

# **Clergy Session Minutes**

## **Trinity Annual Conference**

### **June 5, 2025**

#### **Opening Prayer / Call to Order**

#### **Bishop Scott Jones, Episcopal Leader of the Trinity Conference**

Bishop Scott Jones opened the clergy session in prayer at 3:00 PM.

#### **Announcements**

#### **Rev. Ben McGehee, Operations Officer of the Trinity Conference**

##### **Church/Charge Conference Timing**

When I served as a Presiding Elder, I loved holding Charge Conferences and even more so our Church Conferences because: I love hearing what God is doing in our local churches. I love meeting the people of the church. I love being present in our local churches to see the facilities and communities. And every once a while someone would take me out to a good meal afterwards as well! As a pastor, though, I didn't always like the paperwork we had to complete, especially the pieces that were confusing as to whether it was required or not, who should complete it, and whether anyone would actually read it after I spend a dozen hours tracking down the right person to answer one stubborn question. Anyone else have this same experience? You love the work of God, but not so much the work of "ordering the life of the church"? Well, let me say, we've heard you and this year we plan to make our Church Conference information as user-friendly as possible and publish it by mid-August so you can be ready for Church Conferences in the Fall.

While every Presiding Elder (PE) will do things differently, sometimes even from church to church, here's a few things that will be Conference-wide:

1. The purpose of the Church Conference will be to celebrate the work of God in our midst. This means the PE will bring a report from the Annual Conference and the church will bring reports about their ministry.
2. In our former life, the reports at Charge Conference seemed designed for the Annual Conference to get information about their local churches. In the GMC and especially here in the Trinity Conference our reports are designed for the church to report to itself. I often tell churches when I'm doing their Church Conference that 90% of what they're reporting is so they can keep each other accountable to the work of God in their midst, especially when it comes to the Trustees report where we ask questions about the building and insurance this isn't because the Annual Conference needs the info it's because

churches need to report this information publicly for accountability in their decision-making.

3. Finally, Church Conferences will be a time of worship and prayer. We're going to encourage the PE to bring a devotional and to pray after every report is presented, laying hands on the leaders and pastors.

If you have any suggestions on how to make Church Conferences better please let me know.

### **End of Year Reports**

End of the Year (EOY) Reports are something that I always used to dread as well mostly because in LA we had hundreds of questions to answer every year including exactly how much money we spent on things like food, flowers, and even candles. It took me and Financial Secretary over 40 hours to complete every year at Lea Joyner and our budget was only \$500,000. I can't even imagine The Woodlands here trying to do that! Thankfully in the Trinity Conference we only ask 10 questions each year plus the contact info for all your officers and leaders. At Lea Joyner we went from 40 hours a year to less about 5 and half of that time was trying to figure out if we really didn't have to do all the things we'd had to do in the past! In 2024 over 90% of our churches completed their EOY reports but in 2025 it was less than 75%. I want to thank all the churches that completed EOY Reports because it makes a big difference for us at the Conference. We use those statistics for a variety of different applications including tracking which churches are doing well and might be able to share their knowledge with other churches along with which churches are struggling and may need some outside support to get them going strong again. We're also using this information to help us determine where we need to plant new churches in our Conference by looking at the demographics of the community and comparing it to the make-up of the local churches in that area. We also use the contact information to make sure we get the right information to the right people in your church. Many of our ministry groups like the Prayer Team and the Disaster Response Team need those contacts to create their networks and when something happens in your church like a pastoral change, we need to know the SPRC information. In short, we use the information from EOY Reports in a variety of ways and we appreciate everyone who completes the report and as an added bonus if you complete the report before the deadline, you won't get an annoying phone call or text message from the Presiding or Connecting Elder to remind you to fill out the form.

### **Insurance**

I don't know about you, but I spend a lot more time dealing with insurance than I want to. Mostly because any time I spend dealing with insurance is more than I want to. And yet I'm glad I have it...For me and for my family. As a pastor in the GMC appointed full-time it's required. But I also know that many lay people who work in our churches don't have it. And many churches don't know how to provide it or think it's too cumbersome or expensive. Well after hearing from a few churches about this, we have worked with Guidestone – to create an Associational Health Plan For Lay Employees at local churches. Our hope is to have dozens of

churches with hundreds of lay staff members join with us to create a large, diverse pool of men and women so that we can work together to give churches options for insuring their lay employees – including day school employees. We’re still working on the details like pricing and what exactly will and won’t be covered but our intention is create something affordable and accessible by churches of any size as long as they have full-time lay employees. More information will be coming out later this summer but if you’re interested in being part of this please email me and let me know. You aren’t making a commitment to anything at this point other than to be kept informed of what we’re doing.

