

Minutes of the Ministry Session

Trinity Annual Conference

June 6, 2025

Opening Prayer and Call to Order

Bishop Scott Jones, Episcopal Leader of the Trinity Conference

Bishop Scott Jones opened the Ministry Session at 8:47 AM with a word of prayer.

Election of Recording Secretary & Assistant Recording Secretary

Rev. Ben McGehee, Operations Officer

Bishop, I make the following motion for the Annual Conference:

I move that we elect Rev. Clark Atkins as the Conference Recording Secretary and the Rev. Kathleen Halpin as the Assistant Recording Secretary.

Motion Adopted Unanimously.

Conference Welcome

Rev. Ben McGehee

Welcome to the 2025 Trinity Annual Conference! We especially want to thank Rev. Mark Sorenson and the dedicated staff at The Woodlands Methodist Church for hosting us this year! They are extremely gracious hosts and we love working with them. Thank you for opening your doors to us this year!

We also have a dedicated team of men and women who have been meeting since last Fall and maybe even earlier to Plan the fine details of Annual Conference from where each event will be held down to exactly where every person will stand on the stage and for exactly how long. So if you helped with the Annual Conference Planning Committee, I want to thank you.

I also want to thank all of our volunteers many from The Woodlands but others from all over our Conference. Thank you for volunteering your time and service so that our Conference can be a joyful, Christ-honoring time. Many of our volunteers are out of the room right now because they're working in other areas but if you need anything or have a question about the facility or the schedule or where the bathrooms are. Especially if you need to know where the bathrooms are look for someone in a yellow shirt and they will be glad to help you. We also have numerous men and women in blue shirts who are also volunteers. They are part of our Prayer Team and are dedicated to praying over us and for us throughout the Conference. If you ever need prayer for anything whether it be something happening at the Conference or something on your heart

but happening somewhere else find one of the Prayer Volunteers. They have set up a Special Prayer Room in Lenox Parlor, that's a self-guided experience and an Intercessory Prayer Room staffed with Volunteers in D124 the Infant Courtesy Room and we also have the Chrysostom Chapel available which is a beautiful prayer chapel down the hall that's available at any time.

Pretty much everything I've said so far along with a hundred other informational items are available in the Conference web app. If you haven't looked at it yet there's a QR code on the screen to go to it and bookmark it and put it on your home screen or just scan the QR code every time. The printed program contains lots of great information, but the Web app has even more detail and we'll be referring to it numerous times throughout the Conference, so I encourage you to get it on your phone.

Finally, I want to tell you about something special happening this weekend that's not directly part of our Conference but is coming from people in our Conference and that's the new album from Bristol House that released last night at 11 pm. Have you heard it yet? It's a hymn album and it's amazing. During the break we're going to play one of their videos and if you haven't downloaded the album yet, I encourage you to give it a listen. You should have received some information about this when you checked in.

Approval of Guidelines for Our Life Together

Rev. Ben McGehee

Bishop, I make a motion that the Conference approve the Guidelines for Our Life Together that were printed in the Pre-Conference Journal. I'd also like to make a few comments about them before we vote.

Every year we pass a set of Guidelines for Our Life Together and this year we've updated them a bit with references to the new Book of Doctrines and Discipline and a section that codifies the process we've been using to determine the lay membership of the Annual Conference specifically that all churches get at least one lay member and that all the laity on the Conference Connectional Council are automatically members of the Annual Conference. Of course, all active appointed clergy are members as are all inactive, non-appointed senior deacons and elders.

Motion Adopted Unanimously.

Episcopal Address

Bishop Scott Jones

It's a great joy for me to be back serving as your bishop and presiding over another session of the Trinity Annual Conference The Global Methodist Church is now three years old, and we are a very healthy denomination. We continue to welcome new congregations that are being formed. We are

organizing new conferences in new countries. We're planting churches where God is opening doors. If all of the current conversations bear fruit, we may well have 50 annual conferences in 30 countries by the end of this year.

Since we last gathered, we have held our convening general conference. You'll hear a report about that later, but it's important to recognize that we are no longer a provisional annual conference but a real one. We no longer have a president pro-tempore; we have a conference superintendent. Our *Book of Doctrines and Discipline* is no longer transitional. That general conference was an amazing event I have been to 12 general conferences; I started in 1970. This was the most spirit-filled powerful conferencing led by the Holy Spirit that I have ever been to. Never before have I seen the Holy Spirit hijack a business session. But the 20-minute devotional melded into an hour and a half prayer session with delegates down on their knees at the front. Hello! The spirit of the conference was one of unity and celebration. There were some tough conversations that happened, but it was an amazing event.

Now as we recognize our development as a church from the beginnings on May 1st of 2022 up until the general conference last year and now there have been some changes that have had to be done. I want to talk about a few of them just so that you're seeing it from the same perspective that I am. One has been a leadership transition. Keith Boyette who was our founding leader through the WCA and then the Transitional Leadership Council retired at General Conference and was replaced by Mike Schafer. That process has gone smoothly. Here in the Trinity Conference Jim Welch retired for the third time. Maybe, I've sort of lost count I was his bishop then. Anyway, I just want you to recognize that Jim Welch was our President Pro-Tempore and then for a few short months our Conference Superintendent. He had stepped up to be a leader in this part of the Global Methodist movement Jim we are deeply grateful to you for all that you did. Jim's retirement triggered a process which is in our *Book of Doctrines of Discipline* where I consult with leadership groups in the conference and then seek through prayer and discernment to name a new Conference Superintendent. That process went very smoothly. You were blessed with many great leaders, and I had several choices, but eventually I presented to the Connectional Council that Jason Burnham would be your new Conference Superintendent, and they agreed. Technically, you all have to vote on that. If you will approve that decision by me and the Connectional Council, would you say "Amen"? Amen! You've been elected Jason.

Just to let you know the health of our denomination. I'm bishop of 13 conferences and in four of them I have had to make that kind of transitional choice. Our system works well people. It's not that I'm picking whoever I want but it's me as a bishop listening to the leadership to discern how God

is moving in the conference to make that happen. Another crucial change that's happened was the decision at the general conference to have itinerant bishops. There was an option. Most of us have been used to residential episcopacy. That didn't work out so well in our former denomination. We have decided to have itinerate episcopacy. So my role as bishop is to be a teacher, a spiritual leader, and a kind of final accountability point. I supervise nobody directly. What a huge difference that was from the Texas Annual Conference, when I was a bishop in Houston in the UMC. I supervised 44 people directly or indirectly. In other words, my role as bishop is to travel the connection. By the way, I've been doing that. But it also means that your conference superintendent leads a team of people who are doing most of the day-to-day leadership work of the annual conference. There is accountability. Every pastor is accountable to a presiding elder. Every presiding elder is accountable to the conference superintendent. Jason is accountable to me. I'll give you my email. If you have problems with his behavior, let me know. Okay. But I'm also accountable to the Global Episcopacy Committee. Chris Ritter is the chair of that body and Jason is the vice chair, so it makes for an interesting relationship here. But the point being that bishops in the Global Methodist Church are accountable and if the right processes are followed, I could be fired on any given day. Yeah, that's worthy of the applause.

During our convening general conference we elected eight bishops. Mark Webb and I were reelected by acclamation on the opening day because they needed somebody to preside over the conference. But then we elected six part-time bishops and we'll be talking about how that happened and how we now have a team of eight bishops working together as colleagues and a leadership team that I never experienced in my former denomination. It's a great blessing to have these seven colleagues working with me. We also changed our mission statement. We added scriptural holiness to the mission statement of the GMC. Now one of my friends 25 years ago or 35 years ago said, "Jones, there aren't 10 people in America who know what scriptural holiness is." It comes out of the large minutes that John Wesley put together 200 and some odd years ago. But nevertheless we are now in the process of proving my friend wrong. I hope by the end of this conference session you will have gone deeper into understanding why holiness is central to the whole of the Bible and the insight of scriptural holiness is what makes Wesleyan Christianity distinctive. So you heard it last night from Artie Cadar, you'll hear it again over the day today. You'll hear it from me in the ordination sermon. This is something that's crucial and is part of our DNA. It is that we are seeking to help all Christians be obedient to God's commandments and to recognize that they can't do it on their own power. But it's only by the grace of Jesus Christ and their faithful response that God will change their hearts and make them be the men and women God's called them to be.

Friends having set up our church for most of us having moved out of the disaffiliation pain it's now time to get to work. We have sometimes complained about the distractions that existed in our former denomination. We had a difficult transition period Some of you may still be suffering from post-denominational stress syndrome. Quit suffering. Move beyond it.

We deeply value evangelism. We want to reach out and help people share the good news of Jesus with as many people as possible. This conference is one of the leaders in our denomination. You are doing so many things right. But I would encourage you to go to your conference website and read this section on your strategy. It was lifted up two years ago at annual conference. I'm not sure it's something that you're paying a lot of attention to but here are three phrases that you all invented that I've been sharing across the church. First, Members disciple. That means every lay person has a job to reach out and help somebody else become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Second, Churches Multiply. That means your local church ought to be looking around for where God is opening a door that you might plant a new church. We've got a lot of refugee churches of people fleeing another denomination. It's now time to build missionary churches that reach the unchurched and help them know Jesus. Amen. And third, the Conference Equips. That means that this conference session and all the activity that we do together from our camps to our training sessions to the School of Ministry through recruiting through all those things, this is where the conference is equipping local churches to multiply and equipping members to disciple.

