obligations. Also consistent with the template and 2553, the AWFC approved disaffiliation agreement provides the Conference an option whether to require a church to pay for their real estate upon disaffiliation. The AWFC makes that determination on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration a number of factors. No one has made an issue of that until recently when shortly before annual conference representatives of Gulf Breeze UMC raised concerns about the disaffiliation of Woodlawn UMC. Both churches are in the Florida Panhandle.
- At the AWFC Annual Conference last year (2020) the Report of the Cabinet was given which included the churches that had disaffiliated. No one inquired about the terms of disaffiliation and all in the report were ratified. Several conferences around the AWFC do not require payment for local church property. Some conferences do. Except for Woodlawn United Methodist Church, AWFC disaffiliations thus far have all been of small rural churches where the property would have little or no value.
- Negotiations with Woodlawn UMC lasted a year or so before an impasse resulted in their requesting mediation last Fall. By that time, Woodlawn had hired a lawyer from out of state who in the past has made public statements about certain disaffiliations. When Woodlawn requested mediation, our Chancellor reminded them that mediations are confidential in Alabama and suggested all aspects be confidential, to avoid the appearance of a public dispute between the Conference and a local church. Confidentiality is not uncommon in mediated settlements and there were several reasons that was considered appropriate in connection with the Woodlawn mediation.
- The Woodlawn disaffiliation agreement was the result of a full day of mediation and Woodlawn was required to pay a relatively modest cash amount for their property, in

addition to apportionments, pension fund liabilities and insurance obligations. The disaffiliation agreement approved by the 2019 Annual Conference was used but three additional requirements were added that were not inconsistent with the approved form but designed to afford the AWFC more protection. One provision was the broader indemnification added to include Boy Scouts of America (BSA) potential liabilities that had come to light. Another provision was confidentiality and the third was a non-disparagement provision requested by the local church. Those negotiating for the Conference and the local church recognized that while the sides disagreed on the terms for disaffiliation both desired the mediation to be dignified, respectful and result in a disaffiliation with grace.

- Because the Annual Conference had previously approved the form disaffiliation agreement and since the AWFC did not change the required provisions but added additional protection for the Conference, and also received payment for church property, it was believed that any ratification required by the Annual Conference would be largely perfunctory in that the Conference would be better protected with the agreement entered into with Woodlawn than it would have been if we had relied only upon the original agreement. Again, the parties had been in negotiations for a year and Woodlawn wanted a resolution before the end of 2020. Accordingly, the property was deeded to the church and the church was told the disaffiliation would have to be voted on at annual conference.
- Based on communications from representatives of Gulf Breeze UMC, it seems they object to the amount charged for the real estate, to the confidentiality provision and because the property was deeded prior to annual conference. Again, Woodlawn was determined to disaffiliate before the end of 2020. Would one expect the church to continue to pay apportionments, pension liabilities, insurance obligations until Annual Conference? If made to wait until Annual Conference, would the local church elected delegates (clergy and laity) not have a right to participate in the Annual Conference they intend to leave? There is also the possibility that a local church would not agree to wait six or more months for Annual Conference. There was also a risk that some potential liability that could affect the Conference could arise in the interim. As for the payment for the real estate, the Conference the agreement approved previously by the Annual Conference allows discretion in that regard. Some may feel more should have been required and some may feel Woodlawn should not have been required to pay anything for church property.
- The Woodlawn disaffiliation terms were negotiated by the Chair of the Trustees, Conference Treasurer, another Trustee, Chancellor and Associate Chancellor with input from the Bishop Graves and his cabinet. The terms were approved by the Trustees. Four lawyers were directly or indirectly involved, including two trustees, the well- respected former Chief Justice and one of the best litigators around who is a former state bar president. There are factual and legal reasons that led to the decision of the amount charged for the real estate, but it could be detrimental to the Conference if the legal analysis and advice of Conference attorneys and related discussions with trustees and the cabinet are disclosed to the entire conference, which would include others that may wish to disaffiliate in the future. One factor considered was litigation costs if the AWFC did not settle, which was based on a quote received from a firm in Florida.

- The Confidentiality provision at issue in the Woodlawn Disaffiliation Agreement states that disclosure may be made to certain persons including “Conference leaders”. During the 2021 Annual Conference, the Chair of the Trustees reminded those in attendance of the prior approval of the form disaffiliation agreement and the discussion that took place, including slides from the 2019 annual conference. Because of some questions raised by representatives of Gulf Breeze in advance of the 2021 Annual conference, the Chancellor was prepared to discuss the Woodlawn disaffiliation and the confidentiality provision at the end of the Trustee report. He planned to explain the confidentiality provision allowed for disclosure to Conference leaders and explain the Annual Conference would qualify as Conference leaders, while in session in an official annual conference. All that would have taken was a motion, second and majority vote of the delegates. However, the Chancellor never got the opportunity to explain this just as the Trustee Chairperson did not get the opportunity to complete her report that day.
- At 11:57 am during the second day of Annual Conference and while the Chair of the Trustees was giving her report, a representative of Gulf Breeze emailed a motion and interrupted the Trustee report to demand the bishop make a ruling of law as to the constitutionality of the Woodlawn disaffiliation. Because of the late notice of the motion, the bishop advised he was inclined to carry the motion over to the next day to study it and proceed with the remaining business of the day. However, the person making the motion insisted on a ruling at that time from the floor. Others expressed concern about proceeding with other business without the ruling. Therefore, the Bishop ruled the Woodlawn disaffiliation was constitutional. Again, no one in attendance asked about the Woodlawn disaffiliation prior to the demand for a ruling by Bishop Graves.
- The subject of disaffiliation came up again the following day in the Report of the Cabinet when the delegates were advised of the disaffiliations that had taken place since last annual conference and ratification was requested. On the list of church disaffiliations presented at Annual Conference was the Woodlawn disaffiliation. At the end of the presentation, the delegates were asked if they had any questions. No one inquired about the Woodlawn disaffiliation. Assuming there might be questions, the Chancellor was again prepared to give the same explanation about the Woodlawn disaffiliation he had been prepared to give at the conclusion of the Trustee report. The Chancellor had discussed his plans and proposed remarks with Conference leadership in advance. However, after the Cabinet Report was given and there were no questions about the Woodlawn disaffiliation a vote was called to ratify the disaffiliation of all churches on the list, including Woodlawn, and the motion passed. Accordingly, the Woodlawn disaffiliation has been officially ratified by the 2021 Annual Conference.

2021 Annual Conference Working Agenda
The Alabama-West Florida Conference
May 16, May 23, June 6-9, 2021
Theme: "Come to the Table" – Luke 24:35
Virtual by Zoom and Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama

Sunday, May 16

4:00 p.m. Laity Session

Sunday, May 23

4:00 p.m. Clergy Session

Sunday, June 6

1:00 p.m. Conference Staff/Personnel Set Up- Wesley Hall

4:00 p.m. Ordination – Sanctuary
 Sermon- Bishop Mike Watson
 Ministerial Education Fund Offering

Monday, June 7

8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
 Devotion-Tamela Stallworth, Theodore First UMC

9:30 a.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
 Gathering Music-Jarvis Wilson
 Hymn- *And Are We Yet Alive*

 Welcome from the Host District Superintendent – Rev. Dr. Debora Bishop
 Prayer- Karl Whiting, Mobile District Lay Leader

 Opening Business and Organization of the Conference – Wesley Hall
 Setting the "bar" of the Conference
 Election of secretarial staff
 Approval of the 2020 Conference *Journal*
 Adoption of the 2021 Conference Working Agenda
 Presentation of the 2021 Consent Agenda

Committee on Standing Rules (to lay on the table overnight) –
Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight

Committee on Nominations – Rev. Ashley Davis

- 10:00 a.m. Laity Address – Beverly Maddox, Conference Lay Leader
UMM, UMW, Lay Servant Ministries
- 10:30 a.m. Report on the Annual Conference Staff Priorities
- 11:00 a.m. Break
- 11:15 a.m. ORDER OF THE DAY – Memorial Service
Remembering those who passed since the 2019 Annual Conference Session
Sermon: Rev. Misty Barrett
- 12:15 p.m. Lunch Break
- 1:30 p.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION – Wesley Hall
Gathering Music- Jarvis Wilson
Prayer - Will Edmonds, Spring Hill Avenue UMC
- Board of Ordained Ministry – Rev. Dr. Jim Sanders
Recognition of Commissioning and Ordination classes
Recognition of First-Time Licensed Local Pastors
Recognition of Licensed Local Pastors who completed Course of Study
Recognition of Clergy in Extension Ministries and Appointments
Beyond the Local Church
Recognition of Retiring Clergy
- 3:30 p.m. Conference Announcements and Recess
- 4:00 p.m. Service of Commissioning – Sanctuary
Sermon: Bishop David Graves
Ministerial Education Fund Offering

Tuesday, June 8

- 8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
Sermon- Deaconess Celeste Eubanks
- 9:30 a.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music- Jarvis Wilson
Opening Prayer- Kimi Oaks, Dauphin Way UMC