### **Liability Insurance**

¶ 509.6 & 510.3 – *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*

*Where applicable by national or local laws, inactive deacons and elders serving in a ministry setting outside the connectional structure of the Global Methodist Church shall insure themselves with a package of insurance coverage (including limits) determined by their conference board of ministry and cabinet. Such insurance shall include, but not be limited to professional liability and misconduct. Each inactive deacon and elder shall annually submit to the cabinet and board of ministry a certificate of insurance showing their annual conference listed as an additional insured.*

During General Conference last year, we passed a set of mirrored amendments to the Book of Doctrines and Discipline that required any deacons and elders who are “inactive” which means anyone not appointed to a GMC church or ministry all inactive deacons and elders must purchase liability insurance for themselves and make sure the Annual Conference is listed as an additional insured. It also states that the Board of Ministry and Cabinet must set the limits and other requirements for this. We haven’t done this yet, mostly because we’re trying to figure out exactly how to make this work for our Conference.

Here’s what we’ve come up with:

1. We purchased a new insurance policy for the Conference that automatically covers all retired deacons and elders who aren’t appointed and aren’t serving in an independent Methodist church.
  - a. Let’s use Janice Gilbert as an example of this. She recently retired from Blueridge and isn’t serving a church but if Janice goes and preaches somewhere or visits someone in the hospital or performs a wedding she has liability coverage through the Conference.
2. The Conference insurance also covers non-retired pastors who aren’t currently appointed or serving anywhere but may still work with a church on a volunteer basis by preaching – teaching Confirmation or doing a funeral.
  - a. My friend Lamar Oliver fits this category for all of 15 days back in January before he began serving as the Interim at Lea Joyner in Monroe, LA because he was helping out at Trinity in Ruston.

3. Our insurance doesn't cover anyone who is considered Inactive but is serving an independent Methodist Church or otherwise employed in a ministry setting.
  - a. For those of you in this category no matter whether you're classified as a Senior Deacon or Elder or not you are required to carry liability insurance.
    - i. An example of this is Aubrietta Jones who started a new church in Maumelle, AR. Aubrietta is a GMC pastor and we're glad to have her, but her church is currently independent Aubrietta and the 3 dozen others in similar situations fall into this rule of needing to get and report their liability coverage.
  - b. I said earlier that we haven't set the requirements yet but the Insurance agents and lawyers I talked with recommend at least \$1,000,000 in coverage for professional liability and misconduct.
  - c. If your church has liability coverage already (and I hope it does) you can likely put the Conference in as an "additional insured" for a couple hundred dollars a year. That is our recommendation.

One of the reasons I brought up Aubrietta is to highlight ones of the oversights from General Conference because even though we made a big push to get all Inactive Deacons and Elders insured we didn't check to make sure that Active Deacons and Elders had the same requirements and as it is Aubrietta is married to another pastor the Presiding Elder of Arkansas-East Jeff Warrick and technically Jeff's churches are not required to purchase liability insurance for him. Now, the good news is that Jeff's churches do have liability insurance on him, but the bad news is that we've discovered through our Church Conferences last year that many local churches have dropped insurance coverage altogether because it's so expensive and difficult to get... PLEASE – do not do this. Even if you have to drop property insurance you can often get liability insurance at a fraction of that cost and we highly recommend it for everyone. Jason did a webinar last year with insurance agents from Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. You can find it on the Conference YouTube page, and I encourage you to watch it if you're wondering what your options are. We also have some insurance agents here in the Exhibit Hall and I encourage you to stop by their table and see what they can do to help you get liability or even property coverage.

## **Board of Ministry Report**

### **Rev. Dr. Burt Palmer, Chair**

Bishop Jones, Superintendent Burnham, and clergy members of the Trinity Annual Conference, you will find the report of the Board of Ministry beginning on page 101 of the Pre Conference journal.

I ask that the members of the Board of Ministry stand so that we can recognize their leadership and work in the life of the conference.

Before we walk through the report by the number categories, I'd want to lift up a three topics:

First, on page 140 you find a QR code for any spelling or name changes that need to be submitted. If a name is listed in the wrong place, I will indicate that as I have been made aware.

Secondly, the journey towards representative, ordained ministry begins in the local church. There is no way to over-emphasize the importance of the role of each local church and pastor in helping people to discern the call to ministry in the GMC. Candidacy starts in the local church. We do not have District committees to cultivate and grow candidates for ministry, we have you. Part of the process of sanctification is making ourselves available to participate in the conversation the Holy Spirit wants to have in the lives whom Christ is calling.

Third, given our extensive report last year for the historical record, our report this year and in the years to come will reflect people whose status is changing or who still have educational classes to complete to honor their ordination status. Again, please use the QR code on page 140 to submit any corrections.

Beginning on page 101, we will be walking through this report. Notice that any required vote is indicated in parentheses beside the ¶ of the BOD reference.