Evangelism means more than just that strategy though. It also means recognizing the brokenness of our world and overcoming it. That means that our evangelism has got to be cross-racial, international, cross-cultural, cross-linguistic. Artie Cadar has been my friend for eight years. I was his bishop, and he was on my staff in the Texas Annual Conference and that gave him the privilege of writing that speech last night and making me give it. Somebody asked they didn't know that Bishop Jones speaks Spanish. And I think in that process I confessed last night that I wasn't doing that because of my linguistic skills I was simply doing that to make all of our people feel welcome. All of our Hispanic folk need to feel like they're included. This conference is probably the most ethnically diverse conference in the GMC in America People. Praise God! But given the ethnic diversity of our mission field y'all still not where you need to be. We have got to do a better job of reaching African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanic people. And I challenge you to be at work in that in your setting. Friends, we've got to be planting more churches. We've got to be reaching more people. The time is right. We're going, we've moved beyond our infancy. If you know of a three-year-old child that person

is talking and walking and active. I expect you all to be doing everything you possibly can for Jesus.

I want to close this with a word of personal testimony. Maxi Dunham and I have been colleagues in the larger Methodist movement for decades. He's been my friend. We've sometimes disagreed but most of the time found ourselves on the same team. Maxi is 10 years older than I am or something like that. And when I saw him a few months ago and we hugged and shared sort of this sense of where we are in the scheme of God's providence. Maxi said, "Scott, God has been so good to allow us to live long enough to see this revival of Methodism." Friends, I'm 71 years old. That's certainly my feeling about it. God has been so gracious to me to allow me to be a part of this and you all are part of it as well. God is gracious to be including you as leaders in this movement. Don't blow it.

Lay Leaders' Address

Co-Conference Lay Leaders Mr. Oscar Garza, Mr. Carl Brothers, and Dr. Sarah Kreutziger

Oscar Garza: Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. My name is Oscar Garza and along with Carl Brothers and Sarah Kreutziger we are the Trinity Conference co-lay leaders. We are excited to bring this lay leader report to you. I will discuss my visit earlier this year to Tanzania with my wife Lani along with Jon Thornsbury, Brad McKenzie, Tim Turner and Jason Burnham. I will discuss my visits with 28 churches (yes 28 churches in about two weeks) in the Sabine Area with Jason. (He visited all 30 churches in the area.). Carl Brothers will follow my comments to discuss the work of the Connectional Council with regards to the Local Church Lay Leader guidelines and the need for other guidelines to keep us centered and focused on making disciples of Jesus Christ. Finally, Sarah Kreutziger will conclude with a call to action.

In late January, early February, we attended the convening Tanzania Annual Conference. We were blessed to be with them as we worshipped and prayed together. I was privileged to sit in on the laity session which took place outside the church where we sat on wooden benches, plastic chairs and large rocks. I listened to Tanzania Conference lay leader Shedrack Kilimba explain to the laity their version of local church lay leader guidelines. 1. If your pastor is hungry, get him or her some food. 2. If your pastor is short on clothing, provide him or her some clothes. 3. Make sure you go out and visit the lay members of your church. The laity in Tanzania talked about starting churches and about creating communities in Christ. We're talking about bringing people to Christ before a clergy person is appointed. Yesterday I asked the laity in our session when was the last time you started a church without clergy leadership? I encourage you to understand the words of our vision statement: *Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Global Methodist Church envisions multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the earth who flourish in scriptural holiness as we worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.* Through our ministries, we desire to share the whole counsel of God with all peoples and to advance the presence and fulfillment of the Kingdom of God in every part of the world and at all levels of societies and cultures. The Global Methodist Church is committed to the Lordship of

Jesus Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and the work of the Holy Spirit in conveying God's truth and grace to all people. We are a global church that recognizes and deploys the gifts and contributions of each part of the church, working as partners in the gospel with equal voice and leadership. Our witness to the world is marked by mutual love, concern, sharing, and a focus on those who are most vulnerable. We watch over one another in love and bear witness to the transforming power of the Good News as we humbly, but boldly, strive to serve others as ambassadors of Christ! If you have a heart for international ministry, I encourage you to attend the workshop presented by Revs. Justin Lonas, Jon Thornsbury and Rev. Dr. Ashley Goad. They will be leading us in Cross-Cultural Ministry Collaborations. I am personally working with Mwenge Muyimbi one of the lay members of the Tanzania Conference and Upendo Likondi, the Conference Superintendent to develop ministry opportunities in Tanzania.

Last month, Jason and I visited the churches in the Sabine Area. I am encouraged and was strengthened by the visits. I am happy to report that we are on the right track. The folks we met have hope. Although there are some pockets of concern, by and large, folks are excited about our new denomination. These are some of the comments we heard: "When I was growing up, we talked about Jesus, and then I felt that we went through a period where we didn't talk about Jesus and now, we are talking about Jesus again." "Our youth have asked us to do a deeper dive about Jesus. They want to know more about Jesus." "I came to this church and through our class meetings, I have been transformed." We visited South Liberty Methodist Church and met with Lay Pastor Brice Curl. First of all, South Liberty is a small church, but when you drive up to it, you see the well-manicured lawn and garden. Brice believes you should make sure your church looks good for those who attend. Brice started with about 4 people in worship and now has around 20. Why the increase? As Brice told us, I can only speak the truth, the Word of God from the Bible. He stated that he doesn't preach but delivers God's message. You see, Brice is experiencing what we are seeing throughout our new denomination. The world is hungry for the truth. The world is hungry for Jesus. If we preach that, they will come.

Now, I invite Carl Brothers to report on our local church lay leader guidelines.

Carl Brothers: Good morning, it is my privilege and pleasure to be the second of your three conference lay leaders to address you this morning. Each of us bring a little different perspective to our call as laity in the church and our responsibility to spread scriptural holiness bringing new disciples to Christ. Let me begin by saying, we are grateful for all the work our laity are doing in women's and men's ministry, our youth, our mission volunteers, our disaster relief, our grow groups, and especially the prayer warriors who are undergirding all the efforts.

As we looked at these ministries, it occurred to us, that a vital aspect of how we might help in facilitating and equipping that work was focusing on the responsibilities of the local church lay leaders in our laity-driven congregations. Therefore, a task force was formed under the convening of Rev. Vivian Kinnear to create guidelines for this pivotal position. Yesterday, Oscar, Sarah and I presented the guidelines for local church lay leaders in the laity session while David Eikner and Vivian Kinnear made the presentation in the clergy session. As the lay leader is a critical position within our churches, we believed it important to have clear guidelines of the many responsibilities of the lay leader.

Although, we understand and respect the exact responsibilities vary from church to church. With the completion of the local church lay leader guidelines, it our desire and plan to address similar guidelines for conference lay leaders over the coming year. We believe the development of these guidelines are of extreme importance as we live out Christ's words from Matthew 28 verses 19 and 20 which reads, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age"*.

Our desire and passion as your conference lay leaders truly goes back to the basic principle...that is, "If everyone is responsible, no one is responsible"! Thus, the importance of our church lay leaders! Our local church lay leaders are primary representatives that embody the gospel in their daily lives, both within the church and in the world, by inviting, encouraging, equipping and empowering both clergy and laity to connect with and grow in the ministry life of the church. They foster a spirit of unity and fellowship within and beyond the church, encouraging members to connect with those who do not belong to a church and share Jesus with them. Although, we deem the role of our lay leaders as most important to keep us accountable, we must not assume that someone else is responsible...it leads to inaction and failure to honor and to serve our Lord and to make disciples! We must accept our clearly defined responsibility and sense of ownership to be the people that Christ has asked of us as we spread scriptural holiness throughout the Trinity Conference and the world. Thank you!

Now, Sarah, would you come forward for your comments.

Sarah Kreutziger: Thank you, Carl. I'd like to continue Carl's point with an old, but meaningful story.

During a fired-up sermon, a minister was expressing his vision for the future. "Our church, he proclaimed, "needs to get back to basics. We have to start like an infant, just learning to CRAWL. The Church needs to CRAWL, Sisters and Brothers." From the back of the sanctuary came energetic agreement. LET 'UR CRAWL PREACHER. LET THE CHURCH CRAWL. The pastor continued, "After we crawl, we need to work on studying the word and strengthening ourselves so we can STAND and be strong in the Lord. The Church needs to Stand for the Lord." From the back of the sanctuary again. LET UR STAND PREACHER, LET THE CHURCH STAND!! Encouraged, the pastor continued his illustration... "That's not enough. The church needs to put one step in front of the other so we can Walk with the Lord! THE CHURCH NEEDS TO WALK WITH THE LORD." Again, from the back: LET UR WALK, PREACHER, LET THE CHURCH WALK? Fully inspired by the response, the clergyman almost shouts, "If the church walks, we can make it RUN for the Lord. To make it run, you will have to commit to daily Bible study, you'll have to pray without ceasing, you'll have to be here every Sunday, you'll have to volunteer when asked, AND, you'll have to tithe! LET THE CHURCH RUN." SILENCE and then, from the back of the sanctuary. LET THE CHURCH CRAWL, PREACHER, LET THE CHURCH CRAWL."