Report of the *Journal* Committee

Action on Standing Rules- Rev. Dr. Kathy Knight

- 10:00 a.m. Special Awards and Recognitions (video presentation)
- 10:15 a.m. Board of Global Ministries Presentation-
Roland Fernandes, General Secretary of Global Ministries and UMCOR
- 10:30 a.m. Blue Lake Strategic Report- Beth Allen and Jessie Spangler
- Congregational Development/Disaster Response- Rev. Bill Kierce and
Rev. Chris Ackerman
- Teaming with Tanzania (video presentation)
- Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries- Rev. Jenni Hendrix
- Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits- Tara Sanders, Chair
- Commission on Equitable Compensation- Rev. W. Michael Cobb, Chair
- Action* on Trustees Report- Rev. Dr. Olivia Poole, Chair
- 12:00 p.m. Conference Announcements and Recess

Wednesday, June 9th

- 8:30 a.m. OPENING WORSHIP
Sermon- Rev. Michael Precht
- 9:30 a.m. CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION
Gathering Music- Jarvis Wilson
Prayer- Rosalind Pettaway, Mobile Site Director, QuadW Mission Outreach
- Report of the *Journal* Committee
- Council on Finance and Administration- George Mingledorff
Action Item: 2022 Conference Budget
Statistician's Report- Suzanne Krejcar

Report of the Cabinet- Rev. June Jernigan
Change in Charge Lines
Property Resolutions

Where shall the 2022 Session be held?

Break

11:30 a.m. Gathering Music- Jarvis Wilson
Hymn: *To God Be the Glory*

Fixing of the 2021-2022 Appointments- Wesley Hall

Episcopal Address- Bishop David Graves

Adjournment *Sine Die*

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES
Montgomery, Alabama
Monday, June 6, 2021

Theme: "Come to the Table"

EVENING SESSION
Sunday, June 6, 2021

SERVICE OF ORDINATION

The Service of Ordination began with the processional at 4:00pm at Frazer United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama.

Bishop Michael Watson preached the sermon on 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 and 5:18-20 entitled "We Have This Ministry."

Special pre-service and service music was led by Dr. James D. Seay, III and the Cathedral Choir of Montgomery FUMC.

The conference ordained into full connection, two Deacons and eight Elders, in addition to celebrating the recognition of orders of an Elder.

A special offering for the Ministerial Education Fund was taken.

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES
Montgomery, Alabama
Monday, June 7, 2021

Theme: *"Come to the Table"*

MORNING SESSION
Monday, June 7, 2021

OPENING WORSHIP FOR MONDAY

Worship opened with a video from Rev. Michael Precht, Dauphin Way United Methodist Church and gathering music by Jarvis Wilson. Bishop Graves welcomed the conference with the 2021 theme "Come to the Table." The opening devotional text was from Luke 24:13-18 led by Miss. Tamela Stallworth, a youth from Theodore First United Methodist Church. Miss Stallworth shared how we should not assume everyone knows Jesus. Rev. Julie Hare invited the conference to reflect on the mornings devotion by answering the following questions:

- Who invited you to hear the things of Jesus?
- Who have you told about the things of Jesus recently?
- What still amazes you about Jesus?

Rev. Julie Hare shared her answers to the three questions and led the conference in a time of prayer. Deaconess Celeste Eubanks accompanied by Jarvis Wilson led the conference in singing "Jesus is All the World to Me" (UMH#469).

Mary Catherine Phillips, Director of Communications shared this is her 11th Annual Conference serving in this role. She shared important information related to technology, video, reports, registration, the technology help desk, and comprehensive media coverage. Mary Catherine Phillips welcomed Luke Lucas back to the Conference.

Bishop Graves recognized Mary Catherine Phillips, Director of Communications. Ms. Phillips gave the instructions for participating in the Conference via Zoom or via the live stream, and gave the location for the working agenda as well as other communications and help desk information.

Bishop Graves gave thanks to Jarvis Wilson and Celeste Eubanks for leading worship, reflected on the ordination and service, and recognized those who help with Annual Conference.

Bishop Graves shared the necessity for all to be in the spirit of kindness and patience as we navigate technology.

Conference recess until 9:30am.

CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION

The Alabama-West Florida (AWF) Conference of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church convened its annual business session at the Frazer United Methodist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, at 9:30 a.m. on June 7, 2021, with Bishop David Graves presiding. It was the 193rd annual session since the organization of the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, the 189th annual session since the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the 82nd annual session since the unification of the three branches of The Methodist Church, the 53rd annual session since the merger with the Evangelical United Brethren church to form The United Methodist Church, the 49th annual session since the merger with Central Alabama Conference, and the 32nd annual session following the establishment of The Alabama-West Florida Episcopal Area.

The session began with gathering music and singing “And Are We Yet Alive” led by Celeste Eubanks and Jarvis Wilson accompanied.

District Superintendent Dr. Debora Bishop of the Mobile District welcomed everyone to the 2021 Annual Conference. Dr. Karl Whiting, Mobile District Lay Leader offered an opening prayer. Bishop recognized the Mobile District and their call for prayer.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

Bishop Graves recognized Rev. Ashley Davis, conference secretary, for the procedural motions and to address the organization of the conference and give instructions on how to vote using the Zoom platform.

Rev. Davis reviewed voting instructions for Conference delegates and the Conference practiced these voting procedures.

Setting the “bar” of the conference: Rev. Davis set the bar of the conference, composed as those who are clergy members, those who were chosen by their churches, given a unique zoom link, and who are present on the Zoom webinar. The conference approved.

Election of assistant secretaries: Rev. Sheila Bates, Rev. Clint McBroom, and Rev. Ashley Wilkinson Meyer were nominated as assistant secretaries to the conference. The conference approved.

Adoption of the 2020 Journal: Rev. Davis moved that the 2020 *Journal* with the corrections by the Committee on Nominations be adopted as the official record of the 2020 session of the Alabama-West Florida Annual conference. Motion carried.

Official Attendance record: Rev. Davis moved the information compiled by the zoom usage report from the webinar to be the official attendance of the 2021 session of the annual conference. Motion carried.

Adoption of the 2021 Conference Working Agenda: An updated copy of the working agenda was emailed and can be found on the conference website – the additional action item is the transfer of the Dexter Avenue property to be discussed in the report of the Trustees. Rev. Davis moved adoption of the 2021 Conference Working Agenda. Motion carried.

Presentation of the Consent Agenda: Rev. Davis moved adoption of the 2021 Consent Agenda on page 22 of the *Book of Reports* available for purchase at Amazon. There is a date correction to the original printing and two reports were removed to be presented from the floor. *Rev. Davis moved for the adoption of the 2021 Consent Agenda.* Motion carried.

COMMITTEE ON STANDING RULES

Rev. Kathy Knight presented the Standing Rules as found on pages 7-21 in the *Book of Reports*. Rev. Knight expressed her gratefulness for those on the Standing Committee. She noted and reviewed the proposed changes found in bold.

5.A. – page reference from SR 24 to SR 26

13.C. “paper or electronic” ballot addition

14.B. “and elected at the district conferences” addition – Conference Secretary will ensure balance of lay and clergy delegates

16.A. “The Committee on the Status and Role of Women” addition

19. Specifies the persons making up the voting membership of the District Conference (long list)

32. Delete since Academy Congregational Excellence no longer exists

33-38 will be re-numbered because of deletion of rule 22.

The Standing Rules shall lie on the table overnight.

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

Rev. Ashley Davis presented the conference report with changes and containing all new members to the Boards, Commission, and Committees of the Annual Conference.

Rev. Davis moved to approve the conference report on the Committee on Nominations. Bishop called for a vote. Motion carried.

LAITY REPORT AND ADDRESS

Ms. Beverly Maddox, Conference Lay Leader report found on pages 128-129. Ms. Maddox thanked the laity for giving of their time during COVID-19, how they learned different ways to worship together, and presented the following reports:

Annual Report of the Conference Lay Servant Ministries – gave 210 pulpit messages, 75 devotions, 79 faith-sharing, 7 lay servant classes with COVID restrictions, and certified 6 in Bay Pines District. Report may be found on pages 129 -130.

UMW report celebrated giving 101.4% of their \$118,000 pledge to the mission of the national UMW amid COVID restrictions. Report may be found on 140-142.

UMM report included raising funds, supporting Blue Lake camp, completing community service projects, and hurricane relief. Report may be found on pages 139-140.

Mrs. Maddox mentioned how grateful she was to be the Lay Leader in such a great conference and gave the Laity Address based on the Winnie the Pooh quote where he said to Christopher Robin, "In order to get to where you need to be, you have to walk away from where you are."

CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES

Rev. Ashley Davis as the Director of Connectional Ministries presents the report on page 130 -131 and encouraged local churches to continue to lead people to Christ.

In this challenging time, Connectional Ministries continues to prioritize proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We know that we will have to continue to tell the old, old story in new and innovative ways. The Both/And video from Jason Moore was one of the ways we attempted to help our churches proclaim the gospel in ways that focused on in person and online worship without giving preference to either group or medium. Jason Moore will be joining us by zoom in the fall to delve into this topic further. The Office of Congregational Development also offer microgrants for churches to enhance online worship capabilities.

