



CONFERENCE *CIRCUIT*

The West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church

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You are invited to gather around Christ's table for annual conference



By Sandra Steiner Ball
Resident Bishop, W.Va. Conference

You are invited! You are invited to come and gather around Christ's table as we do the worshipful, prayer-filled, and missional work of our annual conference session.

Invitational – this is the theme under which we gather for the 2019 West Virginia Conference.

God calls us to be an invitational people, to be people who invite others to the light, hope, and life that only Christ can give. Christ invites us to be invitational leaders, to be a people who invite others to be baptized, to grow in discipleship and to gather around Christ's table to share the good news,

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Annual Conference to use electronic voting system for delegates

By George Hohmann
Midland South District Communications Coordinator

Secure, easy, efficient.

Those are some of the words used to describe the electronic voting system that will be unveiled at the West Virginia Annual Conference June 13-16 in Buckhannon.

Annual Conference lay members and clergy will use the system to elect six delegates — three lay people, three clergy — to the May 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, MN; and also to elect delegates to the July 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Hunt Valley, MD.

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More on the web!

You can read much more about the stories featured in the Conference Circuit by visiting our award-winning website, wvumc.org/news. Use your smartphone camera to scan the code at left to go directly to our news page!

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Wednesday Schedule

1-8pm	Check-in & Ministry Expo Rockefeller Gym
3:00pm	Ordination Rehearsal

Thursday Schedule

8:30am	Check-in & Ministry Expo Rockefeller Gym
9:00am	Teller & Usher Training Wesley Chapel
10:00am	Clergy Executive Session Chapel Hill UMC
10:00am	Laity Session Performing Arts Center
12:00pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Opening Worship with Holy Communion
4:00pm	Business Session
5:30pm	Dinner
7:30pm	Evening Plenary Session

Welcome to Buckhannon for AC2019!

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June 12, 2019

Dear WV United Methodist Annual Conference Attendees:

Once again, it is my honor on behalf of our entire City of Buckhannon family including our 85 dedicated employees who are here to serve, to bring you warmest greetings from City Hall. To those of you returning to Buckhannon to attend this year's annual Conference from June 13 through 16, we're so happy to have you back. To those of you perhaps attending your very first Conference, we're so very pleased to welcome you to our wonderful community that has long served as home to the Annual Conference.

When you're not busy attending to Conference matters, please find your way just down the street to our beautiful downtown. During the past year, we have expanded our amazing horticulture program, installed new public art, the Opera House opened last summer, the Colonial Theatre is being restored, Trader's Alley is nearly complete connecting Main Street with Jawbone Park, and our Innovation Center is nearly finished. Don't forget to sample the many culinary wonders in our many fine restaurants and cafes. Two new restaurants have recently opened with Pita My Heart on North Kanawha Street, and Mama Mia's just across the street from our courthouse. The Poundstone-Ellis Legacies' Plaza was dedicated last Fall beside our College baseball field, the Dog Park was rededicated in May and has neat, new things for our canine friends to experience, and the Wall of Blue was installed last month honoring our police officers at our public safety complex. There is truly something here for everyone!

I encourage you to walk our sidewalk loop in Jawbone Park and visit with Buckongahelas & Mahonegon created by the late, great sculptor, Ross Straight. I'm down there nearly every evening getting in my Fitbit steps! On Friday evenings, it's Festival Friday with amazing music, food, and crafts. Check out Al the Alien atop our Colonial Theatre! Be sure to take some selfies with our best pal, Wesleyan alum "Lurch" and our gi-normous "French Creek Freddie" statues! Pose in front of the monkeys' mural in Trader's Alley. Read about Gray Barker and Wesleyan alum, Pare Lorentz. We know how to have a lot of zany fun here!

All of us in Buckhannon hope you will enjoy a most excellent and productive Conference while finding time for some fun here. If there's anything we can do to make your stay more pleasurable, please drop by City Hall at 70 East Main Street or phone us at (304) 472-1651. Enjoy Buckhannon!