This joke came to my mind because of Bishop Carolyn Moore's riveting sermon at our Pelican Area Revival last February. At the end of her message, Bishop Moore asked the clergy to raise their hands. A few hands went up. Then she asked the laity to do the same and many more

people raised their hands. And then the Bishop went to meddling with a shocking statement: “Laity,” she said, “if the church grows, it will be because of YOU...And...if the church fails, it will be because of you.” Ouch. Then, I remembered Jason’s heartfelt desire to reach the 17.6 million souls for Christ who live in this Conference because it is so critical to our Wesleyan mission to make as many disciples as we can and spread Scriptural holiness across the globe. Ben McGehee’s personalized that desire for me later when he said that WE are the church’s mission plan...We are the *laos*, the “set apart people of God,” sent by our Lord to spread the good news across our communities just as the lay missionary Frances Asbury did in his time... and just as the many lay preachers and house church faithful successfully did in their times.

So, dear friends, do we allow our beloved Movement to crawl into oblivion with apathetic indifference? Or do we set aside every weight and sin that clings so closely [to us] in order to RUN with perseverance the race that is set before us...looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the JOY that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated on the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12: 1-2)? That is the question.

You heard the call from Oscar. You heard the call from Carl. And make no mistake, you hear the call from me. We the laity of the Conference OWN the Mission. We count on the clergy, of course, to shepherd us, but at the end of the day, we have the numbers, we have the resources, and we have the charge. It really is up to us.

Thank you and God bless.

Conference Superintendent Address

Rev. Jason Burnham, Conference Superintendent

Welcome to the 2025 Trinity Annual Conference! Since we last gathered, we’ve witnessed God’s faithfulness, power, and presence in extraordinary measure. In September, the Convening General Conference gathered in Costa Rica and while many anticipated an organization’s business meeting, we experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This winter, the Lord called us to proliferate the spirit-filled joy of our Annual Conferences in each area of the conference through Revivals on the Road. At each revival, we were inspired and convicted by clear Gospel centered preaching and witnessed a response to the Lord’s invitation with an outburst of prayer. A few weeks ago I experienced a fresh blessing. Upon receiving the Bishop’s appointment as Conference Superintendent, I called upon the Lord to seek His guidance for a faithful way to order my steps. I heard the Spirit speak, “go to the Local Church.” So, we developed Conference Connections, and I visited every church in the Sabine Area in May, and I look forward to continuing that journey across the conference. In each visit, I heard how the Lord is working through the church, and caught a glimpse of the vision the Lord had given them for reaching people for Jesus. It’s been an extraordinary year filled, with the movement of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the saints.

We’ve also experienced some transitions in our conference team this year. I can’t go any further without acknowledging a brother in Christ who led us so faithfully for the first two plus years of our conference. This is a man after God’s own heart, an extraordinarily well-read man of deep faith, a man whose humility and graciousness inspire each of us to strive more fully after

perfection in love, a man who I am honored to call mentor and friend, our one, and forever only President Pro Tempore, Rev. Jim Welch. Thank you, brother! We also saw Shanda Levingston step into her next arena of ministry. Shanda, we are grateful for your service, you are missed. As we have seen some leaders move into new spaces of ministry, we have seen others enter new roles or join the team. Rev. Vivian Kinnear has begun work as the Director of Missional Development, assessing the missional engagement and opportunities across our conference. This is critical work that will clarify where we are so that we can faithfully move forward in wisdom. Thank you, Vivian! Another critical step when entering this role was to discern who the Lord was going to establishing as a partner in ministry. Thankfully, the Lord moved quickly and clearly in calling Rev. Ben McGehee to the position of Operations Officer of the conference. Welcome! While Ben's address is now in Texas, he says he will always be a Louisianan. Ben quickly began a search for Shanda's successor to serve as his Executive Assistant, and we have been blessed to receive and welcome Lorena Ossa to the team.

I'm grateful for the gifted servants who are a part of this team, AND I'm humbled to be a part of a connection like this, where we are able to see evidence of God's activity; where He is calling his children and His churches to be a part of what He is doing amongst us. I'm excited to share, Trinity continued to grow over the last year! There are now 394 churches in the Trinity Conference! We celebrate this growth, acknowledging the 25 churches that have made a decision to affiliate with us or been planted over last year! Let us welcome our brothers and sister! Not only is the conference growing in number of churches, but the churches are also growing as well! The Average Worship Attendance of Trinity Conference churches grew from 2023 to 2024 by 8.6%. That means that there were nearly 3,000 more people in worship on any given Sunday year over year! But that is not the end of the good news! You might think that that represents growth in a few churches or in one area. Not the case, every single one of the 11 areas in our conference posted growth in average worship attendance last year. Praise God! Lord, do it again. Lord, send revival! We want to see your great awakening!

One of the great joys for me this year has been a much-anticipated Wednesday phone call with my older son. Aidan was hired to serve as the youth director for St. Andrew's Global Methodist Church in Oxford, Mississippi where he's in college. He's preaching every Wednesday night, and most Wednesdays we'll talk, and he'll tell me what the Lord has laid on his heart to teach. One Wednesday he lays out for me that he is going to preach on the Parable of the Sower and at first blush it sounded like a pretty standard message. He is going to describe the different types of soil and ask the question; "Is my life good soil, prepared to receive the Word of God?" Then Aidan notes that a secondary consideration has captured his attention; What about the rest of the seed? Fascinating. Yes, this is a parable that Jesus breaks down for His disciples and He clearly articulates the seed is the Word and the soils represent our lives, BUT He never tells us who is the Sower or what is the role of one who has already received the Word in the good soil of their life. It is clear to me that our Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit sows the seed that is the Word AND each of us is called co-labor with God, to Make Disciples, called to Be Witnesses. Just as Paul planted and Apollos watered you and I are called to serve as Sowers of the Word as well. Which leads me to ask, "How are we sowing the Word of God into other people's lives?" Pause, think on that. And if you, like me, in that moment realize that there are a series of missed opportunities to lament, then we must then ask, "How do I account for the seed not sown?" Lord, have mercy. Hear the good news, there is an endless supply of seed. For the Word of the

Lord endures forever. And, opportunities abound, after all “The world is my parish.” But do you remember the rest of that quote. Wesley said, “I look on all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounded duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.” You see, there is an endless supply of seed and opportunities abound for each of us who join the Lord as Sowers.

In ministry, I always think in terms of mission field. Maybe it’s an occupational hazard of church planting. When you think about ministry in mission field terms you start with your individual mission field. The Lord has placed you in a series of relationships; your family, your neighborhood, your co-workers, your community. And you are called to sow the Word in that mission field. AND Each church represented in this room; all 394 churches of the Trinity Conference also have a mission field. The Lord has positioned your church in your community, in this time and in this place so that your mission field would know Jesus. In short, you are called to reach your community for Jesus. Some of you might be wondering, who is in my mission field? How can I learn more about my community so that I can better consider how the Lord is calling us to sow His Word in our mission field? Good news, Vivian is going to be stationed at the check-in area during lunch and through the workshops this afternoon. If you would like to request a mission field report for your church, please see her and she’ll put that together for you. But mission field thinking has now clearly expanded for me. Just as the Lord has given each of us a personal missional, and our churches a mission field; when we gather as a conference, we collectively have a mission field. This has become my fixation. The lord has called us to share the Gospel with the 17.6 mission souls in our mission field. Yes, 17.6 million souls! The Trinity Conference is called to reach the people of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Eastern Texas with the life changing Good News of Jesus Christ.

From swamplands of coastal Louisiana to the pine curtain of East Texas, from the beauty of the Ozarks to the urban core of the fourth largest city in the country, from the delta lands to the cattle ranches; you and I are called reach this mission field for Jesus. And the Lord has positioned each of the 394 churches of the Trinity Conference with that mission in mind. And the Lord will call new churches to be planted to reach areas and people groups in this mission field we are currently not positioned to reach. After all there are 17.6 million souls the Lord entrusted to us. I have so much to learn about our conference’s mission field and God has a life’s work ahead of us in serving these people in obedience. A couple of notes about our mission field that we need to consider as we move forward together. First, 49.9% of the people in our mission field are not Anglo, Nearly 8.8 million. 22% African-American, 21% Hispanic, and 7% other. Second, nearly 23% of the people in our mission field do not speak English in their home. This doesn’t account for who is able to speak English. It shows whose heart language is something other than English. And it’s not only Spanish spoken in the homes of our mission field. 7%, or 1.2 million people are speaking a language other than English and Spanish in their homes. If we believe that every tribe, tongue, and nation will gather around the throne of the lamb and in worship. That we will cry out Holy, Holy, Holy then we must respond now in leading a growing multi-ethnic, multi-lingual church for the Glory of God. I’m encouraged to report the Lord is already moving ahead of us in this very effort.

<Video shown depicting the work, house fellowships, worship experiences, and ministry of Sanjay and Babita Singh>

God bless you Sanjay and Babita. We commit today to pray for your church and the 140,000 Indian, Pakistani, and Nepali people the Lord has given you as a mission field across Houston. I love this passage from 1 Peter: *'His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in His divine nature.'* Did you catch that, church? Through *His* glory and goodness—lavished on us—we participate in *His* divine nature! Come on, Church! That's not just theology; that's identity, that's power, that's purpose! And just in case there's still any question—this includes sowing the seed of His Word across the vast mission field of the Trinity Conference, to every one of the 17.6 million souls He's placed in our care. He has called us, He has equipped us, and—praise God—He has given us *Himself*. So rise up, church! The time is now—*for His glory and their good*.

