



MINISTRY SESSION MINUTES

EVEN
GREATER
THINGS

TRINITY ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024

GLOBAL
METHODIST
CHURCH

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH



SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA

Ministry Session Minutes

Bishop Scott Jones called the 2024 Trinity Annual Conference Ministry Session to order at 8:51 AM on Friday, June 21, 2024.

Rev. Jason Burnham, Executive Officer of the Trinity Conference nominated Rev. Clark Atkins to serve as Recording Secretary for this session of the Trinity Annual Conference. The motion was approved by acclamation.

Bishop Jones asked all clergy transferring into the Conference from another denomination to stand and be recognized. Bishop Jones asked them a series of questions to be received into clergy membership in the Global Methodist Church and the Trinity Annual Conference.

Rev. Burnham proceeded to provide an orientation to the Conference. He referred the conference to printed reports for Class Meetings, International Ministries, and African American and Hispanic Initiatives as found in the Pre-Conference Journal on p. 17-19. He introduced some of our exhibitors and familiarized the conference with various locations and personnel to assist throughout the conference.

Episcopal Address

Bishop Jones provided his Episcopal Address. Bishop Jones exhorted that as the Global Methodist Church that we have to be a church that is evangelistic. We have to be a church that multiplies. We have to be a church that is multi-racial. We have to be a church that truly global. Bishop Jones then shared a video of his and Mary Lou's travels during Lent where for 47 days they visited the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, the Middle East, and throughout Africa.

Our Conference Lay Leaders Carl Brothers, Oscar Garza, and Sarah Kreutziger offered the Laity Address.

Laity Address

Carl Brothers: Good morning, we, your three Conference Lay Leaders, Sarah, Oscar and I have been asked to address you this morning as part of the Ministry Session. We have chosen as our subject...Connectionalism. I will begin followed by Sarah and then Oscar as we individually share our thoughts.

I wish to take a moment to share with you why, we as First Methodist Church, Stuttgart, Arkansas, so valued the connection to other churches that joining the Global Methodist Church offered. After disaffiliation from the UMC, there was considerable support for remaining independent, however, our Church leadership became focused on the importance of Connectionalism versus the potential threats to our church by going it alone. It was suggested that being independent could result much like separating logs in a fire. What happens when logs are separated...the fire gradually goes out. On the other hand, if logs are connected, what happens...the fire burns brightly! We believe this principle applies to our faith and to our success as a church.

This connectional structure provides accountability for doctrine, protecting our Wesleyan theology, and most importantly a pool of proficient clergy as well as the opportunity for collaboration among our laity and leadership. This collaboration offers the opportunity for churches to share “best practices” in so many areas such as discipling, finance, and community relations with the ultimate goal of bringing more of our brothers and sisters to Christ. The connection supports that we are one body because God in his grace and mercy has called us together. For this we are so thankful.

Sarah Kreutziger: As Carl said, we are working diligently to enhance our connection among laity and laity; clergy and clergy; laity and clergy; clergy and churches; and churches and communities.

Our firm belief is that enhanced partnerships create the strong foundation for discipling, multiplying, and resourcing our congregations. Our aim is to accomplish this in several ways.

As the webinar indicated last week, the Conference Nominating Committee has striven to build a more balanced Connectional Council by equalizing the number of laity and clergy on the Council and recommending that Carl, Oscar, and I become the co-chairs. That lay and clergy balance is replicated in the convening boards and committees with the goal of ever-widening circles of disciples—lay and clergy—working in mutual admiration to claim (or reclaim) our legacy of evangelistic Christian fervor.

The Trinity Conference has a solid basis on which to build. As a denomination in the making, we know what to do as well as what NOT to do. We know we carry the history of a vibrant Wesleyan tradition based initially on the success of its lay ministers. We have a guidebook with God-inspired instructions for that tradition. I can also attest that we have extremely talented leadership and many Spirit-led, energized congregations eager to join with dedicated pastors in their equal calling as servant leaders. And, most importantly, we have the promise from John 14:12 of even greater things to come when we are working in God’s name.

In other words, we are poised for success with an unparalleled opportunity to respond to our Conference’s goal as a laity empowered, grassroots faith community intent on building the Kingdom... and equipped already with communication networks and other tools in place.

Based on that conviction we are all—not just partners—but co-creators in a vision that is unfolding one step at a time.

We have already taken the first step in that Vision. As many of you know, we initially solicited questions from delegates and lay leaders for the Laity Session Panel we held yesterday. Our goal was to see where we are now and where we need to go. Your responses confirmed what we suspected; that while we are successfully marching upwards to Zion, there is still wilderness to travel before we arrive. We completely agree.