Most sincerely,



David W. McCauley, Mayor



Rev. Mark Conner is retiring as Worship Planning Team leader

By Lawrence Rebelo

When all of the hymns have been sung during Sunday's worship service at Annual Conference and the benediction has been given, it will mark the end of Rev. Mark Conner's time as the leader of the Worship Planning Team.

Mark began working with the team in 1984, participating in various roles and positions. Mark said of his time as team leader, "It has been amazing to watch the process. It is a beautiful, spirit-filled process." Mark also enjoys the collegial work he gets to engage in with the entirety of the team.

Rev. Krysta Rexrode Wolfe said, "Mark is a gifted pastor whose humor, diligence, and institutional memory have made the programming and worship planning for Annual Conference a joy...his retirement, while much earned, is a sad occasion for those of us who have had the honor to walk alongside him in his work."

The worship theme of this year's Annual Conference is "Invitational." Krysta, who will be the leader of the Worship Planning Team for the upcoming year, said, "The theme allows Christ's followers to be both guests at Christ's table and hosts to the hope and life of the gospel."

Every year the Annual Conference theme changes but the focus is always a reflection of the Annual Conference's



Rev. Mark Conner (l) and Rev. Krysta Rexrode Wolfe (r) discuss details of AC2019 worship planning in Wesley Chapel.

mission, which is to *discover, develop, and deploy spiritual leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*"

Alongside their citations this year, the Worship Planning Team included margin notes in the Conference Workbook which explain the "why and what of the worship services we planned," said Krysta. The hope of both Mark and Krysta is that local churches will be able to use the workbook citations and notes to implement elements and practices from worship at Annual Conference in their local churches.

The schedule of worship can be found on pages 10 and 11 of the Conference Workbook.

You are invited...

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to be nourished, and to gain strength and assurance for the Christian journey.

At this annual conference session, we are accepting Christ's invitation to gather around the table, Christ's table – to share the good news, to be nourished, and to receive strength and assurance for our journey together as the West Virginia Conference.

"Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another."

Jesus invites us, calls us to come and see, to stay and remain with him in order that we may know, believe, follow, and live our lives as Jesus does.

Christ's table is an invitation to be one family – one body of Christ. At the table God's spirit moves to make us "one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world." This is an invitation to understand ourselves as

sons and daughters of Christ, children of God, an invitation to become each other's brothers and sisters in the best sense.

At the table we remember that Christ calls us to be present with each other when the going gets hard. At the table Jesus invites us to believe in each other and try to bring out the best in each other. Christ's table invites us to share each other's burdens, griefs, and joys.

So, you are invited! Christ invites us. Come and gather with us around the Christ's table for annual conference knowing you are welcome and welcomed. Come expecting to experience the presence of our host, Jesus Christ. Come to the table seeking to connect to the source of hope and life, seeking to draw our love from God, so that we, together, may be empowered to help each other love both God and neighbor, become a Christ-led spiritual breath of fresh air in anxious times, and more effectively make disciples who make more disciples and transform the world.

Electronic Voting

Continued from page 1

Voting typically takes a considerable amount of time at Annual Conference. “People ask me at the end of every conference, ‘Why can’t we vote electronically?’” said Conference Secretary Judith Kenaston. “We will use it this year to elect delegates. Other votes will be conducted in traditional ways.”

Kenaston said great care has been taken to ensure the security of the electronic voting system. For example, the system uses its own wireless network, not the internet. Also, lay and clergy members will be issued different devices, making it impossible for lay people to vote in the election of clergy delegates and vice versa.

“We have to make sure we have a valid and secure vote,” Kenaston said. “That’s my job.”

Electing delegates to the May 2020 General Conference and the July 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference will be among the most important decisions made at Buckhannon.

General Conferences, usually held every four years, are where changes are made to the Book of Discipline and the Book of Resolutions.