Delegation Report

Rev. Jason Burnham and Mr. Oscar Garza

Jason: In partnership, Oscar and I were humbled to serve, collaboratively, as heads of the Trinity Convening General Conference Delegation. Our delegation included 30 delegates, 6 alternates, and 4 reserves. As one of the larger delegations, we were well represented and able to have at least 3 seats on every legislative committee. In addition, it was beautiful to see how many Trinity leaders felt called to serve in volunteer positions throughout the conference. Others simply followed the Holy Spirit's leading to travel and bear witness to what God is doing in our movement. If you were a member of the delegation, a volunteer, or a guest in Costa Rica at the Convening General Conference would you stand and be acknowledged. Church, if you have questions about General Conference find one of these folks; I know they would be glad to share with you.

Oscar: The convening General Conference was a momentous event. It was seven days of very important and critical business. More importantly, it was a time of prayer, lots of prayer and a time of worship, with alter calls. Throughout the conference, you could feel the Holy Spirit move through those in attendance.

After the Trinity Conference delegation was elected, we were selected to serve in various legislative committees and started having zoom meetings with delegates from around the world. (One way to save money.) We held Trinity Conference delegation meetings to review legislation and to discuss the various topics and concerns. (Also via zoom except the delegation meeting we had at last year's annual conference.) Jason will point out in a bit more detail, three major characteristics began to flesh out. The characteristic of Wesleyan theology was prevalent. We saw this towards the end of the conference when our mission statement was discussed and finalized. Another main characteristic of the conference was bureaucracy, or I should say no bureaucracy or limitations on bureaucracy. Folks were concerned that a bureaucracy can take on a life of its own and possibly move in a direction that's not consistent with the majority of the denomination. Finally, another main characteristic of the conference was accountability. We all agreed that we have to move beyond a place that allows behaviors and teachings that are inconsistent with our beliefs in our doctrines with no consequence.

Jason: You can find our report on pages 20-22 of the Pre-Conference Journal organized by actions taken as an outcome of each legislative committee's work. But here we want to highlight those three themes that were woven throughout.

First, a full embrace of our Wesleyan Theology. The last act of the Convening General Conference was to affirm the mission and vision statements for the church, which are intentionally Wesleyan.

The mission: The Global Methodist church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness across the globe.

The vision: Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the Global Methodist Church envisions multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ throughout the earth who flourish in scriptural holiness as we worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly.

Our mission and vision statements testify to the fact we are a Holy Spirit empowered, bible believing, evangelical, holiness movement in the Wesleyan tradition.

We also further ensured our ongoing embrace of Wesleyan Theology by requiring *Wesleyan Worship and Sacraments* for ordination as Deacon, *Ministry of the Holy Spirit* for ordination as elder, and expecting all candidates for ministry, beginning in January of 2026, to attend institutions that have been approved by the Commission on Ministry and Higher Education for their theological training. These decisions were made to ensure our pastors clearly lead from strong Wesleyan theological foundation for the benefit of the church for generations to come.

Also of note, we called for two important tasks to be accomplished that will strengthen our theological witness ahead of General Conference 2026; 1) a team has been formed to create a *Book of Worship*, 2) a team has been formed with the charge of harmonizing one theological statement out of our current two (the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith).

The second theme of our work as a conference was a lean and constrained bureaucracy. In a historic action the General Conference passed the denomination's Constitution where we affirm that "the ministry of the Global Methodist Church happens primarily through the local church" and the role of "all Global Methodist Church organization is to strengthen and support the work of the local church." We are clear that disciples are made, and scriptural holiness is spread through the local church.

With that in mind, the formation of all structures called for clarity in their limited scope. The Annual Conference Connectional Council was established with flexibility for each conference based on their needs, while clearly articulating the bounds of their work. Similarly, a Connectional Council was formed for the denomination along with 8 commissions or councils that each were given defined structure, composition and purpose.

Finally, the theme of accountability was central in our work. The strongest source of accountability was codified in our constitution; there shall be no trust clause in the Global Methodist Church. The local church owns their property. The Global Methodist church does not have any legal claim to local church property.

We also discerned as a body the Lord calling our church to a renewed episcopacy where bishops are general superintendents, serving the whole church with multiple annual conferences under their leadership. The role of a Global Methodist bishop is centered on teaching, preaching, guarding the faith, and defending our doctrine. Their leadership calls us to accountability first and foremost to our faith as delivered once for all.

Bishops are further accountable in two ways: 1) they are term limited with each bishop serving a 6-year term and only eligible to be elected to one additional term, 2) the Global Episcopacy Committee was formed so that laity and clergy from across the connection are charged with holding our bishops accountable.

Oscar: One of our biggest challenges was the election of bishops. Given our past, the election of bishops and their role was of critical importance to the conference delegates. Leading up to the conference, there was a bit of confusion regarding the nominations of bishops. Confusion based on what the Transitional Leadership Council was proposing versus what many understood was to happen. In addition, during the process, a large Nigerian conference joined the GMC and of course many wanted to provide an opportunity for a nomination from that conference. During the Conference, the Episcopacy and Superintendency Legislative Committee submitted a resolution to elect bishops which was then amended on the floor. The amended resolution then passed overwhelmingly. I say all this to show how the Holy Spirit moves in ways that we are not always anticipating and ends with the right answer. After all that, we finally were poised to elect our new interim bishops to serve until 2026. And wouldn't you know it, on the first ballot, we elected three bishops, Bishop Kimba Evariste from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and two clergy women, Bishop Carolyn Moore and Bishop Leah Hidde-Gregory. Then we elected Bishop Jeff Greenway, Bishop John Pena Auta from Nigeria and our very own Bishop Kenneth Levingston.

Oscar: Because of the number of delegates from the Trinity Conference and recognition of the gifts and graces of Trinity Conference delegates, many were elected to serve in various leadership positions within the committees and commissions of the denomination. If you are part of the leadership team of a committee or commission, please stand so that we may thank you for your service. Before you sit down, could a couple of folks near these individuals please place your hands on them so that we may pray over them for their commitment and service.

Oscar prayed a prayer of blessing over those general conference delegates who have been elected to serve on general church committees, councils, and commissions.

Called Special Session Information

Rev. Jason Burnham

As announced on our communication channels last month, Bishop Jones has called a Special Session of the Trinity Annual Conference on September 6, 2025, via Zoom webinar for the sole purpose of electing the 2026 General Conference Delegation. We will utilize VPoll again: this is the same technology that we used for the 2024 election. To register, present as a candidate for election, or for more information scan the QR code. All Clergy Members and Lay Delegates who are eligible to vote must register to attend. If you are interested in presenting as a candidate for election you must fill out the candidate form by July 6. All candidate information will be

compiled into a Candidate Guidebook that will be published by August 6. Let us join together as a people of prayer as we seek the Lord's guidance for this election.

School of Ministry Report & Certified Lay Ministry Certificate Presentation

Rev. Dr. Tim Turner, Rev. Dayimi Pimentel, Rev. Artie Cadar, and Rev. Ross Hyde

<Video shown of School of Ministry sessions and participant testimonials>

Rev. Dayimi Pimentel: Good morning, brothers and sisters in Christ! I am Rev. Dayimi Pimentel, and it is my joy to serve as the Dean of the Spanish-Speaking School of Ministry. What a blessing to share how God is moving in our Spanish-Speaking School of Ministry. We began in January with 17 students. God has already grown us to 24 students. This past month, we launched the first School of Ministry in Panama with 28 students. We're also beginning to plan a School of Ministry in Mexico. This is not our work—it is God's work through us, equipping His people for ministry across languages and borders.

Rev. Artie Cadar: Qué bendición compartir cómo Dios está obrando en nuestra Escuela de Ministerio Hispano. Comenzamos en enero con 17 estudiantes. Dios ya nos ha ayudado a crecer a 24. El mes pasado, lanzamos la primera Escuela de Ministerio en Panamá con 28 estudiantes. También estamos planeando una Escuela de Ministerio en México. Esta no es nuestra obra, sino la obra de Dios a través de nosotros, capacitando a su pueblo para el ministerio a través de idiomas y fronteras.

Rev. Tim Turner: Thank you, Revs. Pimentel and Cadar for your work in launching our Spanish-Speaking School of Ministry.

If you've served in any capacity within the School of Ministry—Lead Team, instructors, mentors, host churches, CLM team, communication team, Board of Ministry leaders, or Conference staff—please stand. Each of the team members who just stood up demonstrate that the calling to equip the saints for the work of ministry is *not* something for just a *single* person or team...It's a work of the *entire Church*—with contributions from *each individual part*—This is one reason I'm *thrilled* to announce a *pivotal* shift in the Trinity Conference School of Ministry...We're currently developing a Student Workbook that will make it possible for churches across our Conference to be certified as regional training hubs of the School of Ministry. This change will transform the current Lead Team into a *train-the-trainer* model,—which will make the program more *accessible* to laity and more *sustainable* for our Conference connection of churches. The upcoming year will be the first efforts at training and certifying *hub training churches* across the *large* geographic spread of our Trinity Conference. This represents a *fundamental reimagining* of how we as a Conference equip God's people for ministry *without* becoming overly bureaucratic. If we *truly* aim to build *God's Kingdom* and not our own—to build a *movement* rather than an institution—then it will take changes like *this*: where we release the *control* of ministry from a *single* location into the capable, Spirit-filled hands of qualified churches and leaders throughout our Conference.

