



Special Annual Conference Held

By Shannon Blosser

We have never done it this way before in West Virginia.

That was a common theme recited throughout the 2020 Special Annual Conference that, in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, met in multiple locations across the state. Instead of gathering at Wesley Chapel on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College, the annual conference session was held at 12 locations across the connection in order to comply with social distancing requirements.

“We know God creates all things new,” Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball said as she opened the legislative session in Buckhannon.

The work of the Special Annual Conference was limited to specific items that had to be voted on by delegates so the Annual Conference could continue operating in accordance with both the Discipline and state laws. Only items on the called agenda could be brought before the delegates. Other matters were postponed until the scheduled June 2021 Annual Conference.

Legislative work took place over two sessions on Aug. 1. Both sessions covered the same agenda and conducted the same votes, but were



Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball presides over the 2020 Special Annual Conference from Wesley Chapel at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Due to COVID-19, the business session was shown to 12 voting sites across the conference. (Photo by Jim Minutelli)

broken up in this manner in order to comply with health and safety standards. Only delegates in attendance at assigned sites could vote. Votes were totaled from each session and across the 12 sites and announced later in the afternoon during a live stream of the Celebration of Ministry.

Each district had its own site, with some having to utilize multiple sites within their districts. Wesley Chapel served as the presiding table for the conference.

Delegates approved a \$12.8 million operating budget for 2021. Rev. Ken Ramsey, chair of the Committee on Finance and Administration, said it is the overall same amount approved for 2020.

Changes were made to the conference’s health care plan. Delegates approved a switch to Cigna Preferred Provider Organization (PPO)

for medical coverage. They also approved a small employer exception regarding Medicare. According to Jamie O’Brien, who serves as the chair of the Board of Pensions, the moves will benefit churches and the entire conference.

Other matters approved during the special annual conference included:

- *Apportionment funding for the conference health care program was maintained at \$4,325,000.
- *Full-time minimum salary for clergy was set at \$37,000 (Category I), \$35,000 (Category II), and \$34,000 (Category III).
- *The minimum Accountable Reimbursement Plan was set at \$2,000.
- *Maintained the CRSP and medical insurance benefit paid by the local church at 70 percent.
- *Approved the report from the Board of Trustees, which offered no changes from its report in 2019.

Visit WVUMC.org for more on the 2020 Special Annual Conference.



Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball baptizes Nora Grace, daughter of Rev. Lauren Godwin and Josh Hill, and granddaughter of Rev. Greg Godwin, on Sunday, Aug. 2, at West Virginia Wesleyan College's Wesley Chapel. (Photo by Deborah Coble)



Rev. Jenna Moon

Rev. Heather
Moore

Rev. Michael
Potesta

Ordination Biographies can be found in the Conference Workbook on pages 14-15.

Baptism, Ordinations Serve as Signs of Hope

By Audrey Stanton-Smith

Some saluted. Others mimed hugs from a 6-foot distance or asked for a closer look at the camouflage stole his mother made him. But all who gathered outside their church Friday in Beckley, though socially distant, warmly congratulated Michael Anthony Potesta after his elder ordination service.

Potesta's ordination marked the third for Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball in the week following Annual Conference. On Sunday, Aug. 2, at the chapel of West Virginia Wesleyan College, she ordained Heather Moore, deacon, and Jenna Wright Moon, elder.

Later, the bishop will ordain Paula Lea Perdue Nutter Napier, elder, who serves the New Haven-Graham Charge in Mason County.

Dr. Jay Parkins, chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, on Aug. 2 also presented the names Bradley Gene Davis and Jonathon Charles Collins to be commissioned for the work of an elder.

In addition, the Aug. 2 service included the baptism of Nora Grace, daughter of Rev. Lauren Godwin and Josh Hill. Nora Grace was baptized by her grandfather, Rev. Greg Godwin, who retired this year.