The Book of Discipline outlines the law, doctrine, administration, organizational work and procedures of The United Methodist Church.

The Book of Resolutions contains the text of all resolutions or pronouncements on issues approved by the General Conference that are currently valid.

Lay delegates to the 2020 General Conference will be elected by the lay members in Buckhannon who cast ballots. Twenty lay people were nominated at last year’s Annual Conference. Information about the nominees is published on pages 201-211 of the Conference Workbook.

Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor prior to voting.

All of the candidates will be assigned a number.

The election will begin at Friday’s 8:45 a.m. business session.

At the start of the session, all eligible lay members (who will have blue name tags) within the bar (the official areas designated for members) will be asked to stand as able. Tellers will give each one an electronic voting device.

Kenaston said the device will be easy to use. It looks like a television remote control. Each member will be given a sheet with printed instructions and there will be verbal instructions and tests before any votes are taken.

A candidate must receive more than 50 percent of the

votes cast to be elected.

During the first round of voting, lay members will be instructed to vote for three candidates. They will do so by pressing the numbers assigned to the candidates of their choice.

“The device will tell you to vote for three people,” Kenaston said. “You will enter a number and hit, ‘Send.’ The device will then read, ‘Sending...’ and then, ‘REMAIN: 2.’ Then you will type in a number and hit ‘Send.’ The device will read, ‘Sending...’, followed by ‘REMAIN: 1.’ Finally, you’ll enter a third number and hit ‘Send.’ The device will read, ‘Sending...’ followed by ‘BALLOT CLOSED.’”

The Conference Secretary will read the names of all candidates who receive 10 or more votes. Then those names and numbers will be displayed on screens throughout the sanctuary.

“We hope this is more efficient than paper balloting,” Kenaston said.

If a second ballot is necessary, the names and numbers of all candidates who receive 15 or more votes after the second round will be read and then displayed.

If three or more ballots are necessary, the names and numbers of all candidates who receive 20 or more votes will be read and then displayed each time.

The balloting will continue until three candidates are elected.

“During the balloting, if one person is elected, then you would only be voting for two people on the next ballot,” Kenaston said. “You will be required to vote for the correct number of candidates. If the balloting is for two people and you only vote for one person, your ballot will be invalid.”

Some ballots were invalid in past elections because a vote was cast for someone who had already been elected, or a member voted for too many people. “The electronic voting system will not allow you do to that, so it will cut down on invalid ballots,” Kenaston said.

Voting devices will be collected at the end of each business session.

Qualified clergy (who will have green name tags) will vote for three clergy delegates to the General Conference. Clergy will vote separately but use similar procedures.

The clergy nomination process and information about some of the clergy candidates is published on pages 213-226 of the Conference Workbook. A list of all clergy eligible to be elected will be distributed at Conference.

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West Virginia Conference Health Insurance Recommendations for 2020

Where are we now?

Throughout the last year we heard your strong desire to maintain the current level of benefits and to limit cost increases to clergy and their families. The Conference Board of Pensions has proceeded with these priorities in mind.

Why do we have to make changes?

For the past two years, health insurance expenses have exceeded income. It has been necessary to draw money from reserves in order to cover a deficit of approximately \$3,000,000 last year.

What actions did the Conference take?

The Board of Pensions has researched options for health insurance coverage.

Proposals were received from HealthFlex (managed by WesPath), BlueCross/BlueShield, The Health Plan, Aetna and Cigna, and compared all to our current partially self-funded plan (administered by Benefit Assistance Corporation).

After comparing all proposals submitted, the Board determined there would be no cost benefit and less flexibility in making a change from our current plan.

Are there changes to who is eligible?

No, those who are eligible for coverage will remain the same as last year.



Who do these recommendations affect?

All congregations participate through the apportionment process, as well as those congregations which pay a percentage of their pastor's health insurance premium.

Can we expect similar increases in the future?