The current Lead Team will remain active to train and certify for the *quality* of the ongoing School of Ministry—by distributing classes to churches across the Conference, we will *also* be multiplying discipleship and ministry development. We believe God has pushed us in this direction, especially as we’ve partnered with Tanzania and Panama and seen a *great* need to make ministry training *even more accessible*.

We have a few more upcoming events in Fall 2025 that you can learn more about by visiting our vendor booth. 3 Spanish-Speaking School of Ministry events; 2 more English-Speaking training weekends,—one with Bishop Kenneth Levingston teaching on preaching; And our premier School of Ministry Intensive week in October, where all 10 required classes can be completed in one week. It will once again be held at Lakeview Camp. Make sure to visit our vendor booth for all this information in one place, including information about efforts to launch a Youth Ministry Leadership and Worship Ministry Leadership Cohort.

Now I’ll turn things over to the School of Ministry Registrar, Rev. Ross Hyde, as we celebrate the new certified lay ministers.

Rev. Ross Hyde: Thank you, Tim. The following individuals have completed the requirements to be recognized as Certified Lay Ministers (CLM), and we recognize them at this time. As I read your name, please come forward and receive your certificate and be recognized.

Charles “Chip” Arnold, Antonia Ayala, Ronald Ayala, Mary Ann Baron, Kevin Bauman, Ann Birdsong, Dennis Black, Susan Bouse, Frank D. (Doug) Boutte, Kay Boyd, Johnny Bynum, Jason Cagle, Fred Carter, Ben F. Craig, Colton Dampier, Theresa Downs, Margi Duncan, Carla Dunn, Martinez Filoteo Gomez, Dana Fatic, Mitchell Forrest, John Forthman, Darrell Gibbs, Kaleb Harp Barbara Heller, Laura Holcomb, Richard Hyde, Philip Langley, Shannon Larche, Mark Mathis, Oneika J. McCarthy, Tammy McKissack, Catherine Mergele, Jennifer Miller, Patricia Miller, Donald Newell, Michael Payne, Jeff Pellegrin, Carolyn H. Richardson, Scott Russell, Victoria Sandage, Rebecca Sansing, Renita Schroeder, Vincent Sloterdijk, Linda Sharion Snow John Stine, Roberta Strauss, Gary Thiel, Lee Ann Toliver, Gary Tribble, and Angel Van Ostrand.

Bishop Jones prays a prayer of blessing over the new CLMs.

Ben McGhee: This year, we changed the way we do sponsorships and host exhibitors. You can see all of the groups and organizations that are sponsoring us in the program and on the web app. Throughout the Conference you’ll see these sponsors being highlighted on the screens, but all of our Diamond and Platinum sponsors are being offered a chance to either address the Conference or play a video. As we move towards our break, we’re going to watch a video from Compassion International. Lori Lee is here as the Compassion Representative. She’s available to answer questions about Compassion and will be in the Exhibit Hall this afternoon. Also, I want to thank Compassion for purchasing bags for all of our Conference members.

<Video shown depicting the work of Compassion International>

Following the video the ministry session was in break for fifteen minutes.

Board of Ministry Report

Rev. Dr. Burt Palmer, Chair of the Board of Ministry

Bishop Jones, Superintendent Burnham, and 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. If you have any questions about the BOM, please stop by our table in Dunham Conference room. Before we call forward those to be ordained Deacons and Elder, I want to lift an important issue for our future.

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 – SPRC, Church Conference 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. The following persons will be Ordained Deacon tomorrow. As I read your name, please come forward: Elaine Alexander, Emily Blair, Trevor Blair, Kenneth Burns, Marjorie Lea Bynum, Chris Claytor, Clifford Cole, Ashley Isaacs, David Goodwin, Franklin Gray, Barb Jensen, Robert Knowles, Lauren Kruse, Joe Leal, Diego Mercado, Carson Minish, John Paschall, Jason Samford, Sanjay Singh Thakur, Babita Singh, Jahmal Smith, Jacob Torrez, Billy Vanderbilt, and Brian Walker,

Those of you being ordained Deacon and Elder, please remain where you are; those of you being Ordained Deacon only, please return to your seats.

These persons will be ordained Elder tomorrow: Zach Anderson, Emily Blair, Trevor Blair, J. Pierce Drake, John Cogdill, David Goodwin, Franklin Gray, Kelley Inman, Barb Jensen, John McKissack, Sarah Odom, John Paschall, Wade Skinner, and Billy Vanderbilt.

Bishop Jones then asked the candidates for ordination the historic questions.

- (1) Have you faith in Christ?*
- (2) Are you going on to perfection?*
- (3) Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?*
- (4) Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?*
- (5) Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to God's work?*
- (6) Do you know the General Rules of our Church?*
- (7) Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?*
- (8) Have you studied the doctrines of the Global Methodist Church?*
- (9) After full examination do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?*

- (10) Will you preach and maintain them?
(11) Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity?
(12) Do you approve our church government and polity?
(13) Will you support and maintain them?
(14) Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?
(15) Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
(16) Will you visit from house to house?
(17) Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
(18) Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
(19) Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
(20) Will you observe the following directions? Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' Sake?

All of the candidates for ordination successfully answered the historic questions.

Burt: Three clergy members of the Trinity Conference entered into the Church Triumphant since we last met as an annual conference. As I read each name a rose will be placed in a vase in their memory and a bell chimed.

If you shared in the ministry of these persons, we invite you stand with their families as their name is read:

- Cecil Locke
 - Cecil served Centenary Methodist Church, Franklinton, LA
- Laura Nusbaum
 - Laura was a Senior Elder
- Robert Hand
 - Robert served First Methodist Bullard.

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.

Rev. John Newsome who serves as Registrar, Mariann Rayne manages our TLPS and candidacy process, and Dr. Debra Davis serves as Chair of the Connectional Commission on Ministry and Higher Education. Let's thank them for all the work they do on behalf of our conference and the general church.

Bishop, this concludes my report.

International Ministries Team (IMT) Report
Rev. Jason Burnham and Rev. Dr. Ashley Goad, Chair of IMT

<Video depicting the partnership with Panama is shown>

Jason: As a sign of our growing partnership, we are blessed to have leaders of the Panama Provisional Annual Conference of the Global Methodist Church here with us. Please join me in welcoming Jazir Morales, Dylan Joseph Gonzalez, and Conference Superintendent Reverend Luciano Pereira Da Silva.

Luciano Pereira Da Silva, Conference Superintendent of the Panama Provisional Annual Conference: Hallelujah! I am I am nervous, but I am so thankful for to be here with you and dear brothers and sisters of this Trinity Annual Conference. May the grace and peace of Jesus be with you all. I am pastor Luciano Pereira Dilva, superintendent of the Panama Provisional Conference. I thank Bishop and Pastor Jason for the privilege the opportunity to be here with you and I am so thankful for God bless us and give the privilege to participate in his mission.

So at two and a two and a half years ago we began as a small group in our house with around 11 people. Today by God's grace we have six churches across the country with about 140 people. Yeah. And in 2024 we founded officially the Global Methodist Church in Panama with the support of Keith Boyette and Jasir was the attorney that helped in this foundation as well. So our vision is to plant churches in 11 cities and from these cities to plant churches in small places of the country for the long term. We envision multiplying into 200 churches throughout all the 10 provinces and five karas. Karas are indigenous communities in Panama. So in Panama 70% of the population is nominally religious and syncretistic, 20% is evangelical, and 10% are atheists or belong at other groups. But within the 20% of evangelicals, there are weaknesses in discipleship and in equipping pastors and leaders. So we are working to address these weaknesses through the Global Methodist Church.

This year we launched the Asbury Seminary program training 22 students to become deacons and for some future pastors. We also began a school of ministry project in partnership with the Trinity Conference, with you. So right now we have 50 people from Panama studying and being equipped in this group. Yes, Praise the Lord. In this group, among this fifty students we have ex-prostitutes ex-drug addicts, ex-alcoholics, ex-suicides, ex-gamblers. So, our main strategy is life transformation. So we are working that plan to multiply disciples to make disciples. The only thing that we want is to multiply disciples and God didn't call us to plant churches, he called us to make disciples, and these disciples will form the communities.

So our main strategies are a movement of prayer, discipleship in small groups, and equipping leaders by the grace of God. We are seeing lives transformed. We ask for your continuing prayers love and support. I am so happy to be here I feel like I have a great family right now. So when I start,

when God gave this vision to me at three or four years ago I couldn't speak any words in English. So, I am before you and I try and speak some words. We are not planting church for us or for ourselves or just for the short term, but for the future generations. We want to bring the hope of the gospel to broken families, to children, and to the heart of Panama nation. Thank you, Trinity Conference, for believing in us and believing your vision. May God bless you abundantly. Amen.

Ashley: A Spirit-born friendship is flourishing between the Trinity Annual Conference and the Panama Provisional Annual Conference. Today's signing is not merely the fulfillment of a process, but a celebration of a growing partnership — rooted in relationship, grounded in trust, and propelled by shared mission. Over the past year, intentional steps have led us here. Two Trinity delegations traveled to Panama — in December 2024 and again in February 2025 — not to advise or instruct, but to listen, learn, and build lasting friendships. We encountered a vibrant, faithful church, rich with potential and led by courageous pastors. Through those visits — and through regular Zoom calls, prayer, and ongoing collaboration — a vision is coming into focus.