Our next step then, is to build on your responses by sending out another inquiry shortly after this Annual Conference. We need everyone’s help, whether clergy or lay, male or female, member of a large church or small one; young, old, or in between. We want to know your thoughts, your

dreams, and most importantly, what is working for you in your congregations that we can share with others. We want to know what resources you need to answer God's call. We want to hear where renewal is bubbling up in your faith communities. And we want to listen to how best to reach out to those most in need of the saving power of Jesus Christ. In short, we are seeking channels of ministry that best allow all of us to become vessels for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now Oscar will continue and close our address with a Call to Action; a call to be in unity—lay and clergy—together in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Oscar Garza: We've heard from Carl, and we've heard from Sarah. They speak truth with passion. This may be the place where you ask, "What do you want from me?", What do you want from us? We, and I use we in a collective sense, all of us here and those who could not make it here, have been called by God to follow the Holy Spirit as the Spirit leads us in this new Church, in this new Conference, and in this new Denomination to a new place. He is calling us to a place where disciples of Jesus Christ worship passionately. He is calling us to a place where disciples of Jesus Christ love extravagantly. He is calling us to a place where disciples of Jesus Christ witness boldly. He is calling us to a place where churches multiply. He is calling us to a place where the Trinity Conference equips. He is calling us to a place where we are all connected. He is calling us to a great place. But in order to get to this great place, we need to be ready. We need to be ready so the world will know the transformative message of God's love. We need to be ready so the world will know the transformative message of God's grace and we need to be ready so the world will know the transformative message of God's forgiveness.

For the lay here today, I have a few questions to ask of you. If you agree, I would like for you to answer in the affirmative "We are ready!" Remember that we are here before God and the Holy Spirit, so I'm sure your response will be reflective of that. Before I ask the questions, I ask the clergy here today to stand so that we may clearly see you. Lay, when you answer the questions, don't look at me, look at the clergy person nearest you and answer to them with the strength and gusto provided by the Holy Spirit.

First question, are you ready to be led by the Holy Spirit? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to worship passionately? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to love extravagantly? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to witness boldly? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to multiply your church? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to be equipped? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready to make Connectionalism in the Trinity Conference a real thing? [WE ARE READY!]...Are you ready for even greater things? [WE ARE READY!]...Clergy, you heard it firsthand; WE ARE READY!! Clergy, you may sit down.

Lay, let us go back to our churches and let the lay members of the Trinity Conference know that as their representatives, we committed them to be ready for the future, led by the Holy Spirit to make disciples of Jesus Christ to worship passionately, to love extravagantly, and to witness boldly. We committed them to be in connection with each other throughout the Trinity Conference. Next year, when we convene again, there will be more members, more clergy, and more churches. But most importantly, there will be more disciples of Jesus Christ in the world.

I now ask Jason, Jim and Vivian to join me, Sarah and Carl as we, lay and clergy, jointly affirm our commitment to a new day in the Trinity Conference. WE ARE READY!!

Rev. Jim Welch, President Pro Tempore of the Trinity Conference along with Rev. Vivian Kinnear, Conference Operations Officer, and Rev. Burnham offered the President Pro Tempore Address.

President Pro Tempore Address

Rev. Jim Welch: Well, I can say that my earliest and best theological teachers were my parents. The truth of the matter is that I learned more about theology Bishop not from a seminary classroom but from the hymns of Charles Wesley and singing those hymns.

When I was in high school a pastor invited me to lead the singing on Sunday night. My response was “Who me? Do you want me to do that?” and foolishly I agreed to do it. We sang out of the old Upper Room Hymnal. I remember the ones that transformed me the most.

For example, *“I was sinking deep in sin, Far from the peaceful shore, Very deeply stained within, Sinking to rise no more; But the Master of the sea Heard my despairing cry, From the waters lifted me—Now safe am I.”* And then the chorus: *“Love lifted me, love lifted me, when nothing else could help. Love lifted me.”* Friends, all those folks gathered on that Sunday night in the little Methodist Church in Baytown TX they can rip out Love Lifted Me and sing it boldly and loudly. What an extraordinary moment. It began to shape my life and call me into ministry and to the service to our Lord.