There is no way for us to accurately predict the future,

but based on past trends...most likely, yes. Due to the rising costs of healthcare today, we are facing a likelihood of increased costs. Our commitment is to manage these expenses as carefully and creatively as possible.

We have made overall adjustments to the conference budget to limit an apportionment increase. The entire conference budget will increase 3.55% or \$441,193 in 2020, with \$425,000 of that in Medical Insurance.

How can participants take steps to control their costs and manage their health?

They can engage their physician and pharmacist in conversation about possible cost-saving options with regard to their health care and medications. We want to help. The conference website (www.wvumc.org/health-care/) has many resources for information on prescription discounts, the Virgin Pulse health benefit program, and more.

See the full list of the Board's recommendations on our website at wvumc.org/2019/05/west-virginia-conference-health-insurance-recommendations-for-2020/

Electronic Voting

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"Some people have said that voting takes too long," Kenaston said. "People get tired of the process. But it's important we follow the process." Even though electronic voting may be more efficient, ample time for discernment will be provided between votes, she said.

Kenaston, who has served as a delegate in the past, said, "Being a delegate to General Conference can be rewarding but it is also a challenge physically, mentally, emotionally, and sometimes spiritually. There is considerable reading, study, and preparation required prior to the two-week session, in addition to the demands of the conference itself."

Similar voting procedures will be followed to elect delegates to the July 2020 Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference.

The Northeastern Jurisdiction consists of 10 annual conferences and 9 Episcopal Areas that stretch from West Virginia to Maine. The primary purpose of a jurisdictional conference is to elect bishops.

"We will not know the number of bishops to be elected until after decisions are made at the General Conference," Kenaston said. "The General Conference will determine the allotment of bishops in the jurisdictions."

Annual Conference Offerings benefit Africa U., Recovery Home, Youth, Disaster Recovery

We always thank God for the opportunity to offer ourselves and our gifts for outreach. The West Virginia Conference acts as a steward of our gifts, and is pleased to announce all undesignated financial gifts will be shared among three transformational ministries. To designate your gift please write the name of your preferred ministry on the memo line of your check. To learn more about these vital ministries please see the information below:

Africa University Scholarships

Africa University was built by The United Methodist Church in a process dating back to 1980. Since then, Africa University has consistently provided its students professional knowledge and skills while it also seeks to impart spiritual maturity, ethics, and leadership qualities. Africa University, in its bid to make higher education accessible to as many students as possible, and being aware of the low-income status of the average African family, offers funding to deserving students to assist with payment of their university fees. The money given for this ministry will be used for student scholarships, with preference toward students studying theology.

Recovery Home, Clarksburg

Leaders from local churches, community organizations, and state government continue to work together to name the harm done by substance use disorder. They also continue to work toward the hope that is possible in recovery for people and communities. In the last two years the people of the West Virginia Conference have heard stories through programs like "What If" and "Day of Hope." We have an opportunity today to honor those stories and the people who live them by supporting Recovery Home in Clarksburg, WV. Offerings made to Recovery Home will be used to open this new facility.

WV Conference youth attending Youth 2019

Youth from all over the United Methodist Connection will gather in July for four days of discipleship, worship, bible study, service opportunities, and life-changing fun.

Participation in the event allows youth to experience the global nature of the church while building relationships with others seeking to be disciples in a fast-paced and always changing world. Offerings given to West Virginia Conference Youth will be used to offset the cost of attendance for youth from the West Virginia Conference, as they travel to the event taking place in Kansas City, Missouri.



Keeping our promise to survivors of the June 2016 West Virginia floods is the focus of the special offering to be taken for the Bishop's Appeal for Disaster Recovery.

Bishop's Appeal for Disaster Recovery

In addition, there will be a special offering taken for the Bishop's Appeal for Disaster Recovery during Annual Conference. Funds raised will allow us to continue to work in partnership with UMCOR to help families still recovering from the June 2016 floods.