Here's just a glimpse:

- 23 Panamanian pastors have begun the Spanish-language Course of Study through Asbury Seminary, supported in part by Trinity scholarships. Deep gratitude to Rev. Dr. John Robert Black for championing this effort.
- A Spanish-language School of Ministry launched in May, equipping more leaders for ministry. (Daniel & Dayimi just returned from an energizing trip!)
- Monthly Zoom gatherings continue, providing space not only for logistics but also for prayer, encouragement, and shared discipleship.
- And in December, a Trinity team will return to Panama to celebrate their Convening Conference—an historic moment in their faith story.

Trinity's financial support has focused on leadership development, superintendent salary, travel, and infrastructure — not to foster dependence, but to plant seeds of long-term stability and indigenous strength. We're investing in people. In pastors. In church planting. In the Gospel. The Memorandum we sign today is a formal milestone. But the truest covenant is found in prayerful presence, shared vision, and the willingness to walk together. So, we invite you — yes, *you* — to be a part of this. Bring your prayers, your encouragement, your imagination. Dream with us about what God is doing through this partnership — and what He might do through you. Because this isn't just about Panama. Or the Trinity Conference. This is the Church — *being* the Church. From Siloam Springs to Metairie to Panama City. And everywhere in between.

Bishop Jones calls for vote on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Trinity Annual Conference and the Panama Provisional Annual Conference.

Motion is approved unanimously.

MOU is signed and prayers in Spanish and English are offered.

<Video depicting the partnership with Tanzania is Shown>

Jason: Here to join us in the holy act of commitment to this covenant relationship it is my honor to welcome Mwenge Muyombi and Conference Superintendent, Reverend Upendo Maliki Likondi.

Rev. Upendo Likondi, Conference Superintendent of Tanzania: God is good all the time, all the time God is good. Dear brothers and sisters we are glad and blessed to be here and being a part of this annual conference event. Thank you so much for welcoming us God bless you so much Amen.

My brothers and sisters my name is Reverend Upendo Likondi, conference superintendent of Tanzania Annual Conference of the Global Methodist Church. Allow me to present to you the lovely greetings from the people of Tanzania and your coworker disciples makers and not only the people called to upholding scriptural holiness but who are working diligently to live and present spirit scriptural wholeness as stated in the second Timothy chapter 2: 15.

Dear brothers and sisters we are standing here on behalf of our faithful people of Tanzania and Trinity Conference. We are people from Tanzania who do believe that our partnership is due to God's will and for his glory. These facts help us to know that this is God's will. First, we both have the common goals to preach the gospel and to make the disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen. Second, we are rich of diversity in our ministries like English and Spanish dialect as we witnessed here that are speakers. In Tanzania we have more than 126 dialects, but unified by the Kiswahili which is our national language which is the widest spoken language in Africa. But once you are with us, we automatically we change to bilingual which is English and Kiswahili. Third, we both have the same acronym that is TAC and TAC which stands for Tanzania Annual Conference and the Trinity Annual Conference. Both TACs are led by leaders who are young and very visionary, strong and committed to see things new are happening in our conferences. By submitting ourselves under the law of the Holy Spirit, one day we will lead our people to celebrate that it is the Holy Spirit that has helped us to do this. Let us bow before God. Praise him and say thank you Lord, Thank you Jesus Christ, Thank you Holy Spirit Amen.

And due to these common goals, that we are having this year in 1st and 2nd February we have celebrated our convening annual conference where Trinity Annual Conference participated in our annual our convening annual conference. In that event we celebrated 54 congregation pastors and lay people. In total 180 members participated in the event. After the convening annual conference we were declared to be a full annual conference. Now we have planted churches. We have planted eight new churches since the

annual conference. Praise God. Amen. Our vision at the end of this year is after planting is to have 150 churches in Tanzania because the people of Tanzania love God and worshipping God is the part of their life. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters now we are standing here to prove what God has already designed in spirit and put them into the reality We believe that through our partnership we will be able to be the catalyst for the growth and development of our ministries on both sides, meaning Tanzania Annual Conference and the Trinity Annual Conference. Praying for each other, encouraging to each other, and value each other. Everyone has something special to offer to the other side Amen. We are finalizing a program for mission opportunities for the people of Trinity Annual Conference to come to Tanzania to work side by side building basic churches buildings. After mission work, we can have an opportunity to take our brothers and our sisters who visited us

to see the beautiful creation of God that we are blessed by God all over Tanzania. Taking them to Mount Kilimanjaro and to other national parks and other areas that have something to offer to the people of God and giving praise to God. Amen.

And through this we have be begun our journey where we together, Tanzania Annual Conference and Trinity we have designed the curriculum to empower the Tanzanian ministries ministers and now we are working toward developing the curriculum that will empower the clergy of Tanzania especially deacons and elders. A special issue that we Tanzanian being unique, here you find here in America for someone to be a pastor is some someone who has gone to theological college having a certificate, but in Tanzania when we registered Global Methodist Church, we had very limited, not more than four pastors who were deacons and I being alone in an area. What we did was to open to pave the way for the lay people who have a call to serve God that go and serve God because in in Matthew chapter 28:18-19 has said go into the world, and this has made the church of Tanzania to grow and give this chance to be here today. Glory be to God.

Ashley Goad: Today, we do more than sign a document. We say yes — to deep trust, shared mission, and Spirit-led friendship between the Tanzania Annual Conference and the Trinity Annual Conference of the Global Methodist Church.

This covenant is the fruit of a journey that began long before paper met pen. In November 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding marked the first official step. But the relationship? It's been forming much longer — through mutual visits, the first in August 2023, heartfelt Zoom calls, shared worship, prayer, and countless holy conversations.

This partnership is anchored in several key convictions:

- That we need each other — not as projects or providers, but as *partners* and *siblings* in Christ.
- That God’s Kingdom is made richer when cultures collide not in competition but in companionship.
- That our shared mission — to make disciples and spread scriptural holiness — requires us to listen deeply, give generously, and grow together.

And what sets this covenant apart? It is shaped by mutual transformation, not charity or control. It includes:

- Clear principles of shared leadership, financial transparency, and spiritual accountability.
- Monthly virtual gatherings for worship, prayer, and updates—alternating leadership between the Conferences.
- A commitment to sustainability, with a step-down financial model that empowers Tanzanian-led growth and long-term independence.
- Joint investment in the next generation—through Course of Study development, a growing School of Ministry, and the empowerment of women and youth.
- And an exciting new School of Ministry, launched in February, thanks to the collaborative leadership of Rev. Dr. Tim Turner and Rev. Upendo Likondi — and their incredible work developing SWAHILI resources.

This covenant celebrates the beauty and blessing of both cultures:

- From Tanzania, we are learning radical hospitality, resilience, fervent prayer, and a deep sense of communal discipleship.
- From Trinity, we offer tools for strategic planning, theological education, and sustainable systems for growth.

This is more than a cross-continental partnership. It’s a cross-cultural journey — breaking through barriers of pride, dependency, and misunderstanding with the grace of Christ. We sign this covenant not because of what we can give, but because of what we can become — together. Because the Spirit is already moving. And because, by God’s grace, the best is yet to come.

Bishop Jones calls for vote on the Covenant between the Trinity Annual Conference and the Tanzania Annual Conference.

Motion is approved unanimously.

Covenant is signed.

Conference Superintendent Upendo offers a prayer of blessing in Swahilli.

Rev. Brad McKenzie offers a prayer of blessing in English and Swahili.

Cabinet Report
Rev. Jason Burnham

Cabinet members, would you stand. Our cabinet has had an incredible year of service continuing to collaborate with the 394 churches of the Trinity Conference in the appointment making process. Each of the members of the cabinet volunteer their service out of a commitment to our movement and a deep abiding love for Jesus. Would you join me as we offer our gratitude for their service?

The cabinet has seen two changes this year to acknowledge: First, as Rev. Ben McGehee entered the position of Operations Officer, he was succeeded in the role of Presiding Elder by Rev. Doug DeGraffenried. Second, as Bishop Kenneth Levingston was elected and consecrated to the episcopacy, Rev. Enid Henderson succeed him as both the Chair of the African-American Ministry Initiative and as a member of the cabinet. We welcome both of you to this season of leadership.

In addition, each of our Presiding Elders has a team of pastors that are investing in the care and well-being of the pastors and lay ministers serving across the conference. Connecting Elders please stand. These leaders are a front line of support, resourcing our ministers and combatting isolation, ensuring that no pastor or lay minister walks alone. Let us join together offering our thanks to the Connecting Elders of the Trinity Conference!

I'm also excited to share; we have had two area name changes to communicate. At the instigation of Doug and Jonathan, the two Presiding Elders serving the state of Louisiana, Louisiana South has been renamed the Pelican Area and Louisiana North has been renamed the Bayou Area.

In addition to the ongoing collaborative appointment making processes, this cabinet year has focused on the development of consistent rhythms in that work. To that end, the cabinet has developed a document entitled "How a Pastor Will be Appointed." This will soon reside on Trinitygmc.org on the Open Church Pastor Position page. I hope that this provides clarity for our conference as we engage with this process together over time.

Bishop Jones, the appointments and assignments of the Trinity Conference are on pages 119-139 of the Pre-Conference Journal . They represent all appointments and assignments you have fixed to date. Conference, If you have begun a new pastoral appointment or lay ministerial assignment since last Annual Conference would you stand. Church, would you gather around these servant leaders and lay hands of blessing upon them as Bishop Jones prays over them.