"We're used to the processions and the choir and the clergy and laity all gathered together today," the Bishop said during the service. "We do it differently today. ... But no matter that, we gather in the spirit and love and the grace and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Bishop reminded those watching in person and via livestream that through baptism, all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers.

"We all share in Christ's ministry of love and service," she said.

Service, in the unusual case of this 2020 class, involves not only the work of the church, but military service. Moon is a U.S. Army Reserve military chaplain and Potesta serves as a U.S. Navy military chaplain.

"They join a great tradition of other military chaplains from West Virginia," Steiner Ball said. "It just shows how people are called from West Virginia to serve our world, to be powerful witnesses of hope and love to people everywhere."

Steiner Ball noted that military chaplains are frequently placed in new and anxious situations, in many ways like the early disciples she spoke of during her sermon.

"Jesus is with those who are grieving, those who are recovering, and those who are needing hope in the midst of personal and communal upheavals that tend to bring periods of gloom and discouragement. And Christ interrupts and changes things," she said in her sermon.

"We are called to be the conveyors of hope, the people who created an atmosphere of Godly expectation, the people who bring spiritual comfort."

A longer version of this story can be found at wvumc.org.

Bishop, Kenaston Call Church to Share Hope

By Shannon Blosser

Churches today face extraordinary challenges to do ministry and give witness to the love of Christ. The challenges include the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the conversations regarding racial justice.

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball said the challenges should not stop the church from being about the work of Jesus Christ. She said, instead, the challenges call for the church to continue its mission of being hope bringers to the people of West Virginia and the world.

“We can be hope bringers in the midst of the challenges because hope bringers help people take the first step into a new and transformed life,” she said.



Rev. Dr. Joe Kenaston

Dr. Joe Kenaston, district superintendent of the Southern District and dean of the cabinet. It was aired on Aug. 2 as part of the Celebration of Ministry in which the two discussed how the conference is rising to meet the challenges before it today. The conversation was interposed throughout the evening, which also included recognition of ministry, the lay leader address, and an update on the legislative session vote totals.

“The future of mission and ministry in the West Virginia Conference is



Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball preaches during the Service of Ordination and Baptism on Sunday, Aug. 2, at the 2020 Special Annual Conference. (Photo by Caitlin Ware)

bright,” Bishop Steiner Ball said. “Jesus Christ turns things around (and) gives us hope.”

Both offered examples of where they have seen hope take place throughout the Conference during the current pandemic. One specific way was how churches have responded to the coronavirus by being creative in expressing ministry in a new way, so as to love their neighbor. Bishop Steiner Ball said she has been amazed at the creativity shown by churches in how they have transitioned into new expressions of worship.

“I’m extremely proud of how our churches have taken on the commandment to love one another and to love thy neighbor,” Kenaston said. “It hasn’t been easy.”

The conversation also touched upon the conversations regarding racial injustice. They recognized the challenges facing the nation in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death and the continued inequality in our nation. Bishop Steiner Ball said much of this has come to the surface as a

result of Covid-19, because the pandemic has revealed the inadequacy of health care within the minority community.

“The inequity between people has been lifted again,” Bishop Steiner Ball said. “People are hurting. People are grieving.”

Kenaston said he has been reading “White Fragility” to help him work through conversations about racial injustice. This has been part of a Wednesday book study with the clergy of the Southern District. Bishop Steiner Ball said she has been reading “How to Be an Anti-Racist.”

The bishop also announced an upcoming project she is involved in with three former West Virginia Annual Conference bishops — William Grove, S. Clifton Ives and Ernest Lyght — on racism. In what she described as a series of conversations from the porch, Bishop Steiner Ball said the project will focus on racism within West Virginia and to how to help churches have conversations about race.

Deceased clergy, spouses honored during session

By Brad Davis

The author of Hebrews speaks of a great “cloud of witnesses” — saints that have gone on to glory whose faith impacts our own as we traverse the trail they blazed and sets the example for us to follow.