It's also curious to me that another requested hymn page #73 in the Upper Room Hymnal was a hymn we sang earlier Bishop “A Charge to Keep I Have” written by Charles Wesley and published in in one of the earlier publishing of hymns called “Rock” for a while and then reestablished. It was taken from the Book of Leviticus. Wesley wrote about 20 hymns from Leviticus. This particular hymn tells the story of God instructing Moses to send out Aaron and his sons as priests. *“A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never-dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky.”* While divided to four verses it's really a poem with two stanzas and later got divided into those four verses. It's the second verse that really claimed me as a young man, okay really a young boy, and following the Lord this is what it says to serve the present age. *“To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill, O may it all my pow'rs engage to do my Master's will!”* and then the third stanza *“Arm me with watchful care as in Thy sight to live, and now Thy servant, Lord, prepare a strict account to give!”* You don't hear too many sermons these days about giving strict accounts of our lives to the Lord, however that time is coming for me and you.

The hymn ends with these words *“Help me to watch and pray, and still on Thee rely, O let me not my trust betray, but press to realms on high.”* As people who are called to love, to serve, and to worship we are called to give of ourselves, to be called out of ourselves into service to the Lord. We are grateful to lead a conference where that is crucial and a part of our developing culture as the people of our Lord.

So, as we come to present the report of the Trinity Annual Conference and some of the things that have been accomplished this year may we as a people learn in our common life together that it engages all of our power to do our Master's will.

Rev. Vivian Kinnear: In our young life of 25 months, God has blessed us in ways that say, we are in the Father and the Father is in us! Our growth is not something we've done but is the fruit of the Father abiding in us showing us "even greater things"! Let me walk through a few ways God has been forming these "even greater things": We began 18 months ago with 235 churches in the eastern part of Texas. We thought we had arrived, but God had even greater things for us.

Our neighboring great state of Louisiana said we are stronger together, let us join together and we did. Then our 235 churches became 245 at our convening conference in February 2023.

Then God said 5 months later, you have another neighbor, the great state of Arkansas, partner with them too, and we did, then during that time He added 94 more churches to our total so at the last annual conference we numbered 339 churches.

Then we prayed to the Lord that the name of our conference no longer reflects who we've become! So, God said, your name shall be Trinity to reflect the unity called for in our ministry. In January of this year, we became a family of churches in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas, under the surname and Christian name Trinity.

In the last 11 months, God blessed us with additional churches for a total family numbering 375 churches. That's a 60% increase from our convening conference!

Along with these 375 churches, God brought workers for the Harvest! We've received by transfer of credentials: 62 Transitional Local Pastors; 16 Deacons; 234 Elders. That's 312 pastors who transferred to our conference!

But God was doing even greater things! He will have ordained by the end of this conference: 69 Deacons and 124 Elders. That's 193 who answered God's call into ordained ministry through our conference!

In total we now have: 62 Transitional Local Pastors; 85 Deacons; 358 Elders. That's 505 pastors both in active and inactive service to our 375 churches. To God be the Glory!

These 375 churches and our 505 pastors enable us to worship passionately! At the end of 2023, there were 367 churches and each one responded to our End of Year Report. The results reveal more evidence of the Holy Spirit at work.

215 of our churches worship less than 50 on a Sunday morning.

78 churches average between 50-99 on any given Sunday.

53 bring in between 100-249 worshippers and

29 churches have gatherings of 250 or more each Sunday.

Many of our churches have experienced growth as 23 average worshippers moved in 2023 toward congregations that averaged between 50-249 on any given Sunday morning. Our churches have seen an overall increase in average worship attendance in 2023 over 2022 of 13%!

The Spirit of Truth was received in our people in these ways: Through the holy sacrament of Baptism: 1,095 infants, youth, and adults were baptized! That is nearly 3 baptisms per church. 2,202 Professed their faith that Jesus Christ is Lord! That's 6 people per church who became disciples of Jesus Christ.

33% of our 367 churches say they have Wesleyan small groups. Most of those who do not yet have these groups report they are becoming intentional in starting them or would like help to get them started. One of our workshops today is designed to do just that. This is good news friends, because Professions of Faith reported 37% higher in churches that have Wesleyan small groups! And that is transformational discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition moving us forward! Yes, expect even greater things my friends as we abide in the Father, and the Father in us!

Rev. Jason Burnham: This is happening all across the Conference in every context. Yes, we have seen large churches continue to grow and bear fruit. Christ College Station 39% with 42 professions of faith. Redeemer Church in Manvel had worship attendance growth of 38% with 13 professions of faith. First Shreveport had worship attendance growth of 22% with 51 professions of faith. As Vivian pointed out churches of all sizes have grown. St. Paul's, an African American Church in Huntsville, TX grew from 25 in worship to 60. 140%!