Bishop Jones prays a prayer of blessing over persons in new appointments or assignments since last annual conference.

New Church Starts Team Report

Dr. John Campbell, Chair

Good morning, friends! I'm John Campbell, chair of the Trinity Conference New Church Starts and a layperson from Resurrection Church in Katy, TX. We're here to celebrate and support the

incredible work of planting new churches—work that’s transforming lives and communities across our region.

First, I want to introduce our dedicated New Church Start Team. Both the clergy and the lay on this team are living out church starts, and we aim to transfer their experience and wisdom across the conference. At the team picnic this year, I’m afraid that the lay/clergy tug-of-war will not go the way I want it to. So, if you are a layperson interested in joining our team then please let me know. The qualifications include wanting to make disciples and willing to give your opinion on stuff we talk about. Now, let’s talk about the support we’re providing. In 2024, we awarded \$200,000 in grants to seven church congregations

- Resurrection Methodist Church of Houma, LA
- Trinity Sugarland
- Resurrection Church of Katy
- Feliciana St. Francisville, LA
- Wesleyan Methodist Church of Crockett, TX
- Living Water Church of Lake Charles, LA
- The Woodland Hills Community Church (a new campus of First Methodist, Conroe, TX)

These churches are planting seeds of faith in their communities, and we’re honored to help them grow. The funding is modest and isn’t buying land per se, but it is making worship happen whether it be chairs, sound equipment, video equipment, rental space, children’s ministry items, trailers for mobile worship, or a variety of things you building people already have on site. I want the conference to know that these funds are making ministry happen – making disciples, taking some pressure off of the new congregations and allowing them to look outward towards growth rather than worry exclusively about funds – something we are all familiar with.

We continue to promote our relationship with Planter’s Field, the training resources available from The Woodlands Church. This place really is amazing. Our committee will now be able to take advantage of the conference’s strategic area reports to look for church planting opportunities. We want to be more tactical based on what we learn in these reports and not merely opportunistic as we have been. We really need to move into a cooperative method of having areas work to support their own local new starts. No one knows your neck of the woods like you do and we need to find ways for your church to help your neighbors. We don’t yet know what this will look like, but I think you can imagine that your church can play a role in helping.

If you’re considering a new church start, our 2025 grant process is open, with a budget of \$200,000. For this year we will collect applications starting in August with a first round of decisions in September. You can apply online at our conference website.

In line with our conference tradition, we would like to offer a public blessing to some of the new starts. Can I ask the clergy and lay representatives from the following congregations to come up to the altar. I’ve asked Rev. Jeff Warrick to offer a blessing at this time.

- Nashville Methodist in Nashville, AR with Wade Eggers as pastor.
- Russellville Global Methodist Church in Russellville, AR with Richard Gifford as pastor.

- Back Porch Church in Pearl River, LA, with Jim Fatic as pastor.
- Sanjay and Babita Singh – who I believe you know as our roving pastors for connecting with Houston’s large south Asian community.

And as they come forward, I’ll end my time with a short reflection.

I had the most interesting last few days, and I’d like to share about that. I had the privilege of having dinner this week with the Tanzanian delegates and the bishop of the Independent Methodist Church of Cuba. Now I couldn’t talk with everyone, but I did sit across from Upendo Likondi, the conference superintendent from Tanzania. We talked about formulating worship communities in homes, under trees, and wherever the people are. Upendo came alive telling these stories and his eyes said, we are making disciples. Then when I came to register, I ran into my pastor Daniel Hernandez who I have decided knows everyone. He introduced me to the Conference superintendent of Mexico, David Almanza. I started asking about their churches and it wasn’t long before he said, AND we are starting 5 more. His eyes said we are making disciples. When I talked to Susan Kent about the Woodlands Hills Community Church, she shared a story about taking in a new member – she was making disciples. God has been sending me a message that new church starts is simply about making disciples. This concludes my report. Jeff, will you pray for these churches.

Rev. Jeff Warwick offers a powerful prayer of blessing over the churches and pastors involved in new church starts.

Board of Directors Report

Rev. Dr. Burt Palmer, Chair

Bishop Jones, Superintendent Burnham and members of the Trinity Annual Conference, my name is Burt Palmer, and I have the honor of serving as the current Chair of the Board of Directors of the Trinity Annual Conference.

On page 94 of the pre-conference journal, you will find the members of the Board of Directors:

- Rev. Chap Temple
- Mr. Richard Whittier
- Rev. Vivian Kinnear
- Rev. Jim Welch
- Rev. Jason Burnham
- Rev. Ben McGehee
- And Ms. Amanda Whitlow, who serves as our Chancellor and has provided wonderful legal guidance for our work.

Beginning on page 49 of the Pre-Conference journal you will find the updated By-laws for the Trinity Conference. All references are to the state of Texas law because we were initially organized in Texas, and our primary office is in Texas. Both the Bylaws and Board of Directors exist to meet the legal requirements to function as we do.

Examples of the changes to bring to your attention are as follows:

1. Aligning the Bylaws with the current Book of Doctrines and Disciplines, for example, changing the term “President Pro-Tem” to “Conference Superintendent”;
2. In VI.C & .D, we made the Conference Superintendent and the Operations Officer the only positions appointed by the Bishop. All others are elected by the Conference, and;
3. Assigning the Board of Directors into two, 3-year classes for service.

These bylaws come to you from the Board of Directors and have been endorsed by the Connectional Council and, as such, are presented to the body with the recommendation for approval by the 2025 Annual Conference Session of the Trinity Annual Conference.

Motion to approve the bylaws and changes as articulated in the Pre-Conference Journal is approved unanimously.

Nominations Report

Rev. Jason Burnham, Conference Superintendent and Chair

I’m so thankful for the team of lay and clergy leaders that have worked alongside of me this year on the Nominations and Leadership Committee. As they stand would you join me in gratitude.

Our report can be found on pages 93-100 of the Pre-Conference Journal. This year we paid close attention to two areas in our leadership where we wanted to be thoughtful moving forward. First, we examined our nominations for pastors and lay leaders that are serving in multiple arenas of the conference. We communicated with them and when relief was a welcomed conversation, we made new nominations as they narrowed their focus. Second, we reviewed the lay/clergy balance of our leadership. While the standing committees of the conference were all in compliance with the Book of Doctrine and Discipline, most of which call for equal representation; the Ministry Teams of the conference needed significant attention. In response, we worked with the chairs of the Ministry Teams and nominated additional leadership with the following guidance: We expect every Ministry Team to have at least 1/3 / 2/3 balance of representation, and we aspire to have a 50 /50 equal balance of representation on every Ministry Team. Both of these efforts are represented in the report.

Also note in our report, we have, for the first time, a named Chancellor of the Annual Conference, Amanda Whitlow. Amanda is an esteemed lawyer that will serve the Annual Conference (not the individual churches only the conference) pro-bono to consult in legal matters and in matters of fidelity to the *Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. Thank you, Amanda! We are grateful.

In addition, please take note of the formation of two additional Teams.

- 1) For the first 2 years of the Trinity Conference our Disaster Response was led by one man, Rev. Terry Lindsay. Terry stand, we are grateful. This winter Terry put forward a request; the formation of a Disaster Response Team, populated with leadership from across the conference that will be able to develop the systems and structure necessary for faithful response. The Connectional Council unanimously supported the formation of the Disaster Response Team as

represented on page 100 of the Pre-Conference Journal. Note, while Terry has chosen to step back from formal leadership, he continues to be a resource for this newly established team.

2) Last year the Strategic Planning Team that was previously formed in 2023 concluded their work. While a strategic framework had been established; Members Disciple, Churches Multiply, and the Conference Equips, they reported that a completed strategic plan could not proceed at that time. This was concluded because we needed the Convening General Conference to determine both the structure of the annual conference and who would be serving in leadership. Following General Conference and my appointment as Conference Superintendent the Connectional Council called for the formation of a Strategic Planning Team with the charge of developing a 5-year strategic plan for the conference, within the approved framework, that would be presented and considered by the 2026 Annual Conference. The Strategic Planning Team's nomination is on page 100 of the Pre-Conference Journal.

Bishop Jones the Nominations and Leadership Committee presents our report for adoption.

Motion to adopt the Nominations Report is adopted unanimously.

Staff and Superintendency Relations Committee

Rev. Heather Sims, Chair

Good morning, Bishop Jones, Superintendent Burnham & My beloved clergy & laity of the Trinity Annual Conference my name is Heather Sims and It is my honor to serve as the chair of your Staff & Superintendency Relations Committee (SSRC). Which functions like the local congregation's SPRC, only at the Conference Level. Those on the committee include me, Sarah Kreutziger, Oscar Garza, Carl Brothers, Mike Tyson, Abby Salazar, Jerry House, Wes Hilliard, John Dawson, Drew Essen, Ginger Wooster, and Karen Swenson

The SSRC exists to make sure that we have the staff, structure & support needed to fully live into our strategic framework as a conference. Our Strategic Planning team established that Members Disciple, Churches Multiply, and the Conference Equips.

I am grateful for our Conference Staff, a tiny but mighty staff who live, eat, and breathe to support each of us in our work to welcome and advance the kingdom of God: Jason Burnham, Ben McGhee, Vivian Kinnear, Rebecca Wilt, Sarah Carter, Lorena Ossa, Brenda Porter, Dlane Mattox, and Jon Thornsbury. Please help me thank each of these gifted servants!!