It is this same chord that Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball and Dean of the Cabinet Joe Kenaston struck as they memorialized those that completed their race and joined that great cloud of witnesses during the 2019-20 conference year.

The memorial occurred during the Special Annual Conference’s Celebration of Ministry and Mission.

“I give thanks and praise today for those who have laid the groundwork for this outreach and ministry that we are experiencing today, and the willingness to risk doing new things for the sake of the gospel,” said Bishop Steiner Ball. “Their witness has made a difference in this generation, and for generations to come.”

A total of 38 deceased clergy, clergy spouses, and surviving clergy spouses were honored at the Aug. 1 event, which was live-streamed from Wesley Chapel on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon.

In addition to a discussion of their lives and legacy as Bishop Steiner Ball and Kenaston engaged in conversation, a nearly four-minute memorial video produced by the conference highlighting each name and face was played, prompting Kenaston to fondly reflect upon all those that have now been clothed in glory.

“As I listened to the names and saw the pictures, I knew virtually all of those persons,” he said. “And the few that I didn’t know I know that God gave them to touch people’s hearts and minds and to make a difference in people and in this world, and I celebrate their ministry.”

The celebration included honoring the faithfulness to the gospel displayed throughout their lives, and the influence they continue to have on their colleagues even in death.

This was highlighted by Kenaston, noting that their legacy is celebrated and carried onward as the conference finds new ways to do creative and impactful ministry during these unparalleled times.

Remembered Clergy, Spouses, Honored Spouses

Clergy:

G. Randall Adkins (Elder); Andrew C. Agnew, Sr. (Elder, retired); Arthur G. Backus (Elder, retired); Michael L. Daniels (Elder, retired); F. Olive Davis (Elder, retired); Esther Wilmoth Dyer (Diaconal Minister); Jerry R. Eaton (Licensed Local Pastor, retired); Clyde L. Gu, (Licensed Local Pastor, retired); George Hamrick (Licensed Local Pastor, retired); Parker L. Hinzman (Elder, retired); Harold A. Langevin (Licensed Local Pastor, retired); Harold A. Laparl (Elder, retired); Harry P. Light, Jr. (Elder, retired); Richard L. Longbon (Elder, retired); Edward D. Lowe (Licensed Local Pastor); John L. Lowther (Licensed Local Pastor); Bryan W. McMullen (Associate Member, retired); Ernest D. Metheny (Elder, retired); Billee Scott Mick (Elder, retired); Charles W. Scragg, Jr. (Elder, retired); Lawrence F. Sherwood (Elder, retired); Donzel B. Wease (Elder, retired); Ralph E. Wycoff (Associate Member, retired)

Clergy spouses:

W. Blaker Boling (spouse of Julia Boling); Kim L. Craft (spouse of Edward A. Craft); Sylvia J. Daily (spouse of James E. Daily); Karyn Mock Harris (spouse of Mark S. Harris); Sharon L. Jones (spouse of Larry Jones); Virginia M. Saville (spouse of L. Curtis Saville)

Surviving Spouses:

Rheba V. Arbogast (surviving spouse of James B. Arbogast); Geraldine Beal (surviving spouse of Paul R. Beal); Rosalia A. Hanna (surviving spouse of Tally Hanna); Virginia M. Hinkle (surviving spouse of Charles J. Hinkle); Naomi M. London (surviving spouse of Kenneth L. London); Helen McCauley (surviving spouse of Donald McCauley); Lela V. McCormick (surviving spouse of James L. McCormick); Joann Morrison (surviving spouse of Albert Morrison); Mamie Helen O’Dell (surviving spouse of Garlen O’Dell)

“They’ve been inspired by the laity and clergy that have gone before them,” he said.

Memorial videos can be found at wvumc.org.



*Rich Shaffer demonstrates his father's whistle during the Special Annual Conference Laity Address.
(Photo by Cheryl George)*

Shaffer Reflects on Call

By Cheryl George

Rich Shaffer was introduced during the Special Annual Conference as a man with a heart for God, whose leadership and compassion have been on display for the past eight years as he has taken the message and witness of Christ throughout the conference as Conference Lay Leader.