All these numbers, all these statistics can grow cold so let's connect some things together. We have a two-point charge in rural Waller County, TX, Macedonia and New Hope. In the beginning of Fall of 2023, Aliana was told that her grandmother's rural church in Hockley was starting up a new youth group and confirmation program. She was invited to attend. With it being her last year at home before she went off to college, she felt she needed to connect with the Lord. She had grown up Catholic but had never connected much with the faith. But, after attending two youth sessions she was sitting in church the following Sunday at Macedonia when there was a call to membership by the pastor. Without telling anybody and on the spot, Aliana felt overwhelmed by the Spirit and stood to join the church in tears.

Since then, she has been confirmed as one of 7 students confirmed. This was the first confirmation class either church had in the last 5 years. She after giving her life to Jesus, has become a regular worshipper, has become a Christian camp counselor this summer, and started a following on social media creating a weekly devotional and sharing it with her followers. We are witnessing signs and wonders across the conference.

Macedonia Hockley with worship growth from 18 to 40 122% and 6 professions of faith. New Hope in Waller with worship growth from 29 to 56 93% and 12 professions of faith. We are witnessing signs and wonders across the conference.

Last week at the Trinity Conference Rise Up Children & Youth Camp during the final worship service a student prayed with power and authority. Her name was Belle. I asked her what church she was from, expecting a large church student ministry, I was surprised when she shared it was

a small church. Belle shared that she had moved in with her grandparents 2 years ago. It was there in that small church that she met Jesus and she shared that she had never been the same. I asked her “How many Sr. High students in the church?” Me. “How did this happen?” The power of the Holy Spirit. We are witnessing signs and wonders across the conference.

Highlands – Belle – 11 Professions of Faith and 30 to 50 increase in Worship Attendance
John 20:30-31 tells us that “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Rev. Drew Essen, Executive Pastor of The Woodlands Methodist Church presented a report on behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

Good morning, Bishop and Members of the Trinity Conference,

My name is Drew Essen and I serve at The Woodlands Methodist Church. For the past two years, I have also had the privilege of helping to lead our Strategic Planning team for the Conference and it has been a joy.

As my report in the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum p. 6-7 outlines, I’m grateful for the opportunity to reconnect and share the progress we’ve made since introducing our strategic framework last year.

Last year, we introduced a framework that guides our organization: Members Disciple, Churches Multiply, and Conference Equips. These principles have directed our efforts and decisions and helped to guide our continued foundational work for the Trinity Conference. Much of the work that will be celebrated this week has been guided by this framework. By having a common language among our conference leadership, we have been able to ensure that our work is organized in effective and efficient ways that help us to be a people that make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.

I have been thankful for this framework as we have navigated all kinds of ministry planning - from administrative organizational work to the planning of resources for churches and more. As you read through these various reports and stories, you will see this framework assisting in the organization of our shared work. Throughout the conference, you will hear stories of this alive in you - the members and churches of our conference. Through our school of ministry, our missional efforts, our organizational efforts for governance and representation, and so much more.

While we don’t have the time to highlight every story and effort, we wanted to be sure to leave some of our time to share with you about online resources that are in the works for the Trinity Conference, thanks to the help of Mike Sims - I’d like to invite Jason to come forward at this time and share a preview of some of these resources.

Rev. Burnham proceeded to highlight enhanced communications through email and social media since the last Annual Conference and then he provided a preview of the redesigned Trinity Conference website which should debut within the next two months. The redesigned website will contain resources designed to help equip local churches in their respective ministries.

School of Ministry Report

Rev. Dr. Tim Turner, Dean of the School of Ministry along with Revs. Ross Hyde, Jason Huffman, and Stacy Sweet reported on the work of the School of Ministry. The report of the School of Ministry can be found on p. 13-16 of the Pre-Conference Journal. It was also announced that there will be an Evangelism Workshop on Saturday, August 24th 9 am-5 pm featuring Bishop Scott Jones at First Methodist Church of Shreveport. Certified Lay Ministers were recognized and received their certificates. Their names can be found on p. 8 of the Pre-Conference Addendum. 88 new applicants have been added to the Certified Lay Ministry program.