**Question #1**

**The individuals approved by the BOM who will receive Certified Lay Minister status are listed.** They will be recognized in the Ministry session. No vote is required by the Clergy Session.

**Question #2**

None.

**Question #3**

**These individuals have become certified candidates.**

Though no vote is necessary by this body, if any of these individuals is present, I invite them to stand now that we might recognize you.

**Question #4**

**What persons have been received as Transitional Local Pastors since our last Annual Conference?**

Please stand when your name is read, as this will require a vote by the body:

2025 Addison, Herbert  
2025 Arauco, Raul A  
2025 Bunnell, Terrie Lynn  
2025 Bush, Greg  
2025 Conrad, Corey  
2025 Everetts, Jeff  
2025 Hooker, Samuel  
2025 Jensen, Joseph Paul  
2025 Lyle, Susan  
2025 Poag, Rose Ann  
2025 Perry, Charles

2025 Rawls, James

Vote was unanimous.

#### **Question #5**

**Individuals previously approved are listed.**

Please note in the description that Transitional Local Pastor is a *transitional* status and the reason we list the year beside your name is to help us all be aware of that one may only be approved for three additional years from the year of your approval.

#### **Question #6**

**What persons previously received as TLP's are not renewed?**

Each of the individuals either requested NOT to be renewed or DID NOT respond to the TLP team about the required renewal process.

No vote is required by the Clergy Session.

#### **Question #7**

**What persons have been appointed as Supply Pastors.**

*There are two important things to remember with the status of Supply Pastor.*

*First, one is only a Supply Pastor if they are appointed. It is not a status if one is not appointed.*

*Secondly, one can only serve as Supply Pastor for up to five total years.*

*Beyond, the 5 years, there is a process to request an additional year from the BOM with required steps to fulfill.*

Would you please stand as your name is read that we might recognize you:

2025 Cole, Clifford

2025 Fountain, Hunter

2025 Johnson, Ashley

2024 Okwa, Inyamuwa

2025 Samford, Jason

2025 Walker, Brian

#### **Question #8**

This is the list of individuals who were previously ordained a Deacon, but at the time of their ordination under the TBDD, were granted 7 years to complete *all* educational requirements for Deacon.

Please notice that we will list your name every year with the year by which your class requirements need to be completed.

On this list, please remove the name Jacob Dunn. Jacob is a now and Elder.

IF you have completed your educational requirements, please remember that we need your help – you must request the transcript of completed courses be sent to the BOM Registrar, Rev. John

Newsome. *You cannot simply use the QR code for this – we need you to help us get the documentation into your file and recognize your work.*

If your name is on #8, we want to see you become one named in #9.

### **Question #9**

As I read your name, please stand. There is no vote for this; however, we want to passionately retain our pursuit of Theological education:

- Anderson, Zachary
- Cogdill, John Warren
- Drake II, Pierce
- Inman, Kelly Joe
- Mckissak III, John B.
- Odom, Sarah
- Smith, Patrick

### **Question #10**

We have received 1 person as a Deacon since our last Annual Conference, Rebecca Clark. As she comes from the UMC ¶521.1 requires a simple majority vote.

**Vote was unanimous.**

Bishop, both questions #11 and #18 have similar implications based upon the actions of General Conference 2024. It is our understanding that this body must vote to approve the candidates as a block or vote upon each one individually.

On behalf of the BOM, I move that we vote upon these persons as a group.

Bishop Jones gets consensus from the body that they would support voting on the candidates for ordination as a group.

**Vote was unanimous. Motion is adopted.**

Please note the important information about the educational requirements and timeline included in this report. If you have completed courses that you believe will change this status, please contact the Registrar, Rev. John Newsome directly.

As I read your name, please come forward. Those of you who will be ordained both a Deacon and Elder at this annual conference please come forward, as you will be called forward later in this report for Elder.

- Alexander, Elaine
- Blair, Emily
- Blair, Trevor
- Burns, Kenneth
- Bynum, Marjorie Lea
- Claytor, Chris

- Cole, Clifford
- Isaacs, Ashley
- Goodwin, David
- Gray, Franklin
- Jensen, Barb
- Knowles, Robert
- Kruse, Lauren
- Leal, Joe
- Mercado, Diego
- Minish, Carson
- Paschall, John
- Samford, Jason
- Singh Thakur, Sanjay
- Singh, Babita
- Smith, Jahmal
- Torrez, Jacob
- Vanderbilt, Billy
- Walker, Brian

**Vote to approve their ordination as Deacon was unanimous.**

**Question #12**

This is the list of Deacons who have become inactive. No vote is required.

**Question #13**

None.

**Question #14**

Bishop, I would like to address question #14 and Question #21 to the end of this report to address them together.