"I was glad I said yes to God when [God] called me to this position," Shaffer said when reflecting on his time in the position.

Shaffer talked about his father's whistle, which could be heard up to a mile away. When his children heard this whistle, they knew that it was a command to come home quickly because his father had a reason for calling them.

This whistle call gave Shaffer an opportunity to ponder God's call on our lives and led to some questions. Like the call of his father, Shaffer pondered whether we recognize the call of our heavenly father. He asked if we realize that when God calls, there is a purpose for that call, that there is something that needs to be accomplished through us. He asked if we can distinguish the voice of God from all the other voices that we hear.

Reflecting on John 10:14, Shaffer said we are reminded that sheep know that their shepherd protects them, cares for them and they can distinguish between their own shepherd and others.

Shaffer closed with several questions to ponder: How much longer do we have on this Earth and what is the urgency for our heart to be attuned to God and our Spirits aligned with the Holy Spirit? Is Jesus the Shepherd of our life? How much time have we spent praying to God?

Leadership Passes from Shaffer to Wilkerson

By Mark E. Smith

For both Rich Shaffer and Kristi Wilkerson, serving in West Virginia Annual Conference leadership roles seemed natural.



Kristi Wilkerson

Shaffer grew up in the church, the son of a Methodist minister. Except for a period in his younger years, Shaffer has attended worship at a local church and has taken on leadership roles. Over time, he became involved in his district and in the annual conference, culminating with his role as the Conference Lay Leader, starting in 2008.

As Conference Lay Leader, Shaffer had the opportunity to add his voice to several committees and agencies. Moreover, in 2016, Shaffer served as a delegate to general and jurisdictional conferences, adding to the influence that West Virginia United Methodism had on global church matters.

It has always been important for Wilkerson's family and for her to be active in a local church wherever they have been living. She has served on the staff of local churches as a Christian educator. She has been nominated and served on local church committees. Additionally, she has been invited to serve on district and annual conference committees and agencies, culminating in her most recent role as the Associate Lay Leader. During the Aug. 1 Special Annual Conference she was elected to succeed Shaffer as Conference Lay Leader. She also serves as director of the Upshur Parish House in Buckhannon.

In 2019, Wilkerson was elected as a delegate to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, which means she also is a reserve delegate to General Conference.

Even though it is common for the Associate Lay Leader to become the Conference Lay Leader, Wilkerson was surprised to learn that she had been nominated for the Conference Lay Leader role. When asked why, she noted that the role is a visible position in West Virginia United Methodism and takes a certain skill set. She said she is not only honored and humbled by the nomination, she also is excited at the opportunity to work with others in building the kingdom.

Clergy, Laity Honored During Special Conference

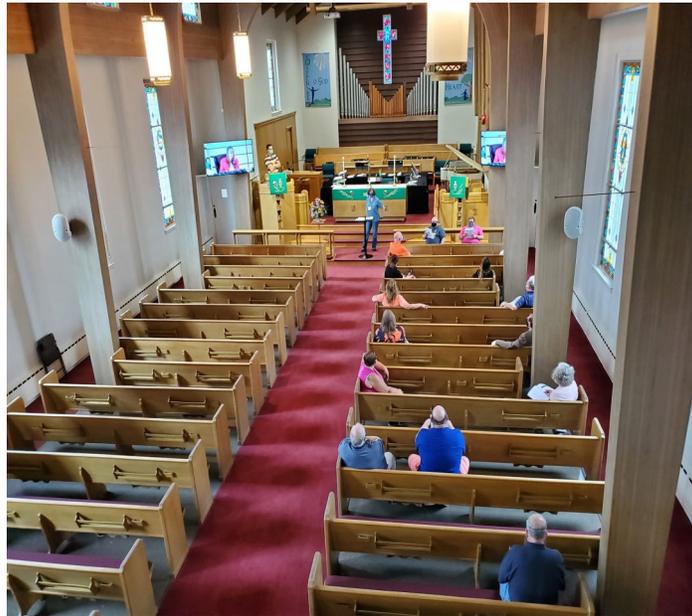
By Mark E. Smith

In addition to passing a budget and receiving reports, annual conferences take time to celebrate the ministries of local churches as well as their laity and clergy. This year's Special Annual Conference was no different as time was taken to recognize the recipients of the One Matters Award and the Harry Denman Evangelism Award.