Justin Gould, Chief Philanthropy Officer for Wesleyan Impact Partners & Texas Methodist Foundation offered a greeting and shared the following:

Wesleyan Impact Partners/Texas Methodist Foundation

Thank you, for the warm welcome and the opportunity partner in ministry with such tremendous leaders. I'd like to thank: Bishop Jones, Jim Welch, Jason Burnham, Burt Palmer, Dianne Burnett and TMF Board member, and Sharon Sabom a current member of the Texas Methodist Foundation (TMF) Board. My name is Justin Gould and I serve as the Chief Philanthropy Officer at TMF and Wesleyan Impact Partners. I'm finishing up my 11th year with the organization and am reminded every day of the wonderful opportunity to be in ministry with leaders like you have in the Trinity Conference.

I'll take just a few minutes to share about Wesleyan Impact Partners and TMF's ministry. TMF, of course, works in TX & NM, and Wesleyan Impact Partners works across the country (so LA & AR), offering investments, loans, planned giving services, and leadership cohorts. I feel very blessed to get to be at TMF/Impact Partners during this season. We are ALL IN with the church - we believe the church is essential in bringing about a better world. Everything we do is to strengthen the church.

One of the ways we are supporting the GMC right now is through a cohort for the 3 annual conferences that cover TX, NM, LA, & AR - the Presidents Pro Temp, and Presiding Elders from each conference are in a cohort for learning and support facilitated by Greg Ligon, GMC pastor and exceptional facilitator.

Let me share a word about how all this happens - we are not a private foundation with a big pot of money that we access for ministry, nor are we a denominational agency, rather we are a ministry partner with a cycle of Generosity. It starts with you and me...Individuals, congregations, like yours, and other organizations who care deeply about the church and helping the church be strong, invest funds with us, earn a return. We then lend those dollars to church and nonprofits to help realize their dreams (almost \$30MM in loans to GMC churches in eastern Texas alone). We turn around and invest our revenue back into the church - through planned

giving resources, grants, leadership cohorts, and other learning and innovation resources. It Starts with You. I invite you to consider investing your rainy-day funds with us, so that more churches, nonprofits, and leaders can benefit from TMF's ministry.

Rev. Burnham introduced Rev. David Almanza, a Global Methodist elder, along with Diana Sanchez who are in the process of planting Global Methodist congregations in Mexico. Rev. Almanza and Ms. Sanchez shared about the early church planting efforts. Their hope is to have all the necessary paperwork filed and the establishment of the GMC in Mexico before the end of the year. They are creating local church partnerships.

A short break was taken.

The Ministry Session resumed at 10:45 AM.

Rev. Dr. Burt Palmer, Chair of the Board of Ministry, introduced members of the Board of Ministry and shared the following report:

Board of Ministry Report

In the opening words of scripture, we read that *“the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”* (Genesis 1:1) The triune God then begins to speak order into existence in His creation. Our work in the Board of Ministry has experienced that hovering presence of God as we are continuing to establish our work. We hear and see God most in the stories shared in the lives of some amazing people who are in this room.

We see the Holy Spirit hovering over our School of Ministry, whose report is found beginning on page 13 of your Preconference Journal where you will see the scope and breakdown of the nearly 140 women and men who have experienced the School of Ministry.

Thank you to Dr. Tim Turner, Rev. Ross Hyde, Rev. Stacey Sweet, and Rev. Jason Huffman for their leadership in the School of Ministry in the Trinity Conference, which has become a model for the Global Methodist Church.

Another group of people that serve faithfully are the Supply Pastors. These amazing people are approved candidates for ordination who are serving faithfully as they complete their education. Would you please stand to be recognized by the conference.

We have 8 clergy who have been endorsed by the GMC for ministry beyond the local church. Their names can be found on page 36 of the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum.

I want to especially emphasize how critical the role of the local church and pastors is as you cultivate the call to ministry in the hearts of women and men. We are building a model for the denomination in our Candidacy Teams to equip Staff Parish Relations Committees with recommended tools for interviewing candidates about God's call on their lives into ministry. It is very important to note that we do not have District Committees on Ministry – once a person is recommended to the Board of Ministry by the local church, and if they are approved, then that

person begins relating to the conference Board of Ministry. So, clergy and laity, we want you; we need you, to lean into the distinctive Wesleyan language expressing our theology.

Thank you to Revs. Jonathan Bynum, Ben McGehee, and John Embrey for help in crafting the “Recommendations and Requirements for Compensation and Benefits For Persons Serving Churches in the Trinity Conference” which begin on page 39 of the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum. That has been a challenging task to create the right balance of guidance for churches across our conference, which previously had functioned in three different ways.

Bishop and members of the Trinity Conference, the Board of Ministry is recommending 35 people to be ordained deacon, deacon then immediately ordained elder, and ordained elder.

I ask that the persons to be ordained Deacon, Deacon and Elder, and Elder please come to the front now as your name is read to be recognized by the Conference and to receive the Historic Questions from Bishop Jones.

