



# CONFERENCE CIRCUIT

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church

Issue # 2 • Friday, June 9, 2017

## Bishop's Prayer of Hope and Light

By Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball

Almighty God, Lover of all people, we come before you as members and friends of The West Virginia Conference in need of hope, encouragement, and a new and revitalized spirit.

We confess that sometimes our words fall from our lips as dead leaves in the autumn breeze. There are times when we feel helpless. There are times when we feel weak. We pray for hope. We pray to be hopeful. We pray to be hope filled!

Hope is the foundation that makes action possible for a better future. We need hope for a better life. We need hope for love and kindness. We need hopeful leaders and churches so that both those who sit in our pews and those throughout our surrounding communities might come to know Christ, receive Christ, say "yes" to Christ.

We seek to be transformed, to be changed once again into your heralds of light and life. Let our words be filled with Your Spirit! Help our words to put forth new growth, life-giving growth, living hope. Give us water for our unquenchable thirst. Anoint us with the power and presence of your promise.

Almighty God, in your presence and power, we pray for the unity of all your people so that all of your children, whom you have created in



Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball prays prior to yesterday's opening worship service. (Photo by Deborah Coble)

your image, will come to feel they can count on each other to lift one another's spirit and to bring healing in times of brokenness. We pray for the unity of The United Methodist Church and the West Virginia Conference. We pray for those affected by the

2016 floods. We pray for the victims of drug trafficking and substance use disorder, both users and non-users. We pray for the victims of violence. We pray for our veterans, for our faith communities, for our schools and students, and for revitalized community, communication, and economic development here at home and around the globe.

As we pray for hope and light, and as we pray that we will be the vehicles of your hope and light, help us remember that it is only amidst darkness that light appears as light. What power. One cinder, one spark shatters the darkness of despair. Help us to be that spark! Help us to be that one speck of light that brings hope where things appear hopeless. We stand at the edge of new creation, of new birth, of new life—a time pregnant with possibility—preparing the way.

In these days, busy days, overwhelming days, forlorn days, we now make ready to usher in God's light, God's Justice, God's

### In This Issue

- Votes on constitutional amendments.....p2
- Healing in opening worship.....p3
- Friendly Reminder.....p4

### Today's Schedule

- 8:30 am Praise and Prayer
- 8:45 am Business Session 1
- 10:40 am Break
- 11:00 am Memorial Service  
Bishop Holston, preaching
- 12:30 pm Lunch
- 2:00 pm Business Session 2
- 2:30 pm Circles of Grace
- 4:00 pm Business Session 3
- 5:30 pm Dinner
- 7:30 pm Evening Worship service  
celebrating our historically  
African American churches  
Bishop Holston, preaching

Truth. We prepare to be the bearers of God's ultimate gift and promise of hope: Jesus Christ our Lord.

We need your light, Lord, in every way. We pray to be filled with your light from head to toe, to bask in your glory. Help us to walk in your light, to walk in unity, and to be hopeful leaders and witnesses, faithful to sharing your light and hope with our communities and the world.

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

# Five constitutional amendments will be up for a vote today

By Erin Sears

During the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, delegates adopted five amendments to the Constitution of The United Methodist Church. Each amendment was passed by at least two-thirds of the General Conference delegates voting.

Each individual annual conference will vote on the amendments.

The amendments can be debated on the floor. However, they cannot be amended. Each individual vote taken at our Annual Conference will be recorded and added to the total number of votes.

Amendments will pass and become part of the Constitution if they receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of members of the annual conferences and are ratified by the Council of Bishops. The

results will probably be known at the end of the 2017 calendar year.

- The first proposed amendment adds a paragraph stating our commitment against discrimination of women and girls (At the General Conference, this was adopted by a recorded vote of 746 Yes, 56 No).

- The second amendment

changes Article IV, entitled Inclusiveness of the Church, to include gender, ability, and marital status within the list of attributes in which people should not be excluded. (In the Book of Discipline, “gender” refers to men and women). (At the General Conference, this amendment was adopted by a recorded vote of 509 Yes, 242 No).