Connectional Ministries continues to encourage its staff and individuals in our local churches to grow to be more Christ-like and help expand the kingdom. In the past year, the Connectional Ministries staff has helped Bishop Graves to lead a series of Bishop's Time Apart events. The first of these featured John Paul Lederach. His teaching and his book, "Reconciliation: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians," have helped us to grow in our understanding of conflict. We now understand conflict as a more natural part of what it means to be human. We, as the church, are called to be more comfortable in spaces of conflict so that we can help to bring about healing. We understand reconciliation to be a part of our Gospel call.

This past year has emphasized even more for us that we must be adaptive leaders. In February, Susan Beaumont shared some valuable insights with us about leading in liminal space. She encouraged us as leaders to move from a

stance of knowing to unknowing. She suggested learning to give deep attention to what is happening verses coming in advocating for a particular position. She invited us to shift from striving to surrender. Her good teaching is helping us to begin to make some important changes in how we lead that will be particular to this season.

Todd Bolsinger met with our clergy this spring. He energized us while giving us a deep look into the biblical metaphor of wilderness. In this wilderness time, we have to lead through learning. We look forward to having Olu Brown with us in August to talk about four areas of focus that are critical for the church post-pandemic. Culture, hospitality, worship, and technology will be keys for 21st century ministry and church vitality. We also hope to have someone lead our clergy in a session around preaching justice in politically diverse congregations and contexts.

It has been particularly important to us as a Connectional Ministries staff to remain grounded in all the uncertainty of the last year by going back to the basics of scripture and reminding ourselves frequently who we are and whose we are. Our foundation is found in God's love for us (John 3:16 and 17), the love we have for God, ourselves, and our neighbor (Mark 12:28-34), and in the mission to go and make disciples found in the great commission (Matthew 28:16-20). We have gone back to these texts repeatedly to find our balance and to guide our decisions.

As we go back to the basics, our job in connectional ministries really is to resource the local church and help connect people to God and one another. This year we have focused on bringing people together more intentionally, often in cohorts. Children's minsters, local pastors, lay leaders, and senior adults are just some of the groups that have had more collaboration and shared learning time together.

As we move through the rest of this year, we will continue to proclaim the Gospel in new and innovative ways, we will grow more like Christ and help expand the kingdom, and we will continue to adapt as leaders. In order to prioritize these things, we must focus on worship and discipleship. We continue to make the mental health of our clergy and laity a priority. There is so much we are learning about the trauma we are experiencing from this global pandemic and how to heal in it and from it. We continue to focus on racial justice because we believe this is

central to the Gospel message and growing to be more like Christ. We are also learning more about the trauma associated with the pandemic of racism and the healing process that must occur.

In all that we do, we seek to be good stewards of the time, money, and resources that God has entrusted to us. We seek not merely to survive but to thrive long term. We seek to be creative and do mission and ministry even when few funds exist. We exist to help our churches do the same.

Bishop Graves offered thanks for the Conference Secretary and her role as the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries.

Bishop Graves announced that participants may stay logged into the zoom conference and reminded participants to use the Livestream link for the Service of Remembrance.

Conference recess at 1:30.

ORDER OF THE DAY – SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE.

The worship service of Remembrance was held virtually at 11:15 am. Memorial Service remembering those who passed since the 2019 Annual Conference Session.

The opening hymn *For All the Saints* UMH 711.

Dr. Mike Pearson led in prayer.

Rev. Misty Barrett preached from Revelation 14:13 *The Well-Lit Path*.

Sixty-Nine clergy and spouses who died during the past two years were named and their lives commemorated.

Bishop Graves shared words in remembrance of Wayne Sigler and his ministry to the Annual Conference and Frazer UMC.

CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION

Bishop calls the Conference Business Session to order at 1:30.

Conference opened with “My Hope is Built” led by Celeste Eubanks and accompanied by Jarvis Wilson. Will Edmonds, of Spring Hill Avenue UMC led us in prayer.

BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY

Dr. Jim Sanders presented the Board of Ordained Ministry Report, the mission of the Board and the membership of the Executive Team and the Board proper; Rev. Jenni Hendrix Director of Ministerial Services, Erika Glawson, Executive Assistant.

Dr. Sanders reviewed those clergy who are receiving a new status.

Recognition of Commissioning and Ordination classes:

Provisional Deacon

Ashlee Brown

Tony Jeck

Provisional Elders

CJ Brown

Elizabeth Hinton

Kelli Hitchman-Craig

Matt Jordan

Bobbi Lassister

Jeffrey Postell

Deacons in Full Connection

David Garvin

Matthew Montgomery

Elders in Full Connection

Jeffrey Burnette

Diane Everette

David Garvin

Ebb Hagan

Dave Marnell

Patrick McBride

Ashley Wilkinson Meyer

Matthews Montgomery

Micah Wright

Kristen Curtis Wright

Recognition of Orders

Rev. Richard Williams

Bishop Graves asked the historic Wesleyan questions of those to be ordained into full connection and whose orders are to be recognized.

Recognition of Licensed Local Pastors

Full-time

James Flick
Melanie Foust
Jennifer Guidoni
Jody Hadden
Ross Jenkins
John Kelsoe
Joshua McLamb
Tim Morris
Sam Wyckoff

Part-time:

Scott Aspden
Kevin Blair
Glenda Carlso,
Gordon Carnes
John Fuller
Chandler Robbin

Recognition of Licensed Local Pastors who completed Course of Study

Gina Bryan

Recognition of Clergy in Extension Ministries and Appointments Beyond the Local Church

Dr. Sanders read the names of the clergy who are retiring at this Annual Conference and recognized of Twenty-Two Retiring Clergy who served a total of 653 years in ministry. Dr. Sanders remembered the clergy colleagues died this year.

Retiring Deacons

David Goolsby
Kathy Lincs Jorgensen

Retiring Elders

Danny Arnold
Jim Batchelor

Gail Baughman
Jimmy Boone
Herstel Carter
Alan Cassady
Stephanie Cox
Mike Gaby
Marvin Luckie
Oakley Melton
Doug Pennington
Charles Smith
Tim Trent
Spencer Turnipseed
Retired Local Pastors
Tony Algood
Reggie Evans
Paul Ferrell
Greg Nobles
Marg Perelli
Gayle Woodard

Jim recognized June Jernigan's time serving as the conference Director of Ministerial Services. As of July 1st, Rev. June Jernigan will serve as the Assistant to the Bishop of two Episcopal Areas under the care of Bishop Graves. Dr. Sanders presented Rev. Jernigan with a gift as she shared her thankfulness for Rev. Jenni Hendrix coming on board to serve as the Director of Ministerial Services.

Dr. Sanders shared how the Board of Ordained Ministry appreciates the path Bishop Graves helped to forge for the conference.

Bishop Graves gave thanks for Dr. Sanders and the Board of Ordained Ministry, those serving as local pastors, as well as extension ministries.

Bishop Graves gave thanks for the many processes and models created by Rev. Jernigan.

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAMPUS MINISTRY

Rev. Jenni Hendrix presented the Report of the Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry found on page 34. Rev. Hendrix shared there are seven campus

ministries within the bounds of the Conference. Three ministries are experiencing a time of renewal. The Board desires a ministry presence on each campus within the bounds of the annual conference. Each local church is invited to support the Wesley Foundation that is closest to them.

The Tuskegee Wesley Foundation was recognized for being selected to represent the South Eastern Jurisdiction during the Strengthening the Black Church 2020 HBCU college tour and the Leadership in Transformation Conference.

Jenni Hendrix recognized David Goolsby and his thirty-eight years in campus ministry.

Bishop Graves thanked Rev. Hendrix for her leadership.

The Missional Offering for 2021 is focused on Acts 1:8. Bishop shared the four missional opportunities for the 2021 Missional Offering to the following:

- Blue Lake Camp
- Communities of Transformation
- AWF Disaster Response Ministry
- Teaming with Tanzania

Bishop introduced a video of how the Annual Conference can continue to team with Tanzania.

Rev. Ashley Davis shared conference announcements:
Celeste Eubanks will give the message on the second business day of Annual Conference and invited the Conference to join the livestream for the Service of Commissioning at 4:00pm.

Bishop Graves recessed the Annual Conference at 2:32 pm for the Service of Commissioning.

EVENING SESSION

Monday, June 7, 2021

SERVICE OF COMMISSIONING

The Service of Commissioning began with the processional at 4:00pm at Frazer United Methodist in Montgomery, Alabama.

Bishop David Graves preached the sermon on Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 2 Corinthians 6:1-11 entitled "Time to Step Up."

The conference commissioned two candidates as Provisional Deacon and six candidates as Provisional Elders.

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES

Montgomery, Alabama

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

Theme: *"Come To The Table"*

MORNING SESSION

OPENING WORSHIP FOR TUESDAY

Rev. Michael Cobb and Rev. Jenni Hendrix served as liturgist and Celeste Eubanks brought the message from Luke 24:13-29, titled "Blessed by a Stranger."

CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION

Bishop Graves called the business session to order in Wesley Hall at 9:30 am. Jarvis Wilson provided gathering music and Celeste Eubanks led in singing "A Charge To Keep I Have". Kimi Oaks, Dauphin Way UMC, gave the opening prayer.

REPORT OF THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE

Having reviewed minutes for Monday, June 7, 2021, Rev. Brennan Peacock, Chair of the Journal Committee, moved to accept those minutes. The motion carried.

Bishop Graves noted that the participation in Annual Conference via Zoom is lower than when the Conference meets in-person, and that this renders discussion difficult. He also noted the importance that our Conference be in compliance with the Book of Discipline where voting members of Annual Conference are concerned. Therefore, if there is a contentious issue that arises during this year's virtual conference, he may defer the vote to a future in-person Annual Conference.

ACTION ON STANDING RULES

Rev. Kathy Knight presented the Standing Rules, found on pages 7-21 of the 2021 *Book of Reports*, and moved the approval of the report. The motion carried.

Motion to change SR 5.A regarding correction to a page reference. The motion carried.

Motion to change SR 13.C regarding exclusive voting by paper and electronic ballots when electing General Conference delegates. The motion carried.

Motion to change SR 14.B. Due to internet problems at 9:54 AM, the approval of this proposed change was postponed, and conference briefly recessed to address the technical difficulties.

The Annual Conference was re-convened at 10:09 AM with the singing of “It Is Well With My Soul” led by Celeste Eubanks and Jarvis Wilson.

BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES PRESENTATION

Roland Fernandes, General Secretary of Global Ministries and UMCOR joined via Zoom and spoke about the work of our United Methodists Global Ministries in witnessing to Jesus Christ in the world, and he spoke about meeting the challenges posed to the church and the world over the past year. He thanked the Annual Conference for their support of these ministries. He then presented a video highlighting the work of the Global Ministries and UMCOR.

Bishop Graves noted the support that our Annual Conference has received from UMCOR and stressed the importance of Missional Giving.

ACTION ON STANDING RULES, continued

Bishop Graves called again on Kathy Knight to present the proposed changes to SR 14.B regarding District Conferences electing (rather than selecting) lay delegates to Annual Conference. Bishop Graves noted that this change aligns the Standing Rules with the Book of Discipline. The motion to make the proposed changes to SR 14.B carried.

Motion to change SR 16.A to add COSROW as a Quadrennial agency. The motion carried.

Motion to change SR 19 to specify the voting membership of the District Conference, rather than simply referring to ¶ 658-659 of the Book of Discipline. There were multiple questions about how the District Conference delegates would be chosen. Bishop Graves answered that the details would be determined over the coming months and would create more transparency. The motion to change SR 19 carried.

Motion to delete SR 32 due to the Academy for Congregational Excellence dissolving, and the re-numbering SR 33-38 accordingly. The motion carried.

Bishop Graves thanked the conference for their grace and understanding and acknowledged the work of the committee.

SPECIAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

John McWilliams of First UMC Montgomery, the 2021 Awards Ceremony Host, presented the winners of this year's awards:

The Francis Asbury Award – Rev. David Goolsby

The Harry Denman Clergy Award – Rev. Pam Barnhardt, FUMC Monroeville

The Harry Denman Laity Award – Jim Hammond, Bellview UMC, Pensacola

Local Church Heritage Award – Cain's Chapel UMC, Deatsville, AL

One Matters Award – Rev. Janie Mallett and Bayou La Batre UMC, Irvington, AL

The conference shared a video welcoming back Bishop David Graves & Nancy Graves as the Resident Bishop to the Alabama West Florida Conference.

Paulette Thompson of the Committee on Episcopacy was invited to the stage to thank David and Nancy Graves for their service and to welcome them to another quadrennium of ministry in the conference.

BLUE LAKE STRATEGIC REPORT

Beth Allen and Jessie Spangler offered the Blue Lake Strategic Report including current camp ministries, creative fundraising, their Strategic Direction, and how the camp is looking toward the future. The new Executive Director Patrick Newton will begin in July.

Bishop Graves thanked Jessie Spangler for her perseverance during the season of COVID and shared his appreciation for Beth Allen's leadership at the camp.

REPORT OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER RESPONSE

Rev. Bill Kierce summarized the work of the Office of Congregational Development over the past year, and announced the planned work of the coming year, including the re-starting of the “Next Steps” ministry and the launching of a new African American church in the Montgomery area.

Rev. Chris Ackerman shared his ministry of starting a new congregation named “Abide” that centers on disaster response, socially responsible housing and entrepreneurial business development. Rev. Ackerman summarized the work that our Disaster Response team has done over the past year.

Bishop Graves shared his appreciation for their leadership and acknowledged the necessity for new ministry models.

CONFERENCE BOARD OF PENSION AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Tara Sanders, Chair of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, gave the 2021 report, found on pages 66-91 of the Book of Reports.

The Report includes a proposed service rate increase of 2%. Motion to accept the proposed service rate increase. The motion carried.

The Board encourages clergy to participate in the UMPIP program and the Wellness Initiative.

The Conference voted to approve the report of the Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

COMMISSION ON EQUITABLE COMPENSATION

Rev. W. Michael Cobb shared the report on Equitable Compensation.

The report includes a recommended increase in the clergy minimum salary to \$39,000.

Brad Norris, lay delegate from First United Methodist Church Montgomery asked if the salary change would take effect on July 1, 2021 or January 1, 2022. It would be effective January 1 of 2022.

This increase required a vote. The proposed minimum salary was approved.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Before beginning the trustees report, a point of order was raised. Roy Roane, lay delegate from Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church, made a motion for the Bishop's decision of law as to the constitutionality of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to the sale of the property of Woodlawn United Methodist Church. Motion seconded by Paula Roane, clergy delegate from Trinity United Methodist Church of Fort Walton. The motion reads:

Motion For Bishop's Decision of Law to Bishop David Graves Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference June 8, 2021

I move for a bishop's decision of law as to the constitutionality of the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn Pcb Church, Inc. and entering into a non-disclosure agreement prior to the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Annual Conference in light of ¶33 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, and Judicial Council decision 1379 which states, "under ¶33 of the Constitution, the annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries."

Roy Roane
Lay Delegate
Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church

Bishop Graves recommended placing the Motion For Bishop's Decision of Law on the table overnight to rule on it on Wednesday morning.

Rev. Dr. Olivia Poole shared the report of the Board of Trustees, found on pages 98-127 of the Book of Reports.

Dr. Poole reviewed the Standard Form Disaffiliation Agreement adopted by the 2019 General Conference and approved by the 2019 Annual Conference. The agreement can be found on pages 247-249 of the 2019 Conference Journal.

Suzanne Krejcar shared a summary of the financial details surrounding the churches that have disaffiliated since the Agreement went into effect.

Dr. Poole shared a motion from the Board of Trustees to transfer the former Dexter Avenue UMC property to Valiant Cross Academy. The motion carried.

Bishop Graves asked Mr. Roane for his approval for the decision of law motion to sit overnight. Mr. Roane did not agree. Bishop Graves called for a break until 1:00 PM.

Bishop Graves re-convened the conference at 1:00 PM and ruled that the disaffiliation agreement with Woodlawn United Methodist Church is constitutional according to Judicial Council decision #1379.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RECESS

Rev. Ashley Davis noted that June 23 is the deadline for any corrections to the conference journal. Bishop Graves recessed the Annual Conference at 1:02 pm until Wednesday morning.

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE MINUTES
Montgomery, Alabama
Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Theme: “Come to the Table”

MORNING SESSION
Wednesday, June 9, 2021

OPENING WORSHIP FOR WEDNESDAY

Rev. June Jernigan and Bishop David Graves served as liturgists, and Rev. Michael Precht brought the message from *Luke 24:13-35*, titled “Seeing Is Not Believing.”

CONFERENCE BUSINESS SESSION

Bishop Graves called the business session to order in Wesley Hall at 9:30 am. Jarvis Wilson provided gathering music and Celeste Eubanks led in singing “Surely the Presence of the Lord.” Rosalind Pettaway, Mobile Site Director for QuadW Mission Outreach and a member of the District Superintendency Committee, gave the opening prayer.

Bishop Graves noted that the new business from the Trustees – the action item on single signatures around disaffiliation – would come immediately following the Cabinet report.

REPORT OF THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE

Having reviewed minutes for Tuesday, June 8, 2021, Rev. Gillian Walters, member of the Journal Committee, moved acceptance of the minutes. The motion was approved. Rev. Walters also moved that minutes from today’s session be accepted, after review and corrections by the Journal Committee. The motion was approved.

COUNCIL ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

George Mingledorff, Chair of the Council on Finance and Administration gave the annual report, found on pages 45-65 in the *2021 Book of Reports*. He noted that the 2022 Budget is found on pages 51-52.