Zachary Anderson, Everett Herman Blakely, Betsy Burke, John Warren Cogdill, Marcelle Frost Crow, Jacob Dunn, John Epps, Casey Estler, Yudeisy Estrada, James R. Fatic, Gina Carol Hamlin, John Hiegel, John Kenneth Hull, Kelly Joe Inman, Susan Kramer, John Dillon Kropinak, Leo Lozano, Eric Thomas Marsh, Ivo Eduardo Moreira Martins, John B. McKissack III, Bonnie Carol Moore, James Ronald Richard, Dale Richardson, Ramona Riggs, Jonah Thomas Robson, Payton Ruddock, Kenneth Randall Russ, Jereme Wade Skinner, Patrick Nolan Smith Sr., Brian Smith, Todd Alan Sullivan, Shawn Owen Trotter, Raymond Payne Vining, Robert (Rob) Williams, and Brian Thomas Youngs.

Bishop Jones read the historic questions and the candidates for ordination answered.

New Church Starts Report

Dr. John Campbell, Chair of New Church Starts Team shared the New Church Starts Report which can be found on page 21 in the Pre-Conference Journal. New Church starts in Nashville, AR, Houghton, LA, and Winfield, LA were recognized, and a prayer of blessing was offered over them, and others involved in new church starts and planting efforts.

Revs. Guy Williams and Bryan Harkness shared a report on NextGen Ministries including the new Pastoral Intern Program and the Rise Up Summer Camp.

NextGen Ministries Report

Rev. Guy Williams: One year ago, we discerned the need to offer a conference camp at Lakeview that would be fully aligned with the doctrine and mission of the Global Methodist Church. Trinity GMC Rise Up Camp was held just last week and we have a video to share about the experience.

[Video]

Wendy Heinemann, Matt Neely, Lamar Oliver, and I began meeting last August to plan the camp. We added age-level directors to the steering committee in January. We had an amazing leadership

team, as well as counselors who gave generously of themselves to make camp a success. We are grateful to Josh Pulver and the staff at Lakeview for hosting us.

On Monday, I had the joy of calling a woman in my congregation who signed up in the camp prayer campaign for the 9:00-10:00pm slot every night to tell her what she had been praying over. Nine o'clock was the time when the sermon was wrapping up and when the students were being invited to respond. I told her, "On Tuesday night, you were praying over 89 mid-high and high school students who stood up to confess Jesus as Lord. On Wednesday night, you were praying over 60-70 students who stood up to serve on the prayer team. [Mark] Swayze invited the pastors not to lead prayer stations that evening and invited students to stand who were led by the Lord to be on the prayer team. So, they stood, we prayed to consecrate them and they prayed and ministered to one another. That's what you were praying over!"

The dates for next year are June 9-13, 2025. The response to camp this year from our conference was amazing. We had over 700 students and adults register. We will have more room next year, so don't miss out. Registration will open in the fall. We will share the date soon.

Rev. Bryan Harkness: The purpose of the pastoral internship program is to provide college students ages 18-24 discerning a call to pastoral ministry an opportunity to receive hands on experience with the different tasks of a pastor under the guidance and support of a local church teaching committee and a mentor pastor. In its inaugural year, the Pastoral Internship Committee worked to develop a program application, internship checklist to ensure a consistent experience for all interns, and a beginning and ending retreat to orient interns and mentor pastors as well as give them opportunities to share experiences.

In February, we began publicizing the internship to potential candidates and host churches. We received completed agreements from six potential host churches. This year we had three students who were accepted into the pastoral internship program for 2024. They are Noah Fish, who is interning with Pastor John Reasons at Bellville, TX, Collin Kenney, who is interning with Pastor Patrick Evans at First Methodist Jacksonville, TX, and Russell Cash, who is interning at First Methodist Siloam Springs, AR. They began their internships on June 1 with an orientation retreat and will conclude with a reflection retreat on Aug 3.

I want to thank each host church and mentor pastor for taking the time to invest in these young men as they discern their call to pastoral ministry. We hope to increase the number of intern applications for 2025. In order to do that, we need you to look within your church's youth and college ministry programs and help us identify and encourage those who are discerning a call to pastoral ministry. Anyone interested in or if you know someone who is discerning a call to pastoral ministry and applying for 2025, my contact information is on the conference website under ministries and pastor internship program.

The remainder of the NextGen report is on pages 17-18 in your Pre-Conference journal. Thank you.