**Question #15**

**What persons have been ordained Elder previously but have educational requirement remaining to fulfill.**

Again, if your name is on this list and you believe it shouldn't be; pursue John Newsome to see what he needs from your educational institution, then pursue the school like you're trying to reach them about their car warranty.

We want to see each of you move to **Question #16**, which is the record of persons who have completed their educational commitments – Patrick Smith, please stand up!

**Question #17**

What persons have been received as Elders since our last Annual Conference? From what denomination?

Have they completed the educational requirements for Elder? *As listed*

Vote to receive them as Elders was unanimous.

**Question #18**

What persons have been approved for ordination as Elders since our last Annual Conference?

Have they completed the educational requirements for Elder?

Please come forward as your name is read

Anderson, Zach  
Blair, Emily  
Blair, Trevor  
Drake, J. Pierce  
Cogdill, John  
Goodwin, David  
Gray, Franklin  
Inman, Kelley  
Jensen, Barb  
McKissack, John  
Odom, Sarah  
Paschall, John  
Skinner, Wade  
Vanderbilt, Billy

Vote to approve their ordination as Elder was unanimous.

**Question #19**

**What persons have become inactive Elders since our last Annual Conference?** The names are listed, and no vote is required.

**Question #20 What persons have become Senior Elders since our last Annual Conference?**

**A vote is required as listed.** Question #20 on pages 114 and 115

Bowman, Kenneth  
Dietzel, David  
Foster, David  
Hixson, Russell Dale  
Little, Ferrel  
Lyon, Kevin  
Miller, Gladys  
Miller, William Douglas  
Milliron, Douglas  
Steele, Ralph  
Phillips Young, Maggie  
Youngs, Brian

Vote to approve their Senior Status was unanimous.

**Question #21**

As previously requested, Bishop, I would like to address questions 14 and 21 at the end of this report.

**Question #22 (Majority Vote)**

**What persons have been approved as Valid Deacons since our last Annual Conference? Have they completed their educational requirements?**

- Harris, Michael
- Jones, Russell
- Malone, Jimmy

**Vote to approve their recognition as Valid Deacon was unanimous.**

**Question #23 (Majority Vote)**

**What persons have been approved and appointed as Valid Elder since our last Annual Conference? Have they completed their educational requirements?**

- Henager, Al
- Loftis Jr., David Scott

**Vote to approve their recognition as Valid Elder was unanimous.**

**Question #24**

**What persons have been transferred to other GMC conferences since our last Annual Conference?** NO vote required, the names are listed.

**Question #25**

**What persons have transferred into the Trinity Conference from another GMC conference since our last Annual Conference?** No vote is required, but let's welcome  
Kevin Trantham

**Question #26**

**What clergy have taken a voluntary leave of absence since our last Annual Conference? A majority vote is required.**

- Cloninger II, Robert Elder
- Leick, Sean Sullivan

**Vote to approve their Leave of Absence was unanimous.**

**Question #27**

**What clergy have previously taken a voluntary leave of absence and remain?**  
None

**Question #28**

**What clergy have returned from a voluntary leave of absence since our last Annual Conference?**  
None

**Question #29**

**What clergy have been placed on involuntary leave of absence since our last Annual Conference?**

None

**Question #30**

**What clergy have previously been placed on involuntary leave of absence and remain on leave?**

- Daniel Hicks

**Question #31**

**What clergy previously on an involuntary leave of absence have been reinstated since our last Annual Conference?**

NONE

Questions 14 and 21 are the record of our clergy who have finished the course of their earthly journey and entered the great cloud of witnesses.

During this Board of Ministry report in the Ministry Session tomorrow when we are all gathered, we will read each name as we will in a moment, but we will also have a rose placed into a vase and a bell chimed.

As I read each name, if you shared in their ministry, please stand to honor their memory as you are able:

**Question #14**

**What Deacons have died since our last Annual Conference?**

Cecil Locke served Centenary Methodist Church, Franklinton, LA; Cecil entered the church triumphant on 4/8/2025

**Question #21**

**What Elders have died since our last Annual Conference?**

Robert Hand served First Methodist Bullard. Robert entered the Church Triumphant 5/19/2025

Laura Nusbaum was a Senior Elder. Laura entered the Church Triumphant 7/21/2024

We've asked Rev. Jonathan Beck to come forward to offer a prayer of Thanksgiving for these who have fought the good fight, kept the faith and finished the race.

Bishop, this concludes the report of the Board of Ministry; but I would like to ask permission for an additional word.

I have the privilege to serve on the Commission on Higher Education and Ministry and lead the sub-committee on General Conference Legislation. At this point, we have defined our work not

to write legislation, but to accumulate the issues needing to be addressed in Section 5 of the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*.