The 2020 recipients of the One Matters Award are:

- * Central United Methodist Church in the Potomac Highlands District
- * Lerona United Methodist Church in the Southern District
- * Morris Memorial United Methodist Church in the Midland South District.

The One Matters Award is sponsored by Discipleship Ministries, an agency of The United Methodist Church, said Ken Willard, director



Delegates to the 2020 Special Annual Conference participate at Christ UMC in Wheeling. Christ UMC was the Northern District viewing site. (Photo by S. Scott Mapes)

of discipleship, leadership, and congregational vitality for the annual conference. The award celebrates professions of faith and baptisms as signs of a growing church.

Another facet considered this year was worship attendance. The three churches selected for the 2020 award had increases in professions

of faith, baptisms, and worship attendance.

The 2020 recipients of the Harry Denman Evangelism Award are:

- * Bob Cover from Central United Methodist Church in the MonValley District
- * Rev. Brad Davis, formerly of the Seventh Street/Logan Memorial Shared Ministry in the Little Kanawha District but newly appointed to Nighbert Memorial United Methodist Church in the Midland South District
- * Rev. Dr. Matt Johnson of Suncrest United Methodist Church in the MonValley District.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award is sponsored by the Foundation for Evangelism. The award is named for a former General Secretary of the General Board of Evangelism of the former Methodist Church. It recognizes the accomplishments of laity and clergy in evangelistic ministries.

Swearingin Named Wesleyan District Superintendent

By Judy Pysell

Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball recognized Rev. Rick Swearingin as the new District Superintendent of the Wesleyan District at the 2020 Special Annual Conference of the West Virginia Annual Conference.

Swearingin began his ministry 23 years ago, in 1997, as an assigned supply, and became a licensed pastor in 1999 serving the Mt. Zion Charge in Calhoun County. Since then he has served four charges and a total of 11 churches. He served

the last six years at Madison UMC in Boone County.

Asked how the move to district superintendent has differed from his other moves, He said, "Some similarities and some differences compared to others but it is always difficult to say good-bye." Swearingin added that Covid-19 has made this a challenge in how we do things, how we say good-bye and especially in how we say, 'hello.' He is looking forward to visiting the churches and getting to know the congregations in the Wesleyan

District but Covid-19 has posed a challenge as not all churches are back to meeting in person.

"It may take a while for folks to learn who I am and for me to come to know them and it is an adjustment to realize that I am not the pastor now but superintendent, clearly a different role," he said.

Swearingin succeeds Rev. Mary Ellen Finegan, who has served as Wesleyan District superintendent for the past eight years. **Read more on Finegan on page 7.**

Retirees Shared Gospel to Hurting World

By Brad Davis

Barbara Ross knows something about being a light in the darkness – of reaching down into the painfully hard places of the world.

Several years ago while serving a three-point charge in the Buckhannon area, a gentlemen unexpectedly walked into one of her churches during an evening meeting looking for help.

Plagued with alcoholism, he told Ross that he was just about to drink his last beer of the night when he noticed the church’s light was on, and that he “thought maybe that God was home.”

“I said, ‘You know what, sir? You’re very blessed,’” Ross recalled during her Special Annual Conference retirement video.