General Conference Delegation Report

Rev. Jason Burnham and Oscar Garza, Heads of the Delegation, offered a brief report on the work of the General Conference Delegation and invited people to attend the breakout session workshop later in the afternoon. It was announced that with a second allocation of delegates that the Trinity Conference Delegation is now comprised of 30 (15 clergy and 15 lay) delegates. Six additional alternate delegates (three clergy and three lay) will travel to Costa Rica. It is hoped that our six remaining reserve delegates will also have the opportunity to be present in Costa Rica. All 42 of our elected, alternate, and reserve delegates are participating in our meetings and deliberations. Delegation members were invited to come forward and be recognized. A prayer banner was displayed, and members of the conference were invited to sign the banner which will be taken to Costa Rica with the delegation. Rev. Jim Welch then offered a prayer over the delegation.

Cabinet Report

Rev. Welch presented the following Cabinet Report: As we mature as a conference moments like this will become more regular. But this is a first for us. Three of our Presiding Elders who have faithfully led their areas are moving on to other service. Kenneth Levingston has served as the Presiding Elder of the Sam Houston Area. While he is now handing off the baton, I'm pleased to share that he will continue as at-large member of the cabinet. Carol Bruse has served as the Presiding Elder of the Sabine Area. She will continue to serve the conference as we develop resources to equip the body, but now she will take time to travel with her husband in retirement. Chap Temple has served as the Presiding Elder of the Coastal Plains Area. As his workload increases as a professor at Truett Seminary at Baylor he will continue to bless our growing movement. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you have contributed in this formational season!

As we offer thanks for those rolling off the cabinet, we are also grateful for the Lord's provision for our cabinet's future leadership. Sharon Sabom will serve as the Presiding Elder of the Coastal Plains Area. She has served as an Elder faithfully for years and has extensive experience navigating challenging situations as an interim minister that will prove valuable in this role. Jim Flagg will serve as the Presiding Elder of the Sam Houston Area. Jim is the lead pastor of Humble Methodist Church and has been a rock-solid leader throughout his ministry in a variety of contexts. Tommy Williams will serve as the Presiding Elder of the Sabine Area. Tommy currently serves as the Associate Pastor at Wesley, Beaumont and brings with him extensive pastoral experience in churches large and small. Jonathon Beck will serve the newly forming Louisiana South Area. Jonathon currently serves as the lead pastor of Munholland in Metairie, LA. Jonathon has been a leader in Louisiana Methodism for years and brings a wealth of knowledge and relationships to the role. Thank you for answering the call and serving the Lord through the work of the cabinet!

The work of the Presiding Elders is not done in isolation, and it is in part due to the faithfulness of our Connecting Elders that the work gets done. Thank you, Connecting Elders, for all you do each day to strengthen our connection.

Bishop Jones then said a blessing over the presiding and connecting elders.

Our Cabinet report calls for the addition of an area in the Trinity Conference dividing Louisiana into North and South. As the GM Church continues to grow in this region adding areas will help facilitate that expansion. The TBDD paragraph 504.6 calls for a conference vote when adding an area. Rev. Burnham presented a motion for the creation of a new area in Louisiana. The motion was adopted unanimously. The areas in Louisiana are now Louisiana North and Louisiana South.

Bishop, the appointments are reported on p. 46-59 of the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum. They represent the appointments that you have fixed to date.

Nominations & Leadership Report

Rev. Burnham presented the Nominations & Leadership Report which can be found on p. 61-66. Bishop Jones asked if there were any questions. The report and slate of nominations were adopted unanimously.

Finance and Administration Committee Report

Rev. Mike Tyson, Chair of the Conference Finance and Administration Committee directed the conference to the written report which can be found on p. 22-27 of the Pre-Conference Journal. He then shared the following remarks:

Good afternoon, Bishop, Sisters and Brothers of the Trinity Conference. It is my privilege to serve as the chair of your Finance and Administration Committee. I am grateful to all of the people that make up the finance and administration committee. If you are a part of this committee please stand, thank you for all that you do.

For a discussion of year end 2023 and anticipated variances in the 2024 approved budget, I direct your attention to pages 22- 27 of the Pre-Conference Journal. I once had a finance chair that stood and made a report to the congregation, we have plenty of money, things are great and sat down. So, in that spirit, we have plenty of money, things are great. This concludes my report. In all seriousness the only business before us is the approval of the 2025 Conference Budget. I regret that a year-to-date financial statement and balance sheet for our most recently completed statements did not make it into either the Pre-Conference Journal or the addendum, that was an oversight on my part, my apologies, it will not happen again.