I am not asking for Legislation; rather I am asking that you email me the paragraph and issue that you believe needs to be addressed. The outcome of our work will be to compile all the concerns to be used as a reference point to evaluate legislation. My goal is to get the compiled list out the Board of Ministry Cohort and Commission in September as a resource.

## **Candidacy Process Overview**

### **Rev. John Reasons**

Greetings, I am Rev. John Reasons, and I serve as the Candidacy Team Lead for the Conference Board of Ministry. The Candidacy Process is governed by Paragraph 506 in our Book of Doctrines and Discipline, and we've included a few things as the Trinity Conference that we think are helpful for all parties involved. When someone approaches you INQUIRING about how to begin the ordination process, or just wondering if maybe they are being called into ministry it begins with a conversation with you - the pastor then:

Go to the Conference Website where we have our documents at

Here you'll find a few quickly relevant documents -

The Path from Calling to Local Church Approved Candidate

The Candidacy Introduction Letter

The Candidacy Guidebook

The PPR Ministry Discernment Tool

When you open up "The Path from Calling to Local Church Approved Candidate" document, it lays out the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* requirements and some additional steps we have added as the Trinity Conference Board of Ministry.

### **Trinity Conference of the Global Methodist Church Path from Calling to Local Church Approved Candidate**

#### **Inquiring - Calling to Local Church Approved Candidate (BDD ¶506.1)**

	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Additional Information/Notes</b>	<b>Required by: Book of Doctrines and Discipline (BDD) or Trinity Conference (TC)</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>

I1	Initial discussion with local pastor or presiding elder	Download and discuss <i>Path to Candidacy</i> — will be posted soon and is currently available by contacting your Presiding Elder.	BDD	
I2	Membership in local church in the GMC at least one year immediately preceding initiation of process	Membership may include membership in local church in predecessor denomination or local church recently disaffiliated from predecessor denomination	BDD	
I3	Secondary school diploma or equivalent or higher required		BDD	
I4	Background/ Criminal check	Performed by local church where the church has the capacity	TC	
I5	Download and Read <i>Candidacy Introduction Letter</i> <b>and</b> the <i>Candidacy Guidebook</i>	Process readings with local pastor or other GMC pastor as needed – will be posted soon and is currently available by contacting your Presiding Elder.	TC	
I6	Prepare <b>Initial</b> Statement of Calling	Developed and brought to local church PPRC. Describe how you are being called and what kind of ministry you are sensing the Lord calling you to.	TC	
I7	PPRC Interview	PPRC download PPRC Instruction Letter. Also download and use PPRC <i>Candidacy Discernment Tool</i> . Expected that this will require multiple meetings. Will be posted soon and is	BDD	

		currently available by contacting your Presiding Elder.		
I8	Two-thirds majority recommendation of PPRC	Retain a copy of minutes signed by PPRC Chair	BDD	
I9	Conversation with Presiding Elder or designee	Discuss call and inform Presiding Elder of upcoming Charge/Church Conference vote	TC	
I10	Simple majority approval Charge/Church Conference to enter candidacy	Retain a copy of signed minutes available  Once approved by local church conference, applicant becomes Local Church Approved Candidate	BDD	
I11	PPRC Chair (or designee) and Candidate fill out and submit "Local Church Approved Candidate" jotform on-line	<a href="https://form.jotform.com/241343829803054">https://form.jotform.com/241343829803054</a>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JotForm link also found in Charge Conference Agenda</li> <li>- automatically sends to Candidacy Registrar</li> </ul>	TC	
I12	Candidate fills out Clergy Membership Application online -	Link on Trinity Conference website - <a href="https://form.jotform.com/230624491046149">https://form.jotform.com/230624491046149</a>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on page 3 of application, for "Clergy Status" select "Candidate for Ordination"</li> </ul>	TC	

Membership – 1 year; Education – Secondary School diploma or higher; Background/Criminal Check; Candidacy Introduction Letter and The Candidacy Guidebook; Initial Statement of Calling; PPR Interview using Discernment Tool – need to train your PPRC – multiple meetings expected – 2/3 approval vote required; Introductory conversation with Presiding Elder; Charge/Church Conference approval by simple majority;

After all the initial meetings and approvals at the local church the candidate will complete the Conference JotForm – Local Church Approved Candidate Application and Clergy Application JotForm

These will inform the Conference Office and the Candidacy Team that there is a Candidate out there and trigger the next steps toward becoming a Conference Certified Candidate