- The third amendment adds to ¶34 to clarify the process of electing delegates to General and Jurisdictional or Central Conferences to be held with open nominations and a simple majority vote (At the General Conference, this was adopted by a recorded vote of 767 Yes, 22 No).
- The fourth amendment aligns the process of episcopal elections in Jurisdictional and Central Conferences as stated in ¶46 (At the General Conference, this was adopted by a recorded vote of 621 Yes, 15 No).

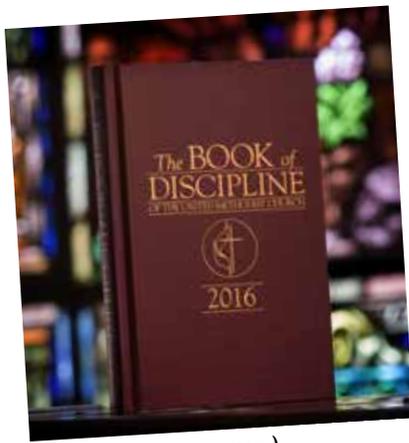
- The fifth amendment provides additional oversight of Bishops to the Council of Bishops by adding another sentence to ¶50 (At the General Conference, this was adopted by a recorded vote of 715 Yes, 79 No).

In ways, the passing of these amendments will have limited effect on the West Virginia Annual Conference. We are committed to the inclusion of women in all areas of the church and conduct our elections accordingly. A few of the amendments speak directly about Central Conferences. However, as one body, we are all affected. We must consider one another as we work together in the mission and ministry to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

*Erin Sears is a student at Marshall University. She is a lay delegate to General Conference and serves on the General Board of Church and Society.*



*Erin Sears speaks at General Conference 2016. (Photo via UMComm)*



*(Image via umc.org)*

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*The five amendments, their rationale, and the recorded vote*

*from General Conference may be found in the*

*Conference Workbook on pages 144-149.*

*A video about the amendments is posted online at*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b94OmYCOwk0>

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For photos from last night's retirement service as well as other activities at conference, visit our flickr page at [flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums](https://flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums)

# How far into the flood are you willing to wade?

By Judy Pysell

“After the rains the sun will shine!”

The rains fell and the rivers rose. The once-smooth and quiet-flowing rivers began to scream out in rage as they overflowed their banks. The rivers demanded attention and took everything in their path along the way...everything but our fight, everything but our spirit, everything but our hope.

We mucked out, cleaned up, tore down and began to rebuild as our wounded hearts began to heal.

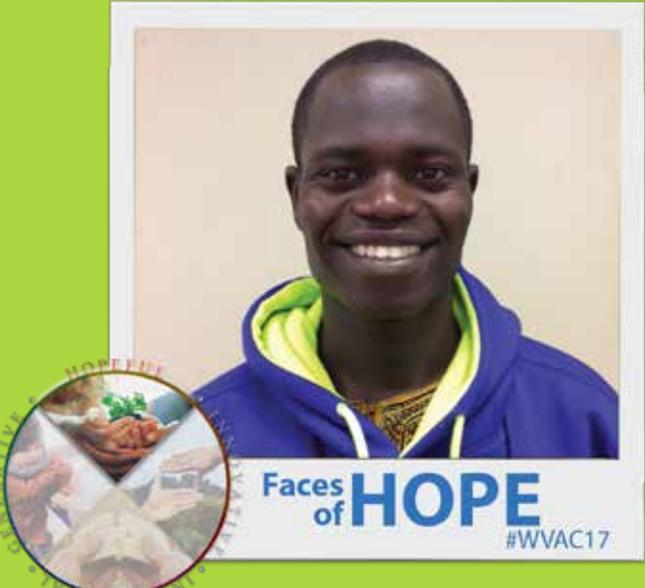
We gathered together yesterday at the opening worship of the 2017 West Virginia Annual Conference to celebrate life after the “1,000-year flood,” bringing water from those raging rivers and pouring it together with a sense of peace, tranquility, and love. We gathered together to give thanks for our Annual Conference; for the material donations; and for the care and support we received from our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Our tears began to flow on June 23, 2016, in sadness and loss. Today, the tears that flow into these waters are tears of hope. As Rev. Scott Ferguson said in his flood recovery celebration sermon Thursday, God was with us even through the flood in every truckload of food and water, in every donation, and in every smile and hug.