With regards to the budget, he shared the following:

- This is a 4.49% increase higher than the 2021 budget
- The 2021 budget however, was the lowest budget in the prior 20 years
- This represents coordinated work by each ministry, leadership and administration area included in the budget to make adjustments in response to the significant economic challenges this past year
- The three areas of increase were:
 1. The Conference Claimants Fund (for health/pension benefits for conference staff and those appointed clergy who are not paid via direct bill (due to depleted reserves): increase \$200,000
 2. Conference Board of Trustees due to depleted reserves: increase \$100,000
 3. Archives and History due to depleted reserves: increase \$13,750
- The total increase for 2021 would be \$313,750

It was also noted that 352 churches paid 100% of their apportionments in 2020. The salary for District Superintendents is to remain at \$104,349. Warren Averett rendered an “unqualified” opinion that will appear in the 2021 Journal to meet the requirement for an audit.

Action Item: 2022 Conference Budget

The Budget was voted on and approved.

STATISTICIAN’S REPORT

Suzanne Krejcar, Treasurer and Director of Administration for the Annual Conference, gave the report on statistics, first thanking the many churches who helped contribute to this report.

She reviewed statistics on:

Professing Membership

Average Worship Attendance

Membership by Ethnicity

Baptisms, Formation, Sunday School

Community Ministries

Direct Giving to United Methodist Causes

Other Local Church Financial Stats

She noted that even though the numbers seem stark, there were obstacles in reporting and it was a challenging year. She also noted that she is glad to provide more information to anyone, and they are welcome to email her with requests at any time.

Bishop Graves encouraged all to step up and continue to be the body of Christ in these days.

REPORT OF THE CABINET

Bishop Graves invited Bob Northcutt and George Parker, Conference Chancellors, to come forward for the Report of the Cabinet so they might be available to respond to any questions.

Rev. June Jernigan presented the Report of the Cabinet 2021 and shared that it can be found at awfumc.org under “quick links.”

Rev. Jernigan explained that each month of the year when the Cabinet meets, votes are taken on charge lines changing, churches closing, etc, so this is the cumulative report.

She read the **Resolution for the Demopolis and Mobile District Lines** as they are being adjusted in order to more evenly distribute churches to the reduced number of District Superintendents.

Bishop Graves noted that per *The Book of Discipline*, the Cabinet has responsibility for setting district boundaries, and although we have fewer District Superintendents, there will continue to be eight districts.

Point of Inquiry (Christopher Walker): Is the Pierce Chapel mentioned on the list located in Montgomery/Opelika?

Response: No, it is another Pierce Chapel.

The report was voted on and approved. The full report is found below.

2021 REPORT OF THE CABINET

Changes in Charge Lines

Demopolis District:

Coke's Chapel (2100) is added to the Lisman/Pennington Circuit; Bethel (2030) is closed.

Dothan District:

Newton/Mabson charge is dissolved. Mabson (3210) is a station church. Newton (3265) is a dual appointment with Kinsey (3185).

Columbia/Kinsey charge is dissolved. Columbia (3080) is a dual appointment with Rocky Creek (3340).

Slocumb/Hurricane charge is dissolved. Slocumb (3365) and Hurricane (3180) are station churches.

Clayton/Street Memorial charge is dissolved. Clayton (3062) is a station church. Clayton is a dual appointment with Louisville (3207).

Marianna-Panama City District:

East Mt. Zion/Springhill charge is dissolved. East Mt. Zion (4115) and Springhill (4315) are station churches.

Mobile District:

Mt. Vernon (5185), McIntosh (5165), Ebenezer (5100) are the Hwy 43 Charge.

Montgomery-Prattville District:

Cameron's Chapel charge is dissolved. Cameron's Chapel (7072) is a station church and Oakey Streak (7345) closes.

Walnut Creek/Thorsby charge is dissolved. Walnut Creek (7520) and Thorsby (7480) are station churches.

Rhodes Chapel/St. Paul (Greenville) charge is dissolved. Rhodes Chapel (7415) and St. Paul (7450) are station churches.

RESOLUTION FOR THE DEMOPOLIS AND MOBILE DISTRICT LINES

WHEREAS the number of District Superintendents has changed from seven to four; and

WHEREAS the Mobile District Superintendent, when the number of District Superintendents changed from eight to seven, has supervised the pastors of Clarke County (less Bashi UMC) and the southern portion of Choctaw County (St. Paul at Toxey is the northern most church); and

WHEREAS the number of churches supervised will be more evenly distributed between the four District Superintendents;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mobile District line move to include the aforementioned area; and that the church conference numbers be changed to the 5000 series.

Demopolis District Superintendent Alan Gantzhorn

Mobile District Superintendent Debora Bishop

PROPERTY RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Demopolis District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Bethel United Methodist Church (2030), located in Choctaw County, Alabama, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years: and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Bethel United Methodist Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Bethel United Methodist Church be closed effective December 31, 2020, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Bethel United Methodist Church immediately shall vest in the annual conference board of trustees, who shall hold such property in trust for the benefit of the annual conference.

Demopolis District Superintendent Alan Gantzhorn

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF MELVIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Demopolis District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Melvin United Methodist Church (2280), located in Choctaw County, Alabama, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years: and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Melvin United Methodist Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS, the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Melvin United Methodist Church be closed effective November 18, 2020, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Melvin United Methodist Church immediately shall vest in the annual conference board of trustees, who shall hold such property in trust for the benefit of the annual conference.

Demopolis District Superintendent Alan Gantzhorn

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF PROVIDENCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Demopolis District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Providence United Methodist Church (2372), located in Washington County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Providence United Methodist Church disaffiliates as of January 11, 2021.

Demopolis District Superintendent Alan Gantzhorn

Mobile District Superintendent Debora Bishop

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF COTTONDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Marianna-Panama City District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Cottdale United Methodist Church (4095), located in Jackson County, Florida, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years: and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Cottdale United Methodist Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Cottdale United Methodist Church be closed effective January 1, 2021, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Cottdale United Methodist Church immediately shall vest in the annual conference board of trustees, who shall hold such property in trust for the benefit of the annual conference.

Marianna-Panama City District Superintendent Doug Pennington

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF WOODLAWN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Marianna-Panama City District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Woodlawn United Methodist Church (4365), located in Bay County, Florida, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Woodlawn United Methodist Church disaffiliates as of December 31, 2020.

Marianna-Panama City District Superintendent Doug Pennington

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF BETHEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Mobile District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Bethel United Methodist Church (5030), located in Washington County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Bethel UMC disaffiliates as of June 25, 2020.

Mobile District Superintendent Debora Bishop

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF CALVERT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Mobile District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Calvert United Methodist Church (5035), located in Washington County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Calvert United Methodist Church disaffiliates as of July 19, 2020.

Mobile District Superintendent Debora Bishop

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF WEST SIDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Mobile District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the West Side United Methodist Church (5285), located in Mobile County, Alabama, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years: and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the West Side United Methodist Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that West Side United Methodist Church be closed effective November 16, 2020, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of West Side United Methodist Church immediately shall vest in the Mobile District for future use as a ministry, local church, or additional church campus of a church of the Mobile District, who shall hold such property in trust.

Mobile District Superintendent Debora Bishop

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF TENNILLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Opelika District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Tennille United Methodist Church (6445), located in Pike County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Tennille UMC disaffiliates as of September 1, 2020.

Montgomery-Opelika District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF UNION HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Opelika District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Union Hill United Methodist Church (6485), located in Pike County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Union Hill UMC disaffiliates as of September 1, 2020.

Montgomery-Opelika District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF LIME SPRINGS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Prattville District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Lime Springs United Methodist Church (7225), located in Chilton County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Lime Springs UMC disaffiliates as of July 15, 2020.

Montgomery-Prattville District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF OAKY STREAK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Prattville District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Oaky Streak United Methodist Church (7345), located in Butler County, Alabama, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years; and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Oaky Streak Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Oaky Streak United Methodist Church be closed effective January 31, 2021, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Oaky Streak United Methodist

Church be transferred to the Oaky Streak United Methodist Cemetery Association. (The deed reads "Oaky", and the cemetery association is deeded as "Oaky Streak").

Montgomery-Prattville District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF PIERCE CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Prattville District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church (7360), located in Elmore County, Alabama, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years; and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Pierce Chapel Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church be closed effective November 15, 2020, and that all real property of Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church be donated to the grantor family according to the reversionary clause contained in the original property deed.

Montgomery-Prattville District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF UNION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Montgomery-Prattville District - Disaffiliation

WHEREAS the Union United Methodist Church (7495), located in Elmore County, Alabama, has sought disaffiliation from the United Methodist Church outlined in paragraph 2553 in the 2016 Book of Discipline;

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended the disaffiliation be accepted; and

WHEREAS the church has met the financial requirements for disaffiliation; and

WHEREAS the consent to disaffiliate has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Board of Trustees;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Union UMC disaffiliates as of November 1, 2020.

