

2015 Indiana Annual Conference Summary



INDIANAPOLIS – “Share Your Story” was the theme of the 2015 Indiana Annual Conference held Thursday through Saturday, May 28-30, at the Indiana Convention Center in downtown Indianapolis. The three-day event had an intentional focus to equip and empower individuals to share their personal stories of faith with the world around them using Joel 1:3 as the scripture reference, which reads, “Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.”

Bishop Michael J. Coyner called the conference into session at 1:45 p.m. Thursday, May 28, with more than 2,000 members and guests in attendance. During the 2015 Celebration of Ministry: Ordination and Commissioning service, Louisiana Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey challenged those to be ordained “be who you are, and I promise the spirit will spin it, churn it, twist it and weave it into a story of legacy. You have a story to tell – of super-natural calling, of sacrifice, of joy, of suffering – and the moving of the spirit.”

George Howard, deputy general secretary of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, led teaching sessions during the day Friday, May 29 for laity and clergy reminding members that faith forming relationship is the growing edge in Christian mission and ministry today. Howard noted that the poor must be a priority for United Methodist worldwide in keeping our Wesleyan tradition. Rev. Dr. Carver McGriff, a retired elder of the Indiana Conference, preached the memorial sermon Friday, May 28, and shared, “Grief is a terrible experience, yet, also, it’s a wonderful experience because it is the greatest experience we can give to a person we love.”

Paula and Ed Kassig, parents of the late Abdul-Rahman “Peter” Kassig, spoke at

the annual prayer breakfast Saturday, May 30, and shared how prayer has sustained them through the loss of their son. The Kassigs are members of Epworth UMC in Indianapolis.

During separate sessions, Friday, clergy and laity elected delegates for the 2016 denominational General and Jurisdictional Conferences. The results of the elections are as follows (listed in order of election):

Laity – General Conference

- Tyler Best, Pfrimmer's Chapel UMC, Corydon
- Allison Curts, Wesley Chapel UMC, New Albany
- Ed Fenstermacher, Covenant UMC, Fort Wayne
- John Lomperis, New Song Fellowship UMC, Valparaiso
- Amy Land, Huntington Trinity UMC
- Leanna Zimmerman, Kokomo Grace UMC
- Doris Clark, University UMC, Indianapolis
- Jim Ottjes, Thorntown UMC

Laity – Jurisdictional Conference

- Manet Shettle, Elwood First UMC
- Douglas Worthington, St. Joseph UMC, Fort Wayne
- William Amerson, Wesley Chapel, New Albany
- Christopher Hancock, Kokomo St. Luke's UMC
- Nancy Low, Sandy Hook UMC, Columbus
- Ian Hall, Bloomington St. Paul
- Greg Tielking, Hanover UMC
- Kate Singer, Elkhart Trinity UMC

Laity – Jurisdictional Conference Alternates:

- Austin Yim, Valparaiso First
- Kenneth Einselen, McGrawsville UMC, Amboy
- Carolyn Johnson, St. Andrew UMC, West Lafayette

Clergy – General Conference

- Frank Beard, Castleton UMC, Indianapolis
- Kim Reisman, St. Andrew UMC, West Lafayette
- Tony Alstott, Wesley Chapel of Floyd County
- Dave Neckers, The Compass, Selma
- Lisa Schubert Nowling, College Avenue UMC, Muncie
- Russ Abel, Saint Joseph UMC, Fort Wayne
- Mitch Norwood, Kokomo St. Luke's UMC
- Beth Ann Cook, Ogilville & Rockford UMCs

Clergy – Jurisdictional Conference

- Cindy Reynolds, Castleton UMC, Indianapolis
- Jill Howard, Morgantown UMC
- Mike Dominick, Dayton UMC

- Greg Pimlott, Main Street UMC, Boonville
- Mark Fenstermacher, First UMC, Bloomington
- Daniel Cho, McDonough First UMC
- Samuel Padgett, Fishers UMC
- Robert Land, Huntington Trinity UMC

Clergy – Jurisdictional Alternates

- Darren Cushman Wood, North UMC, Indianapolis
- Brian Williams, University UMC, Indianapolis
- Stephen Austin, McGrawsville UMC

During business sessions, conference members also:

- Received updates on the work of the Africa University Campaign to raise \$1 million to endow a chairperson for the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources, as well as scholarships for students in the amount of \$600,000. Revs. Bill Keith, Chiyona Bourne and Matt Landry shared about the Indiana delegations recent trip to present the \$1 million check and updated the body on the remainder of the campaign. The report also included a video with interviews from students directly supported by the Indiana Conference. [Click here](#) to see the video.
- Celebrated the 100 Points of Light initiative, launched in 2014, as well as the 103 points of light that were successfully launched throughout the state of Indiana. Each point of light represents a new worship service, Bible study or other organized effort to reach new people with the light of Christ.
- In conjunction with the 100 Points of Light celebration, the conference also launched a new effort “I Have a Story to Tell” encouraging members to share their faith story or what God is doing in their life with others. More information about this initiative can be found at iwillsharethestory.org.
- Raised \$4,686.37 during an offering to support the cabinet emergency ministry fund.
- The Conference voted unanimously to launch a \$6 million campaign to build a new Discipleship Center at Epworth Forest.
- Approved the 2016 budget of \$13.7 million.

The Conference debated several proposed petitions for the 2016 General Conference concerning a variety of issues. The results of these petitions are as follows:

Passed

- 2015-01 Supporting Adoption and Common Ground on Abortion
- 2015-02 Abortion and Disability
- 2015-03 Affirm Christian Principles for Bioethics
- 2015-04 Withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproduction Choice
- 2015-07 Making General Conference Work

Defeated/Withdrawn

- 2015-05 Church Resolutions to be placed in Book of Discipline (**WITHDREW**)
- 2015-06 Church Resolutions
- 2015-08 Delete Para 341.4 of the Discipline
- 2015-09 Complainant as party to just resolution
- 2015-10 Membership of the University Senate

The conference ordained one deacon and 12 elders, as well as commissioned four provisional deacons and 11 provisional. The conference also retired 38 elders, deacons and local pastors from active ministry and remembered 41 clergy and 34 clergy spouses who had died this past conference year. Throughout the conference members were engaged with video interviews from various leaders sharing their stories of how they came to know more about their personal faith or how they share faith with others. [Click here](#) to view these videos.

Also, members of the conference received daily updates through video to encourage more storytelling during the annual conference session. [Click here](#) to view the daily recaps, as well as an overall recap of the week.

Membership stands at 193,060, down less than 1% from the previous year; average worship attendance stands at 102,238, down 4% from the previous year; church school (children and youth ministries), 31,128 down 5%; professions of faith, 3,258 down 11%; baptisms, 2,944 down 11%.