## **Clergy Retreat Report**

### **Rev. Jason Huffman**

First, I want to recognize the members of our Pastors Retreat Planning Committee (please stand, especially Carmen!) We had 88 people register for this year's retreat, a 76% increase from 2024! JD Walt blessed us by preaching three worship services for us. Doug Wintermute and some other pastors led us in worship. We did as much or as little as we wanted. We went out to eat. We played games. We worshiped. It was a wonderful time! In ancient Israel, the Levites were devoted to the service of God and to others and were totally dependent upon the tithes and offerings of the other 11 tribes. Also, while the other 11 tribes were commanded to have a sabbath day for rest and worship, it was the Levites who often worked harder on that sabbath day than on the other six days. A Barna study between 2015 and 2022 showed significant declines in all aspects of pastors' well-being: spiritual, mental, emotional, overall quality of life. We are created in God's image as a communal people, however, it's tragic that pastors often experience isolation more than many others. As a people whose lives are to be centered around that weekly question of "How is it with your soul?", why do we not take better care of our souls? We are already making plans for next year's Pastor's Retreat. We invite you to mark your calendars for April 12-15, 2026, at Scottsville Retreat Center outside of Marshall, TX. That is the week after Easter, one of the busiest seasons of the year.

## **Clergy Bands Report**

### **Rev. Sam McRae**

Are YOU in a Clergy Discipleship Band Yet? As we follow the Holy Spirit in designing and developing the Trinity Conference together, being intentional about clergy faith development is vital. Discipleship does not just happen in our congregations, and it does not just happen for us either. Shepherding can be a lonely vocation, and we, as your fellow clergy, recognize how crucial it is for us to develop deep, humble, earnest, and accountable friendships. The Spirit of Christ leads His followers to participate in disciplines that shape and form us, helping us to become more and more like Jesus. Band Meetings are small groups that meet regularly, in person, by phone, or online. Each person shares for 15-20 minutes about how they are doing, discusses struggles and successes, and how the Spirit is speaking to them through the Scriptures

and in other ways. The meeting then closes with prayer for one another. A Band is a single-gendered, confidential, and safe place where you can be vulnerable, verbalize struggles, experience the power of confession and forgiveness, find healing, deal with hard personal issues, celebrate the work of Christ, and share your life outside the role of a pastor. A Band is NOT a time for you to fix others or have yourself fixed, for a counseling session, for updates or bragging, for gossip, or of judgment or obligation. Your Trinity Conference Band Team was formed to encourage and assist every pastor to lead by example, by participating in a Clergy Discipleship Band. The Team is not trying to force anyone into a Band, but we do want to raise awareness, assist you in any way we can, and encourage all clergy in our conference to practice this vital and deeply Wesleyan, spiritual discipline. Each member on the Team has benefited from a Clergy Band and wants to share that opportunity with you!

Please complete this short survey regarding clergy bands, so we can better understand your needs and desires and how we can help you take the next step to involvement.

<https://submit.jotform.com/231086423856156>

Bishop Jones was dismayed to learn that only 34% of clergy in the Trinity Conference are in a Clergy Band. He expressed the need for clergy to be in bands and challenged the conference clergy to do better and hopes that next year when he returns that the percentage of clergy in a band is 75% or more.

Bishop Jones invited Mr. Khaled Jacob to come forward and share about his company.

Mr. Jacob invited clergy to take trips to the Holy Land. He shared about his company GoOmega Travel and invited people to stop by his table in the exhibit hall.

## **Cabinet Policy Report**

### **Rev. Ben McGhee, Operations Officer**

#### **Connecting Elder Role**

Last year we made some adjustments to the role of the Connecting Elder. It seems some were functioning basically as Assistant Presiding Elders even going so far as to be active in appointive process. While others were barely functioning at all because they didn't know what to do.

Based on feedback from the Presiding Elders – and after consulting the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* we came up with a new job description for the Role of the Connecting Elder.

Basically we want the Connecting Elders (CE) to:

1. Relate regularly with the pastors they're assigned not to the churches as that's the job of the Presiding Elder but to the pastors who are serving local churches.
2. We've asked the CE to start hosting class meetings with the pastors they're assigned to check in with each other and make sure your souls are well.
3. CEs also perform numerous other functions as assigned by the PE like hosting Church Conferences, working with men and women who are beginning the candidacy process, and ensuring our local churches that don't have appointed pastors (whether they're OPEN or served by lay people) have access to the sacraments.

If you're a Connecting Elder, will you stand?