We're live streaming!

...And the world is watching!

All of our business and worship sessions at Annual Conference are broadcast LIVE on our website!

Be sure to let your congregations back home know they can tune in by visiting wvumc.org/ac2019. And please remember, everything said on the conference floor is being broadcast and recorded. All sessions will be available following conference on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/user/wvumc



Clergy to meet Thursday at Chapel Hill UMC while laity gather at Center for the Performing Arts

By Cheryl George

The work of the 2019 Annual Conference begins Thursday with clergy and laity sessions.

At 10 a.m. all clergy (licensed, deacons and elders) who are currently under appointment, retired, or in extension ministry, are invited to attend the Clergy Session at Chapel Hill United Methodist Church, 88 South Kanawha St., Buckhannon.

All others are invited to attend the laity session at the Virginia Thomas Law Center for the Performing Arts at 10am.

The performing arts center is a new location for the laity session. It is behind Wesley Chapel, on the opposite side of College Avenue from the main campus. Handicap parking is available and there is a circle in front of the building for dropping off passengers. In addition, golf carts will be available for transportation needs.

The laity session will include information about the voting processes and things that laity will need to know about other Annual Conference activities. Ken Willard, the conference director of discipleship, leadership and congregational vitality, will remind us of our mission and the importance

of spirit-filled, called lay leadership in the conference and in the world. Rich Shaffer will share highlights from the meeting of national Annual Conference Lay Leaders that he recently attended.

It is important that each person have the Conference Workbook and the information that is distributed at registration when attending the business sessions. These documents will be referred to by page number or document number throughout the sessions.

Also, during business sessions, it is important that all those with a vote sit within the “bar” of the conference. The bar includes most of the floor seating in Wesley Chapel (excluding the two back rows, which are for guests who are unable to go upstairs to sit on the sides of the balcony) and most of the center balcony section. There will be instructions at the first business session.

During worship and at other special times, seating is permitted anywhere except in specially marked reserved areas.

Detailed information about who may vote for and who may be elected as clergy delegates to the 2020 General or Jurisdictional conferences is printed on Page 212 of the Conference Workbook.

Thursday Business Preview

By Mark Smith

Conference opens Thursday with Ministry Fair, clergy and laity sessions, worship and Holy Communion.

This year’s theme is “Invitational.”

The central event Thursday, the first day of the Annual Conference, will be the opening worship service. Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball will serve as the preacher and the presider for Holy Communion.

Beginning at 8:30 a.m. Thursday and continuing through Saturday there will be a Ministry Fair in the Rockefeller Gym. Ministries connected with United Methodism in West Virginia and around the world will be highlighted.

In addition, Thursday includes a Clergy Executive Session and a Laity Session at 10 a.m. The session for clergy will be at Chapel Hill United Methodist Church, 88 South Kanawha St., Buckhannon. The session for laity will be in West Virginia Wesleyan College’s Performing Arts Center.



United Methodist Day
at the
Ballpark

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball invites you to come
to the ballpark for a good cause!

**A Homerun
for Flood Survivors**

\$4 of every ticket sold goes to
Bishop's Appeal for Disaster Recovery

Sunday, July 21 – 2pm Ticket \$10 or Ticket + Food Bundle \$15

Visit wvumc.org for more details

SCHED gives you mobile access to AC2019

The Conference Communications Team is excited to share with you for the second year in a row an app that we think you'll find quite handy as you participate in this year's Annual Conference. It's called **SCHED** (pronounced SKED), and it is the conference agenda...online, interactive, and customizable for you. You can view SCHED on your cellphone, tablet, iPad, mobile device, laptop, or desktop computer.

To view/access/utilize SCHED, go to this website: <https://wvumc19.sched.com> (note: it will not work if you use "www"). There you can view the agenda, and you can register (SIGN UP) and log in to create your custom calendar.

To learn more about using the SCHED app, visit our website at wvumc.org/news



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