Montgomery-Prattville District Superintendent Jeff Wilson

RESOLUTION FOR THE CLOSURE OF FERRY PASS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Pensacola District – Lack of financial viability

WHEREAS the Ferry Pass United Methodist Church (8105), located in Escambia County, Florida, has had a long and proud history and has been declining in membership and attendance for years: and

WHEREAS the district superintendent has recommended closing the Ferry Pass Church and recommended transfer of membership to the church of their choice; and

WHEREAS the consent to close has been granted by the presiding bishop, a majority of district superintendents, and the district board of church location and building, in accordance with Paragraph 2549.2.4.b of the 2016 Book of Discipline;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Ferry Pass United Methodist Church be closed effective January 31, 2021, and that all real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Ferry Pass United Methodist Church be transferred to Bright Bridge Ministry of Pensacola, Florida.

Pensacola District Superintendent Tim Trent

Submitted by Rev. June E. Jernigan, Secretary of the Cabinet

BOARD OF TRUSTEES ACTION ITEM

Bishop Graves invited Rev. Olivia Poole to present the final item from the Board of Trustees – the Policy for Single Signature Authority. Rev. Poole reviewed the policy and offered an explanation of the need for it.

Bishop Graves noted that there are several churches closing and it requires much work, but this will help to streamline the process. He then opened the floor to questions.

Point of Inquiry (from multiple participants): Does this coordinate with Alabama and Florida law?

Response from Bob Northcutt: Yes. The Conference Chancellors believe that it does.

As questions came in, Rev. Poole offered the following clarification: in this process, the decision is made by the Board of Trustees, not the individual signing.

Point of Inquiry (Dan Morris, clergy delegate from Gulf Breeze UMC): Does this action supersede *The Book of Discipline*?

Response from Bob Northcutt: No. *The Book of Discipline* ¶2515 requires 2 signatures unless approved by the Annual Conference.

Point of Inquiry (Bill Messer, clergy delegate from Hartford UMC in the Dothan district): Does each transfer require a separate approval letter?

Response from Bob Northcutt: Yes. Mr. Northcutt then offered a fuller explanation of the process.

Point of Inquiry (Chip Oakley, clergy delegate from Westside UMC Dothan): Are we perhaps implementing a permanent change to respond to a temporary situation?

Response from Mr. Northcutt: I believe I responded to this in giving explanation of full process

Point of Inquiry (Geary Rowell, clergy delegate from Center Ridge UMC in DeFuniak Springs): If written approval by a non-signatory is required, how does this alleviate a hardship?

Response from Bob Northcutt: The streamlining comes when Olivia is available to sign the deed, then she could get one of the other person's mentioned in this resolution to put in an email that she approves the execution by that one person. The email is not sent to get the signature, it allows for confirmation of approval by a written document which can be an email or fax.

Point of Inquiry (Dan Morris, clergy delegate from Gulf Breeze UMC): What section of *The Discipline* empowers the Annual Conference to supersede?

Response from Bob Northcutt: We are not.

Point of Inquiry (Chip Oakley, clergy delegate from Westside UMC Dothan): Should we maybe include a sunset clause?

Response from Bob Northcutt: This is up to the Annual Conference, however, this is somewhat of a perfunctory matter.

Point of Inquiry (Frances Clement, lay delegate from Gulf Shores UMC): Will the letter of approval be filed of record along with the single signature deed? Otherwise, if the transfer is challenged, both may have to be in court to affirm the transfer?

Response from Bob Northcutt: No. It will not be filed. It will be put in the conference files.

Point of Inquiry (Roy Roane, lay delegate from Gulf Breeze UMC): With electronic signatures, why is it necessary to streamline?

Response from Suzanne Krejcar: These are not electronic signatures – they are wet signatures that require notarization; in addition, with regards to the question of this being temporary versus long-term: the final step in dispositioning a church is signature and notarization. Even after we move past disaffiliation, this will help streamline the process.

Point of Inquiry (Kathy Knight, clergy delegate from Kingswood UMC Mobile): Will there be any problems with title insurance if the authorizing email or authorization is not recorded with the deed?

Response from June Jernigan: If so, we will get a second signature.

Call for vote: Greg McKinnon

Second by: Tim Trent

Vote by body on moving to vote:

Yes, the body is ready to vote.

Policy for Single Signature Authority Action Item Vote:

391 yes (85%)

70 no (15%)

Policy passes.

Bishop Graves offered thanks to everyone helping with this item.

Where shall the 2022 Session be held?

Bishop Graves shared a letter from Frazer UMC and First UMC Montgomery to host business and worship at Frazer, and host Ordination/Commissioning service at First UMC.

Bishop Graves offered thanks to Frazer and First UMC for their participation in this Annual Conference.

The conference voted to hold 2021 Annual Conference at Frazer UMC and First UMC Montgomery from Sunday, June 12- Tuesday, June 14

Bishop Graves noted that South Georgia already has their Annual Conference scheduled for the first week of June.

Bishop Graves announced a break until Order of the Day at 10:45am.

Bishop Graves called the session back to order at 10:45am.

He offered his thanks for the Cabinet, and many others in leadership.

Bishop Graves also noted that the rule of law he made would automatically be sent to the Judicial Council and they would rule on it in the coming months. It will then become a public decision and document.

Jarvis Wilson provided gathering music and Celeste Eubanks led in singing "To God Be the Glory."

Bishop Graves offered his thanks to Celeste and Jarvis for blessing us with music this Annual Conference.

ORDER OF THE DAY: FIXING OF THE 2021-2022 APPOINTMENTS

The entire list of appointments is available online. The district superintendents announced only the names of those clergy who are being assigned to new pastoral appointments in their respective districts. Bishop Graves offered words of thanks for the District Superintendents, and invited Beverly Maddox, Conference Lay Leader, to come and pray for the 2021-2022 appointments.

Bishop Graves invited Rev. June Jernigan and Rev. Jenni Hendrix to come forward, noting that Rev. Jernigan has served for the past 5 years as the Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Ministerial Services, and that Rev. Hendrix will become the Director of Ministerial Services as of July 1. Bishop Graves offered thanks to them both and the Conference offered a round of applause for them as well. Bishop Graves then offered gratitude to the many people who have helped make this hybrid Annual Conference possible.

EPISCOPAL ADDRESS

In the Episcopal address, Bishop Graves centered his message around Wesley's historic question, "How is it with your soul?" and based the address on Matthew 13:8. He emphasized that we are called to be the church now more than maybe any other time in our lives. After showing the visual of a seed growing into a

fruitful tree, he explained that Jesus uses this image of the seed to talk about spirituality. "If we want to be honest, many problems in our church are spiritual problems," he said. He told of his personal struggles over the past year and realizing that it was not well with his soul. At 4:20am on May 8, 2021, he heard God speak to him by saying, "It's not about you, David, it's about all these people that have put their trust in you. You need to remember your calling." He continued to ask clergy of the Alabama-West Florida Conference to step up. "I am here to help everyone get to where you need to be, but in the meantime, we need to be the church," he proclaimed. "I am a United Methodist pastor, I am a United Methodist Bishop," he continued. Bishop Graves expressed that he wants his legacy to be remembered as winning people to Jesus. While he hasn't always agreed with everything in the United Methodist Church, his churches have always paid their apportionments. "If you do what God calls you to do, God will bless you beyond measure. I am challenging you to step up and step forward," he implored. He told of the \$86,000 of Southeastern Jurisdiction apportionments that were returned to the AWF Conference and through the collaboration of the conference staff, the money went back to the local churches in the form of a "Be a Sower" grant. To those clergy who attended the clergy family meeting in late May, they received a grant to start a ministry out of their church. "When there is something to talk about, we will do all of that in due time, but I will be about winning people to Christ," he said. A recording of this message will be available online.

CLOSING BUSINESS OF THE CONFERENCE

Bishop Graves adjourned the 2021 Annual Conference at 11:50am.

Sine Die.

Subject: Motion for Bishop's Decision of Law
Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 11:57:31 AM Central Daylight Time
From: Roy Roane
To: Bishop, Ashley Davis
CC: Dan Morris, , Pam Avery
Attachments: Decision of Law June 8, 2021.pdf

Dear Bishop Graves and Reverend Davis:

Please find attached the written motion for Bishop's decision of law. As the annual conference is being held virtually I would ask that the attached motion be print and entered into the record.

Roy Roane
Lay Delegate
Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church

Subject: Question of Law Ruling

Date: Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 2:39:14 PM Central Daylight Time

From: Dan Morris

To: Ashley Davis

Ashely,

Thanks for your help connecting us with Bob Northcutt last Friday. Bob gave us helpful guidance, and we anticipate being able to meet with him and the Bishop later in the month.


Our delegation wants to confirm that the Bishop's ruling of law will go to the Judicial Council for review. Is this correct? If so, can you please share the dates with Roy, as he wishes to file an amicus curiae brief in support of his question?

Thanks for your help.

Dan Morris

**Motion For Bishop's Decision of Law to Bishop David Graves
Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference June 8, 2021**

I move for a bishop's decision of law as to the constitutionality of the action of the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with regard to sale of the property known as Woodlawn United Methodist Church to Woodlawn Pcb Church, Inc. and entering into a non-disclosure agreement prior to the ratification of the disaffiliation agreement by the Annual Conference in light of ¶33 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church, and Judicial Council decision 1379 which states, "Under ¶33 of the Constitution, the annual conference as the basic body in the Church has the reserved right to make final decisions regarding the disaffiliation of local churches within its boundaries."