Arkansas-East Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Bob Hager, Rev. Bryan Fink, Rev. Clefthon Vaughn, Rev. Carlton Cross, Rev. David Bush

Arkansas-West Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Kathryn Burchfield, Rev. Jim Benfer, Rev. Keenan Williams

Bayou (North Louisiana) Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Lamar Oliver, Rev. Steve Berger  
Brazos Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Rick Sitton, Rev. Jim Jackson, Rev. Mario Parga, Rev. Garry Masterson

Coastal Plains Area Connecting Elders: Rev. David Dorn, Rev. Randy Hagemann, Rev. Howard Huhn

Lakes Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Ed Wandling, Rev. Carmen Rickel, Rev. Patrick Evans, Rev. Michael Peschke, Rev. Dr. Marc Donaldson

Pelican (South Louisiana) Area Connecting Elders: Rev. John Robert Black, Rev. Chris Blanchard

Piney Woods Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Tim Turner, Rev. Malcolm Monroe, Rev. Doug Wintermute

Red River Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Kevin Otto, Rev. Tommy Earl Burton, Rev. Keith Tilley, Rev. Kara Mitchell

Sabine Area Connecting Elders: Rev. Mark Bunch, Rev. Drew Weber, Rev. Rick Ivey

Sam Houston Area Connecting Elders: Rev. John Stephenson, Rev. Leigh-Anne Williams, Rev. Dario Vargas, Rev. Daniel Lumpee

### **How Appointments are Made**

A few weeks ago the Cabinet finalized a document outlining the process for "How A Church Receives a New Senior Pastor". We've posted it on the website at [<INSERT WEBSITE LINK>](#)

It walks through the whole process from when and how it starts: Either when a pastor announces they are moving or retiring Or when a church and PE jointly decide that it's time for a change. Note: Churches cannot arbitrarily fire pastor. Pastors are appointed by the Bishop until such time as the Bishop unappoints them. This doesn't mean churches are stuck with an ineffective pastors and can't get rid of us when we're not doing our job. No, but there are some processes and guarantees in place to ensure pastors can't be run out on a rail. And by the way, this document doesn't get into that because we're assuming the church is already past that point and the PE agrees that the pastor needs to go somewhere else. This document is mostly written from the church's perspective but it's helpful for pastors to see as well because it lets us know what to expect if we're a candidate for a local church. Basically, the PE will work with the local church

to develop a profile of the church and the community and then work with the Cabinet to identify the pastors who fit the profile. Pastors can request to be considered but it's not a guarantee that you will be shown to the church much less get an interview. First Bryan is a good example of this we had a lot more people ask to be considered than we could present to the church. As pastors it's good to know that we have a say in this process. The Bishop isn't going to force us to leave somewhere we love or go anywhere against our will. And we're letting the churches know that pastors will be interviewing them just as much as the church is interviewing the pastor.

So my encouragement to you: Ask lots of questions. Ask to see the parsonage and the financial package and the pastor's office. Watch a service online to see how they do things as they're going to be doing this for you with your sermon and might as well return the favor to see if you can picture yourself in that service. Prepare for the interview, be professional, be enthusiastic – and be yourself. No one wants to make a bad choice based on a poor and inauthentic interview. Put together a professional resume and make sure your sermon link is good quality. Record it somewhere else if you have to.

### **Open Church Pastor Positions & Clergy Interest Form**

**Open Church Pastor Positions:** <https://trinitygmc.org/pastor-positions/>

We started posting these a few months ago and I know many of you have found the page because we have people tell us all the time that they're interested in a church the day we post a new batch. Our goal is to post every church as soon as it's publicly open and leave it up there until it's publicly announced as closed. If you're interested in any of the Open churches contact the Presiding Elder. If you contact anyone at the church about it – you will not be put on the candidate list.

**Clergy Interest Form:** <https://www.jotform.com/form/232186508515053>

After you contact the Presiding Elder (PE) if you're still interested in the church fill out a Clergy Interest Profile form. We have them conveniently placed at the bottom of the detail page of every open church. You can also get to the form direct from the website. On this form, you'll include lots of information for the PE and local churches including experience, education, expected salary, and much more. You can also use this form when you're ready to move but don't have a place in mind to go. In other words, when you're ready to move as God is leading you. Of course we can't guarantee anything except that our Presiding Elders will see every single one of these Pastor Profiles and be praying about when and where you can serve. One note of caution, over half of the profiles we receive are asking to serve in the Houston area. But here's the thing we don't have many openings around here and when we do, they're highly competitive. I'm not saying you shouldn't try to get one of those positions, but I am saying – that if you limit yourself geographically, you're much less likely to get a new church. Remember, our Conference is a family of churches in Eastern Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas and over half of our churches are more than an hour from Houston. We've got lots of great churches – in small

to mid-size towns and if you're ready for a new challenge one of them may be the right place for you.

## Texas Methodist Foundation

### Rev. Lisa Greenwood, CEO

Rev. Lisa Greenwood, CEO of the Texas Methodist Foundation (TMF) and Wesleyan Impact Partners (WIP) presented greetings and shared about both organizations and what each organizations offer local churches. She invited people to visit the following website and/or come by the TMF/WIP Table in the Exhibit Hall. <https://wesleyanimpactpartners.org/2025-annual-conference>

## Prayer Ministry Update

### Ms. Jan Floro and Ms. Crissie Chenette

**Jan Floro:** Hello, my name is Jan Floro and Crissie Chenette, and I are laity volunteers who serve as your Trinity Conference Prayer Directors. You will find our written report on page 148 of the Pre-Conference Journal. Under the guidance of the Global Methodist Church Steering Committee and what was previously called the East TX Conference leadership, we began to dream and to envision a strong culture of prayer across the Conference. We began to organize with Area Prayer Representatives and local church prayer representatives. As we have grown as a family of churches in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas, the Trinity Conference remains firm in its commitment to be a dwelling place for God, a house of prayer.