Our last completed monthly statement is April 2024, so let me review it for you quickly. Our income through April was \$679,355. This compares to a budgeted income of \$561,916 so our income was 20% higher than we had budgeted. Our total expenditures through April were \$332,147 versus a budgeted amount of \$545,117. This is primarily due to timing issues as it relates to our equipping ministries and our personnel expense. We anticipate most of this money to be spent. The net result for April is that we had an excess of income over expenses of \$381,877.

Our balance sheet at the end of April shows unrestricted cash of \$660,729 and total liabilities of \$11,375, the vast majority of which are payroll taxes payable, it is simply the result of a timing difference on making the actual payment and the closing of the month.

The Finance and Administration committee recognizes that we have significant cash reserves, and we are in the process of creating an account by which we can invest this excess cash in ways that provide a return to the conference but take virtually zero market risk.

Rev. Tyson then directed the conference's attention to p. 67-68 of the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum and the proposed 2025 Conference Budget. He then shared the following remarks:

This is the 2025 proposed budget put forth by your Finance and Administration Committee and approved by your Connectional Council. Your Finance and Administration Committee continues to learn more and more about the operating aspects of our Annual Conference. Your Conference staff has done an excellent job estimating what our income will look like as we continue to add churches to the ranks of the Trinity Conference. For our 2025 budget we are estimating an annual income of \$2,065,544 with \$2,053,544 of that income from Connectional Giving. Last year virtually every church turned in a yearend report, which is key in our ability to predict income to the Conference. So please be sure and file your yearend reports again this year!

On the expense side of the ledger, we endeavor to operate in as lean a manner as possible and still properly support the churches of the Trinity Conference. The Presiding Elders of our Conference are unpaid; however, they do receive a stipend to help offset the expenses they have as it relates to their Presiding Elder duties. You will see a line item for \$120,000 that covers these stipends. For 2025 we are budgeting \$621,000 to our Equipping Ministries, this includes \$150,000 to our African American and Hispanic Initiatives, \$200,000 to new church starts (with a cap of \$50,000 to any one church) and our tithe commitment to helping GMC groups outside of the United States. (see page 18 of the Pre-Conference Journal for more information). We are budgeting a personnel expense of \$1,044,237. This includes all Conference Staff, a communications contract with Winsome Co. as well as legal and crisis management consultant line items to be used on an as needed basis. You will also see a line item "Staff Development Fund Balance," in 2024 this item was used as a place holder for future staffing needs at the Conference level. In 2025 we are using it as a place holder for any Episcopal costs that may come our way after the 2024 General Conference of the GMC. Our total budgeted expenses for 2025 are \$2,050,402, leaving us with \$15,152 in income over expenses.

Effective July 1, 2024, the GMC has moved our health insurance and pension administration to Guidestone. Since health insurance and pension administration are being handled at the denominational level, we as a Conference do not have to staff for handling these areas. The move to Guidestone will be beneficial to the churches of the Trinity Conference because Guidestone and local churches will work directly with one another on the billing of health insurance and pensions. Previously the GMC was using a third-party group to do the billing and the churches were paying the GMC, who then paid Wespeth. This new arrangement will allow churches direct access to the billing and payment information, eliminating the third-party billing organization.

Our Conference has grown to 375 churches encompassing three states. We have plenty of money and things are great! While God has done great things in us and through us since our founding in 2022 God has even greater things ahead for the churches and the people that make up the Trinity Annual Conference. I submit the 2025 Budget for your approval.

Rev. Tyson then asked for approval of a resolution that permits that all retirement income be recognized as housing allowance as retirees choose to do so.

Bishop Jones asked if there are any questions regarding the budget and housing resolution. Seeing none he asked for a vote to adopt the budget and approve the housing resolution. The budget and housing resolution were adopted unanimously.

Personnel/Conference Staff-Superintendency Committee Report

Rev. Heather Simms shared a brief report on the work of the Personnel Committee which has been renamed the Conference Staff-Superintendency Committee.

Closing Remarks and Announcements

Rev. Jason Burnham announced the date and location for the 2025 Trinity Annual Conference for June 5-7, 2025 at The Woodlands Methodist Church in The Woodlands, TX.

Kelly Lawson from The Methodist Children's Home offered a few words of greeting and information. Asked for prayers and support for the children served and for financial support and referrals.

Rev. Burnham offered instructions on lunch locations.

Rev. Dr. Janice Gilbert offered a word of prayer and the ministry session adjourned at 12:06 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Clark Atkins, Recording Secretary*