Rev. Ferguson reminded us that by sharing of our stories we are able to relate with one another...and as we do this we learn: “It is through tragedy that we will ultimately find triumph. You can take all my possessions away,” Ferguson proclaimed, “you can ravage me with flood waters but you can’t take away the love of Christ.” Ferguson is the pastor of

## What gives you hope?

“Jesus Christ, walking in the will of God, and answering His call in my life.”



*Ivan Chetambe, 22, is a 2016 graduate of Living Hope High School in Bungoma, Kenya. Diana White of Beverly sponsored his high school education. Chetambe is attending conference as an ambassador of the high school, seeking financial support for current high school students as well as graduates who want to go on to college.*

Clendenin United Methodist Church and Brawley Chapel UMC, the one West Virginia Conference church that was damaged beyond repair in the summer 2016 floods.

*Continued on page 4*



*Rev. Karen Tate begins removing the symbolic debris from the altar during yesterday’s opening worship service. (Photo by Whitney Cherry)*



*Fabrics representing clean-flowing water were revealed symbolizing hope, healing, and wholeness. (Photo by Whitney Cherry)*

## Opening Worship...

*Continued from page 3*

In the second half of the sermon, Rev. Jonathan Dierdorff, pastor of Rainelle United Methodist Church, shared a story about a small country chapel nearby that opened its doors to flood victims. The church was so small that as they laid out a meal, they placed the food on the church altar. “Feasting on casseroles and potluck at the altar table of a one-room church is a picture of the church being the church!”

Dierdorff reminded those gathered that “our floods of life sometimes come in various forms such as hardship but also disease, abuse and addiction. “We never know what flood some go through on a daily basis,” he said. And, while the water flood of 2016 washed away material things, it “also brought something. It brought people together.”

Dierdorff challenged the congregation to live into God’s call for us to be a Christ-led spiritual breath of fresh air. “If we can respond to a literal flood with passion and conviction, imagine how we can respond to a flood of addictions and other needs in our communities. I believe with God’s help we can change the world! We are called to wade deep in the waters and rescue people from floods. At every level of the church, people have waded in.”

During the liturgy and sermon, the communion table was transformed from an image of flood and destruction to an image of new life and hope.

After celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion, we were invited to a time of prayer for healing and Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball’s invitation to “leave behind all of the hurts and pains we are suffering and to receive God’s healing power.”

I was a water bearer because I serve churches in Richwood and Fenwick that were damaged by the flood. Despite what we have been through the past year I am a person of hope. May God’s blessing be upon each of you as you wade through the floods of your life or the lives of loved ones.

*Judy Pysell is a certified lay minister serving the Richwood Charge. For more photos from the opening service, visit [flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/wvumc/albums).*



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## An Important Reminder:

The West Virginia Conference Communications Team would like to remind all attendees and visitors that all gatherings -- worship, teaching and business sessions -- are being live-streamed. *Anything you say into a microphone is broadcast for the entire world to see and hear if they choose to tune in.*

Also, with today’s technology, there might be others present at the conference recording presentations and business sessions. *Please remember to act and speak as if a camera or microphone is in front of you at all times.* The worship and teaching sessions will be recorded so they may later be posted on the conference website for viewing and download. The business sessions are live-streamed, but will not be posted on the website.

~ Rev. Deborah Coble, Director of Communications

*Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball offers a healing prayer over those attending the Flood Recovery opening worship service at Conference yesterday. The service of healing celebrated the power of Christ to bring wholeness in all areas of flooding—both literal and figurative—in the lives of people everywhere. (Photo by Whitney Cherry)*