**Crissie Chenette:** We are blessed to have a team of dedicated and faithful Area Prayer Representatives who serve across the 11 Areas of the Trinity Conference. Area Prayer Representatives are recommended by their Presiding Elder and pastor and serve as a resource specifically for the churches in their Area. This group meets virtually to share information about how to engage and equip the churches in their Area for an active prayer ministry. These individuals were also instrumental in organizing prayer teams for the recent Revivals on the Road and several are serving this week in the prayer room at Annual Conference. If you have not met your Area Prayer Representative, we encourage you to make that happen.

We invite and encourage every church in the Trinity Conference to have a prayer representative for your congregation. We ask that the pastor provide us with that person's name and contact information. Partnering together, you encourage your congregation to truly be a house of prayer. Your church's prayer representative may be laity or clergy, and would be someone with a passion for prayer, who will share prayer points sent from the conference with your congregation. We currently have identified Prayer Representatives for about half of the churches within our conference. This is a wonderful opportunity for more churches to join in this prayer partnership, and we invite you to join us.

**Jan Floro:** If you have not provided the name and contact information of a prayer representative for your church, either on the End of Year report, or since then, please email us that information before you go home from Conference. If you want to talk about prayer resources for your church, or have questions, email us. We are here to help you equip and engage your church in prayer and

we invite you to join us in the prayer workshop, “In His Presence: Learning to Linger...” tomorrow at either 2:00 or 3:30 in The Harvest Worship Center. Can you just imagine the movement of the Holy Spirit across The Trinity Conference when we have 394+ churches empowered by the Holy Spirit and mobilized through prayer? Come Holy Spirit! Come!

## Local Church Lay Leader Guidelines

### Rev. Vivian Kinnear and Mr. David Eikner

**Vivian Kinnear:** Good afternoon, friends, I’m Vivian Kinnear and I’m here to introduce to you David Eikner, lay leader of Marvin GMC. He will present the results of the local church lay leader guidelines which you should have before you as a handout.

First, let me say that these guidelines were developed by a sub-committee of the Connectional Council. Its members, selected by our conference lay leaders Carl Brothers, Sarah Kreutziger, and Oscar Garza, were David, Wayne Scott, Mandy Murray, and Debra Davis. They made valuable contributions from their experience as lay leaders in their local churches. My role was simply to convene and coordinate their work.

The process and criteria to develop these guidelines were initiated by our conference lay leaders to produce something more than what is contained in our *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. They wanted to emphasize the spirit that drives the call in each local church’s lay leader. We convened on multiple occasions, listened to our conference lay leader’s vision, discussed, prayed, revised, and revised... until we came to the consensus you see before you. Once the guidelines were completed, they were approved by the Trinity Conference Connectional Council.

So, now, David will present these to you.

**David Eikner:** Good afternoon, The results before you we believe, reflect our aspirations to be Holy Spirit-led laity in the Trinity Conference. In consideration of our charge from Matthew 28:19–20 and the Global Method Church’s emphasis on laity to make disciples, we lay leaders want to take personal responsibility for what God has asked us to do.

While the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* describes the duties of the local church lay leader in Paragraph 442, we felt the need to develop further what it means to be a laity-driven congregation. This calling has led us to pursue the development of these guidelines. We believe it is very important to prioritize the role of the local church lay leader as a spiritual one that is active in keeping the church’s mission of making disciples and spreading scriptural holiness throughout the world. The real blessing of a local church lay leader is to represent the congregation in a collaborative partnership with the pastor, to enhance the work of transformation through the Holy Spirit in a lay-driven congregation, and to work both within the local church and beyond. We would like to note here too that these are guidelines and are not meant to be taken as a mandate.

Our prayer is that you, as pastors of local churches, will use them as a tool to develop guidelines for your own church’s lay leader. Most of all we hope you will take these guidelines back to your church and at minimum, have a conversation with your lay leader to discover how God is calling them to respond. We hope this is just the beginning of ways our conference lay leaders

will continue to address the needs in the local church to help empower the laity to come alongside its clergy as Aaron did with Moses. As brothers and sisters in Christ we can with mutual respect, help lead, collaborate, and support our clergy.

Rev. Trevor Blair a 2025 ordinand closed the clergy session in prayer at 4:43 PM.