 6/8/21

Roy Roane
Lay Delegate
Gulf Breeze United Methodist Church

DISAFFILIATION AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO ¶ 2553

This Disaffiliation Agreement Pursuant to ¶ 2553 (“Disaffiliation Agreement”) is entered into this _____ day of _____, 20____, by and between _____ (“Local Church”) and _____ (“Annual Conference”).

WHEREAS, Local Church is a United Methodist church within the boundaries of Annual Conference;

WHEREAS, Local Church has held a church conference, in compliance with ¶¶ 246.8, 248, and 2553.2-.3 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (“*Discipline*”), at which at least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at the church conference of Local Church voted to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.”

WHEREAS, pursuant to ¶ 2501.1 of the *Discipline*, Local Church holds its real and personal, tangible and intangible property “in trust for The United Methodist Church and subject to the provisions of its *Discipline*.”

WHEREAS, property subject to ¶ 2501.1 “can be released from the trust, transferred free of trust or subordinated to the interests of creditors and other third parties only to the extent authority is given by the *Discipline*.” (¶ 2501.2)

WHEREAS, ¶ 2553 provides a specific circumstance in which property subject to ¶ 2501.1 can be released from the trust imposed by that paragraph.

WHEREAS, ¶ 2553.4 requires the terms and conditions of Local Church’s disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church to be “memorialized in a binding Disaffiliation Agreement.”

WHEREAS, Local Church and Annual Conference wish to (1) resolve all matters between them, and Local Church wishes to acquire from Annual Conference all of Annual Conference’s interest, on behalf of The United Methodist Church, in the real and personal, tangible and intangible

property held by Local Church and (2) comply with the requirements of ¶ 2553 and Judicial Council *Decision* 1379.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing and all the mutual covenants herein contained, and for other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, Local Church and Annual Conference agree as follows:

1. Conditions Precedent. Local Church and Annual Conference acknowledge and agree:
 - a. *Church Conference Vote*. At least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference of Local Church must vote to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church “for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the *Book of Discipline* related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference, or the actions or inactions of its annual conference related to these issues which follow.” Local Church must provide documentation, to the satisfaction of Annual Conference, which evidences the result of the disaffiliation vote taken at the church conference. Such documentation must be certified by an authorized officer of Local Church and shall be included as an exhibit to this Disaffiliation Agreement.
 - b. *Annual Conference Vote*. This Disaffiliation Agreement must be “ratified by a simple majority of the members . . . present and voting” at a duly-called session of Annual Conference, as required by Judicial Council *Decision* 1379 and ¶ 2529.1b(3).

Should either of the above not occur, this Disaffiliation Agreement shall immediately become null and void.

2. Applicability of ¶ 2501. Local Church acknowledges and agrees that pursuant to ¶ 2501 of the *Discipline*, Local Church holds all property, real and personal, tangible and intangible, in trust for the benefit of The United Methodist Church.
3. Date of Disaffiliation. Should Local Church timely comply with all of its obligations as set forth herein, Local Church’s disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church will be effective on

_____, 20____ (“Disaffiliation Date”).^a Such Disaffiliation Date must be subsequent to the Annual Conference’s ratification referenced in Section 1 above.

4. Local Church’s Obligations. Unless a different date is specified, Local Church shall, by no later than the Disaffiliation Date, do the following:

a. *Payments*. Prior to the Disaffiliation Date, Local Church shall pay to Annual Conference, in a manner specified by Annual Conference, the following:

- i. [either “Local Church shall pay _____ in exchange for the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property, subject to the following terms . . .” or “Local Church shall have the right to retain its real and personal, tangible and intangible property without charge. Any costs relating to Local Church’s retention of its property will be borne by Local Church.”]
- ii. Any unpaid apportionments for the twelve (12) months immediately prior to the Disaffiliation Date, as calculated by Annual Conference, totaling _____;
- iii. An additional twelve (12) months of apportionments, as calculated by Annual Conference, totaling _____;
- iv. An amount equal to Local Church’s pro rata share, as determined by Annual Conference, of Annual Conference’s unfunded pension obligations, based on the Annual Conference’s aggregate funding obligations as determined by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider, totaling _____;
- v. An amount equal to the Local Church’s pro rata share as determined by Annual Conference, of Annual Conference’s unfunded Post Retirement Medical (PRM) obligations as calculated by a third party actuary, valuation date of January 1, 2019.

^a Per ¶ 2553.2, this date cannot be later than December 31, 2023.

vi[“Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.” (§ 2553.4a)

Insert other payments, which may include, without limitation, other debts and direct bill obligations to Annual Conference or a related foundation, as “established by the board of trustees of [Annual Conference], with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor” (§ 2553.4)]

- b. *Other Liabilities.* Local Church shall either satisfy all of its debts, loans, and liabilities, or assign or transfer such obligations to its new entity. Local Church must provide sufficient documentation of same to Annual Conference.
- c. *Intellectual Property.* Local Church shall cease all use of “United Methodist,” the Cross & Flame insignia, and any other intellectual property of the denomination and Annual Conference, including the removal of all signage containing the same.”
- d. *Group Tax Exemption Ruling.* As of the Disaffiliation Date, Local Church shall cease to use, and also shall ensure that any affiliates of Local Church which have been included in the group tax exemption ruling shall cease to use, any and all documentation stating that Local Church is included in the denomination’s group tax exemption ruling administered by the General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church. Local Church and any of its affiliates which have been included in the group tax exemption ruling will be removed without notice as of the Disaffiliation Date. Local Church or its successors shall be solely responsible for obtaining its own IRS ruling regarding tax exempt status.
- e. [“Annual conferences may develop additional standard terms that are not inconsistent with the standard form of this paragraph.” (§ 2553.4a)

Insert other terms and conditions, as “established by the board of trustees of [Annual Conference], with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual

conference chancellor” (§ 2553.4). Such other terms and conditions may include, without limitation: turning over church archives, membership rolls, historical documents related to funerals, baptisms, weddings, minutes, etc.; if the church has a cemetery or columbarium, provisions related to continued maintenance after disaffiliation, and continued access for families and loved ones of United Methodists buried there; addressing any UMC Foundation loans or related issues as applicable.]

5. Organizational Transition. Local Church shall take all steps necessary to [close and/or dissolve any legal entities and to settle, liquidate, or transfer all assets and obligations of such entities, or to establish any new legal entities, or to modify its current organizing documents,]^b as needed to effectuate its disaffiliation from The United Methodist Church, to the satisfaction of Annual Conference. Local Church shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Annual Conference and its officers, directors, agents, and employees from any liability or costs (including reasonable attorney fees) resulting from any claim, action, or cause of action for damages to persons or property resulting from Local Church’s failure to take all necessary steps as required by this Section 5.

6. Property. On the Disaffiliation Date, Local Church will have full ownership and assume full responsibility for the property and assets listed in [identify relevant exhibit(s), as required by applicable law], which shall include any cemetery of Local Church.. The parties shall ensure all necessary transfers or other transactions relating to the above properties are completed prior to the Disaffiliation Date. Any costs resulting from such transfers or other transactions shall be borne by Local Church. Annual Conference shall fully cooperate with Local Church, as needed and applicable, to ensure that such transfers and other transactions convey all of Annual Conference’s interest – both for itself and on behalf of The United Methodist Church – in the real and personal, tangible and intangible property of Local Church. [add detail regarding deeds, related timing issues, etc., as determined by the Annual Conference board of trustees, with the advice of the cabinet, the annual conference treasurer, the annual conference benefits officer, the director of connectional ministries, and the annual conference chancellor and/or as needed to comply with applicable law]

^b Within this bracketed language, GCFA has attempted to address all ways in which a disaffiliating local church might plan to change its organizational structure, but we recognize that the legal realities of a given disaffiliation process may require some modification to this language.

7. Release of Claims. Upon the completion of all of their respective obligations herein, Annual Conference and Local Church, for themselves and their agents, representatives, members, trustees, employees, successors, attorneys, and assigns, hereby fully and forever covenant not to sue each other, and release and discharge each other, and their current and former trustees, officers, representatives, employees, and assigns, in both their official and individual capacities, from any liability for any and all causes of action and claims, including any statutory or common law cause of action, tort or contractual claims, any claims for attorneys' fees, expenses and all other damages, whether known or unknown, foreseen or unforeseen, which Annual Conference or Local Church ever had, now has, hereafter may have or claim to have against any of the above-named entities or persons in any way arising out of their relationship with each other. The parties further represent they have no pending lawsuit, charge, complaint, or other action against each other. Notwithstanding the foregoing releases and covenants not to sue, the parties may take action to enforce this Disaffiliation Agreement in any court where jurisdiction and venue are proper.

8. Time Limit. Should the Local Church fail to satisfy all of its obligations set forth herein by December 31, 2023, this Disaffiliation Agreement shall be null and void.