The man not only stopped drinking, but gave his life to Christ – just one of many examples of how the 20 clergy who retired at the end of the 2019-20 conference year impacted lives, communities, and the world with the good news of Jesus Christ during the course of their faithful and fruitful ministries, showing the world that God is here in the West Virginia United Methodist Church. Retirees were recognized during the Celebration of Ministry livestream on Aug. 1 and retirement videos are available at wvumc.org.

2020 Retirees

William “Brad” Blanchard, Jr.; G. David Calvert; Kenneth D. Caplinger; Pamela J. Everitt; Mary Ellen Finegan; Gregory A. Godwin; Timothy W. Halloran; Charles E. Hicks; Thomas J. Jeffrey; James A. McCune; A. Alanna McGuinn; Dennis A. Mehaffie; Charles D. Miller; Sharon J. Miller; Alan Randall Mitchell; Jeanie Nelson; M. Elizabeth Peters; Kenneth S. Peters; Barbara “Bobbie” Rogers; Michael D. Smith



Rev. Mary Ellen Finegan speaks with Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball and Rev. Dr. Joe Kenaston during the Celebration of Ministry livestream Aug. 1. (Photo by Shannon Blosser)

Bishop Honors Finegan

By Jim Minutelli

In a pre-Covid world, Rev. Mary Ellen Finegan would have been honored in person in front of the “whole annual conference,” said Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball. But because of the pandemic, the honor was bestowed at Finegan’s home in Buckhannon and shown on livestream during the Aug. 1 session of celebration at this year’s Special Annual Conference.

In thanking Mary Ellen for her eight years as superintendent of the Wesleyan District and her eight years of service on the Cabinet, the Bishop commended her for modeling “for all God’s people what it means to be a servant” in her “ministry centered in prayer.”

The Bishop said Mary Ellen has “served and touched the lives of congregations, mission projects, pastors and laity with the light, hope and empowerment of Christ.”

The Bishop also affirmed Mary Ellen’s time on, and dedication to, the Cabinet. “You blessed your cabinet colleagues with wisdom, intelligence, and grace,” the Bishop said. “You are super smart, and we appreciate your Biblical knowledge and ability to instantly enter into deep theological dialog.”

The Bishop proclaimed Mary Ellen a “healer among us” as a prayer servant and in her knowledge of home and natural remedies, which Finegan acknowledged she learned from her dad.

“It is with a grateful heart that we honor you in your retirement,” the Bishop said.

Mission Update: Camp@Home Available Until May 2021

By Shea James

Spring Heights Camp and Retreat Center is celebrating a summer unlike any other. Due to the pandemic, traditional summer camp was canceled. However, Spring Heights staff asked the Conference Communication team, specifically Deborah Coble, Cassie Kile, and Abbi Blosser, to help create something new for campers while they were at home during the summer. Our collaborative response became an innovative program called Camp@Home.

The theme for Camp@Home was Prayer (adapted from “This is our Prayer” by Inside Out: Christian Resources for Outdoor Ministries). Campers enjoyed daily devotions, activities, small group zoom calls,

and evening campfires. Each camper received a box in the mail before their program week filled with activity instructions, supplies, a small group journal, and a songbook filled with songs for evening campfire time. Campers watched videos on the Spring Heights website and completed various activities like scavenger hunts, making stress balls, and learned many new ways to pray.

We are excited to announce that Camp@Home will remain available online for free until May of 2021. There are two age groups for activities, Children (5-11) and youth (12-18). Some churches are using this material as Sunday School curriculum for the fall.

Camp@Home started July 6 and ran through the month of July. Thanks to the Camp@Home program Spring Heights Camp and Retreat Center ministered to campers in West Virginia, Ohio, Virginia, Maryland, Minnesota, Iowa, South Carolina, and Kentucky. Seventy-nine percent of campers had never been to Spring Heights Camp.

One of the youth campers said, “Camp at home was an amazing way to connect with God and experience camp while staying safe at home!”

If you have any questions about Camp@Home, please contact Shea James at sjames@wvumc.org or Amy Mullins at amy@springheights.org.