9. Continuing as Plan Sponsor. Nothing in this Disaffiliation Agreement shall prevent Local Church, after the Disaffiliation Date, from continuing to sponsor benefit plans from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, to the extent permitted by federal law, and provided that Local Church has not expressly resolved that it no longer shares common religious bonds with The United Methodist Church.

10. Non-Severability. Each of the terms of this Disaffiliation Agreement is a material and integral part hereof. Should any provision of this Disaffiliation Agreement be held unenforceable or contrary to law, the entire Disaffiliation Agreement shall be deemed null and void.

[insert signature blocks for Local Church and Annual Conference, as required by Annual Conference policy/practice and applicable law]

the
**2019 AWFUMC
JOURNAL**



**Alabama-West Florida
Annual Conference**

Southeastern Jurisdiction

Pages 247-249

A complete PDF of the 2019 *Journal* of
the Alabama-West Florida Conference may be found at
<https://www.awfumc.org/journalarchives>.

ALICE LEE AWARD – Committee on the Status and Role of Women

Ruth Ann Powers of the Committee on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) presented the Alice Lee Award to Geraldine Smithard.

GUARDIAN OF THE BELL AWARD – United Methodist Children's Home

Dr. Blake Horne offered thanks to the Conference for all the help at the United Methodist Children's Home, and presented the Guardian of the Bell Award to First United Methodist Church, Montgomery. He then explained the development of a new name for Northwest Florida area work: Embrace Florida Kids. This will enable Florida churches to designate specifically to UMCH work in Florida, and will go directly to children in Florida.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD AND REPORT OF THE UNITED METHODIST CONNECTIONAL FCU

A video presentation highlighted the services of the United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union. Jonathan Curtis of the Credit Union invited members to come to their informational table. He also announced that Rebecca Antonelli is the 2019 recipient of the credit union scholarship. The written report of the United Methodist Connectional Federal Credit Union is found on page 175 of the 2019 Book of Reports.

UNITED METHODIST MEN (UMM) REPORT

Allen Dunham, President of the United Methodist Men gave a report on the work of United Methodist Men.

SUSANNA WESLEY AWARD – United Methodist Men

Allen Dunham presented the Susanna Wesley Award to Julie Reiter, Samson UMC.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RECESS

Rev. Ashley Davis offered thanks to Rev. Kelli Hitchman-Craig for adapting and writing the prayers offered up prior to each vote during Conference sessions. Clergy have returned all clergy devices and laity were invited to return theirs as well.

Break until 3:20pm.

Bishop Graves called the session back to order at 3:25pm.

Bates Roberts opened the session in prayer.

Bishop Graves encouraged everyone to attend the Laity Banquet.

LAITY ADDRESS – Beverly Maddox, Conference Lay Leader

Prior to giving the Laity Address, Beverly Maddox, Conference Lay Leader noted that there is no Scouting Award this year, though scouting is doing well. She also announced that David Bowen has resigned as Director of Lay Servant Ministries and Judy Reiter is the new director. Certified Lay Ministers will receive their certificates at Annual Conference moving forward. This year, Jill Lowman and Christine Jean received their certificates to applause from the Conference body. Beverly Maddox then gave the Laity Address.

CONFERENCE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Christy Crow of the Board of Trustees presented the AWF Disaffiliation Petition. She pointed to the highlighted portions of the Petition, noting that additional terms are allowed and required by the Alabama West Florida Annual Conference.

She then reviewed the requirements that came from General Conference 2019.

She reviewed the recommendations from the AWF AC with regards to the Disaffiliation Petition.

Bishop Graves noted that this Disaffiliation Agreement is church law now, post Judicial Council decision. There are not currently any churches petitioning for disaffiliation in our conference, but there could be next year. He encouraged the body not to discuss the plan itself, rather to focus on the items brought forward by the Trustees given that much thought, discernment, and examination of this has taken place.

The Trustees recommend adoption of these 4 additions pursuant to the AWF AC. Bishop Graves noted as well that this will be a work in progress as we move forward from here.

POINT OF INQUIRY 1 – Bill Richardson FUMC Montgomery – question about top of page 4

POINT OF INQUIRY 2 – Carolynn Ann Carr, Auburn UMC

POINT OF INQUIRY 3 – Rev. Kathy Knight, Kingswood UMC

POINT OF INQUIRY 4 – Rev. Kathy Knight, Kingswood UMC

Rev. Ashley Davis announced that yellow, red, purple and green badges can participate in the voting on this petition.

FOR 1 – Steve Reneau, Elba UMC

POINT OF INQUIRY 5 – Rev. Lee Pacine, Rosinton UMC

Vote on Four Recommendations by Board of Trustees

Vote passes.

The entirety of the Board of Trustees presentation is below:

AWF Disaffiliation Petition

Presented by Christy Crow, AWF Conference Board of Trustees Vice Chair

June 3, 2019

Standard Form Disaffiliation Agreement

- General Conference adopted petition 90066 adding a new ¶2553 to The Book of Discipline
- ¶2553 provides that a local church shall have the limited right, under the provisions of this paragraph, to disaffiliate from the denomination for reasons of conscience regarding a change in the requirements and provisions of the Book of Discipline related to the practice of homosexuality or the ordination or marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuality as resolved and adopted by the 2019 General Conference.
- ¶2553 also allows disaffiliation because of the actions or inactions of the annual conference related to these issues.
- Requires Disaffiliation Agreement with provisions consistent with ¶2553 of The Book of Discipline and ratified by the Annual Conference
- Additional terms by AWF Conference are allowed and required

Standard Form Disaffiliation Summary Requirements

- At least two-thirds (2/3) of the professing members present at a church conference of the Local Church must vote to disaffiliate and must provide documentation to the satisfaction of the Annual Conference to provide evidence of the result of the vote
- Disaffiliation Agreement must be "ratified by a simple majority of the members...present and voting" at a duly-called session of Annual Conference
- Disaffiliation date must be subsequent to Annual Conference's ratification above
- Full Details of the requirements are included in the disaffiliation agreement and must be reviewed and followed Local Church Obligations prior to Disaffiliation Date
- Unpaid apportionments for the twelve (12) months immediately prior to the Disaffiliation Date, as calculated by the Annual Conference
- An additional twelve (12) months of apportionments, as calculated by the Annual Conference
- An amount equal to the Local Church's pro rata share of Annual Conference's unfunded

- pension obligations, as determined by Annual Conference
- Other payments due to the Annual Conference

AWF Conference Additional Requirements

- An amount equal to the Local Church's pro rata share, as determined by Annual Conference, of Annual Conference's unfunded Post Retirement Medical (PRM) obligation as calculated by a third party actuary, valuation date as of 1/1/2019
- Local Church cemetery property must be included with the Local Church assets that transfer at disaffiliation date
- Filing for tax exempt status is the responsibility of the disaffiliating Local Church as the Local Church's group ruling status will be revoked at disaffiliation date
- Other requirements established by the Annual Conference Board of Trustees with the advice of the Cabinet, Treasurer, Benefits Officer, Director of Connectional Ministries and Chancellor and ratified by the Annual Conference prior to disaffiliation

Unfunded Pension Liability

- Unfunded pension liability is equal to the Annual Conference's aggregate funding obligations as determined by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits using market factors similar to a commercial annuity provider
- Valuation of liability for existing and retiring pastors under the pension plan is at a "third-party" valuation to incorporate the long term risk to Annual Conference of being able to fund the liability

Post Retirement Medical Liability

- AWF Conference provides post retirement medical benefits and bears all claims risk (self-insured)
- Actuarial estimate of present value of PRM updated every two years (last update 1/1/2019)
- Risks of longevity, market performance, claims costs

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND RECESS

Bishop Graves reminded body of Laity Banquet, and meeting tomorrow.

Rev. Ashley Davis shared the following announcements:

- Rev. Ed Sells and Rev. Doug Newton are attending their 65th annual conferences, respectively
- SEJ Quadrennial meeting for UMW will be in Mobile, Alabama on April 17-19, 2020 – first time the meeting will be in AWF AC
- Mr. and Mrs. Oaks and Mr. and Mrs. Ammons need our prayers.
- Conference Standing Rules require that all documents must be in hands of Conference Secretary by 10 days following conclusion of Annual Conference.
- Reminder to sit with your district tomorrow.

Rev. Ashley Davis dismissed the conference at 4:14pm.

LAITY BANQUET

The Laity Banquet was held in the Fellowship Hall with Mrs. Beverly Maddox, conference lay leader, presiding. The Mary Ellen Bullard Leadership Address was delivered by Scott Dietrich of Sean of the South.

Docket 1021-8

Interested Parties & Persons To Whom Copies Should Be Sent

Rev. Ashley Davis
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ashley@awfumc.org

Roy Roane
Lay Member, asked the Question of Law
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Dr. Olivia L. Poole
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Bishop David W. Graves
Presiding Bishop
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Rev. Ashley Davis [Conf Secretary] <ashley@awfumc.org>,
Roy Roane [Asked Q] <mptroane@gmail.com>,
Olivia Poole [Trustees Chair] <olivia.l.poole@gmail.com>,
Bishop David W. Graves [Presiding Bishop] <bishop@awfumc.org>