Friends, with this strategic framework at the forefront of our work, the SSRC has identified some needs of our local congregations that are not being supported as fully as we believe they should be (due to capacity constraints of our current staff & presiding elders). As the SSRC chair, I have been a part of numerous meetings, emails, and conversations. Although we have considered and reconsidered various possibilities, today we present to you an experimental proposal for additional resources to support our current conference staff, volunteers, & presiding elders.

I will do my best to answer all of the questions that have come to me thus far, but if I miss something your questions will be welcome at the end of this presentation.

The Staff and Superintendency Committee (SSRC) of the Trinity Conference of the Global Methodist Church recommends the creation of three new staff positions, each with the title of *Equipping Elder*. These positions, if approved, will begin in an initial “Pilot Phase” as a one-third (1/3) time staff roles in September 2025, with clearly identified benchmarks for evaluation. Pending affirmation by the 2026 Annual Conference, the positions would transition to full-time roles in September 2026. This recommendation aligns with our strategic framework and is a response to both urgent needs and promising opportunities within the Trinity Conference. It fits within the current budgeted income for 2025 and 2026 and will not require any change in the current connectional funding rate into the future. It has received full support from the SSRC, the Finance and Administration Committee, and the Connectional Council.

The Trinity Conference is experiencing both exciting growth and pressing organizational challenges. The following needs have emerged as critical areas where expanded staff capacity is essential: 1. **Coaching for Increased Fruitfulness.** Local churches are seeking guidance and support to grow in fruitfulness—spiritually, missionally, and numerically. More staff are needed to actively coach these churches toward vitality. 2. **Resource Development.** Reflecting the expressed needs of our local churches: pastors and laity need contextualized resources to foster growth in key areas: such as discipleship, leadership development, evangelism, outreach, and much more. More staff are needed to develop and share these resources across the conference to support the ministries of local churches. 3. **Mission Field Assessment and Church Planting.** Underserved mission fields exist in every Area of the Trinity Conference. More staff are needed to identify and prioritize locations throughout our vast geographic area where the conference should focus our resources for church planting and multiplication. 4. **Decentralized Leadership and Increased Accessibility.** The Conference staff is currently centralized, which limits accessibility for many local churches. More staff are needed to offer relational support and to respond on a timely basis to issues throughout the Conference. 5. **Strained Capacity Among Existing Staff and Volunteers.** The Conference staff is currently stretched thin, and our volunteer Presiding Elders and Connecting Elders are overextended. As the Trinity Conference expands geographically and numerically, the current model is untenable, so more staff are needed to ensure sustainability and prevent the burnout of our leaders.

Our Conference is well-positioned to respond proactively to combat these challenges due to several converging opportunities: 1. **Available Financial Resources.** The conference currently has adequate funding to support three 1/3-time Equipping Elder positions within the existing budget and connectional funding rate. In addition, the existing funding rate supports expansion to full time compensation for these positions in September 2026 if confirmed by the 2026 Annual Conference. This minimizes financial risk while enabling strategic experimentation. 2. **Strategic Framework Implementation.** The conference’s approved strategic framework identifies its core role as *equipping the local church*. This staff role allows us to act on that priority more intentionally and operationally. 3. **Growth Momentum.** With churches continuing to join and affiliate with the Global Methodist Church, now is a timely moment to solidify infrastructure and provide needed leadership development and ministry alignment.

Role Description: Equipping Elder

Each Equipping Elder will focus on:

- Coaching pastors and lay leaders in local churches toward greater fruitfulness.
- Developing and disseminating strategic resources tailored to the unique needs of churches in the Trinity Conference.
- Evaluating area assessments from the Director of Missional Development to identify and cultivate mission fields for future church plants.
- Serving as a bridge between the conference leadership and local churches to enhance accessibility and decentralize leadership support.

Implementation Plan

- **Pilot Phase Start Date (1/3 Time):** September 2025
- **Pilot Phase Evaluation Period:** September 2025 – May 2026
- **Benchmarks:** To be clearly identified by the SSRC and used as the basis for a progress report at the 2026 Annual Conference.
- **Potential Transition to Full-Time:** September 2026 (pending affirmation from the 2026 Annual Conference)

Here are some of the questions we've received which I'd like to address:

Why 1/3 time? This was considered in SSRC meetings, conversations, and emails. In order to increase accessibility to the entire geography of the conference and experience the value of leaders with various giftings and experiences being able to collaborate in service to the local church, what was finally presented and supported by the SSRC, and the Connectional Council was three 1/3-time Equipping Elders. Ultimately, what is before the annual conference today is the budget that has a line item that represents 1/3 of three full-time positions. If, in the process of recruitment and selection it becomes apparent that we need to shift to 2 part-time or 1 full time, I would want to bring that back to the SSRC and the Connectional Council in order to honor their previous discernment.

What will they do? Much of that is outlined in the Pre-Conference Journal Addendum, but we also have a roles and responsibilities framework that has been developed in anticipation of today's vote. In a 1/3-time engagement some of drafted roles and responsibilities include;

- Provide direct, focused coaching to at least one church per area within the assigned region to enhance fruitfulness.
- Develop and implement at least one reproducible resource or tool, intended for use across the conference.
- Serve as a regional resource for pastors and lay leaders engaged in revitalization, leadership development, and strategic ministry planning.

- Prioritize mission field opportunities as identified by the Director of Missional Development for church planting.
- Plan and host one area-specific training event per area in spring of 2026, contextualized to local church needs.

Who do the Equipping Elders report to? Equipping Elders report directly to the Conference Superintendent and will have a collaborative relationship with the Presiding Elders and Executive Team. Additionally, they will be evaluated by the SSRC, report regularly to the Connectional Council, and assessment of fruitfulness will be reported to the Annual Conference.

What authority do they have? They have no authority over the local church or the local church pastors. They will serve as a resource where they are invited and welcomed into partnership.

What control/influence do they have over pastors? Almost none. They would be able to report to the cabinet reflections on their working relationships with pastors as a point of information when considering appointment openings. But the GMC cannot move pastors that don't want to move and do not require churches to receive pastors they do not want, which limits this influence in comparison to anything we have known in our former life.

Conclusion

The creation of the Equipping Elder position represents a strategic alignment of the conference's needs and opportunities. It is a faithful and financially responsible step toward embodying our call to equip the local church for mission and ministry. The SSRC strongly recommends the adoption of the budget which includes this proposal with full confidence in its alignment with our mission and vision.

Bishop Jones recognized a few persons who asked clarifying questions but no speeches for or against were offered.

In answer to a question regarding evaluation and benchmarks Rev. Burnham shared that the results will be shared all along the way and then they will also be shared in the Pre-Conference Journal.

Finance and Administration Committee Report and Presentation of the 2025 Amended Budget and 2026 Budget

Rev. Mike Tyson, Chair

Good afternoon, Bishops, Sisters, and Brothers of the Trinity Conference. It's my privilege to serve as chair of your Finance and Administration Committee. I want to begin by thanking the faithful members of that committee. If you're part of Finance and Administration, would you please stand? Thank you-truly—for all that you do.

For a brief overview of our 2024 financial results, please refer to page 66 of your pre-conference journal. You may notice a small discrepancy between the operating surplus listed in my written remarks on page 66 and the actual statement on page 70. That's because a \$4,700 adjustment was

made after my comments were submitted. Our final operating surplus for 2024 was \$332,227—an outstanding result for the Trinity Conference. Our balance sheet shows total cash of \$708,682 as of December 31, 2024, spread across both our checking and investment accounts. The only liabilities on the books are related to credit card charges and payroll expenses—both due to timing. I want to assure you: our credit cards are paid in full every month.

You'll find our year-to-date March financials on pages 76 through 80. As of the end of March, our operating surplus stands at \$358,793. That number is higher than expected because many ministry areas haven't yet begun drawing from their 2025 budgets in the first quarter. As of yesterday, our current cash balance is \$850,000, with another \$350,000 in our investment account. These funds are fully liquid, earning a healthy 4%, and are not exposed to market risk resulting in a total of \$1.2 million cash on hand.

As mentioned in my written comments on page 67, your Finance and Administration Committee contracted with an accounting firm, PSK, which specializes in nonprofits and works with churches and denominations across the country. They conducted a Best Practices Audit as we prepare for a full audit of our books for the year ending 2025. You'll find the Executive Summary on page 92, and again, I invite you to review the letter from PSK and my additional comments on page 67.

Now, turning to the business before us today, I am placing four action items before the body for your consideration and approval:

1. Approval of an amended 2025 budget

- Highlights on page 66; full budget on page 81.

2. Approval of the 2026 budget

- Highlights on page 67; full budget on page 83.

3. Approval of five financial policies:

- Operational Funds Policy (pages 85-86)

- Investment Policy (page 87)

- Capitalization Policy (page 88)

- "Use It or Lose It" Policy - the Prohibition of Carryover of Unused Funds (page 89)

- Gift Acceptance Policy (page 90)

4. Approval of a housing allowance resolution for retirees, which reads:

Be it resolved that the Trinity Annual Conference hereby declares that, within the guidelines of the IRS code, all retirement income received by retired members of the Trinity Annual Conference shall be classified as housing allowance for the calendar years of 2025 and 2026.

Bishop, as Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, I respectfully submit these four items for the approval of the body.

Your Finance and Administration Committee continues to work diligently to ensure the Connectional Giving you entrust to us is used faithfully and efficiently to grow the Kingdom of

God. We remain committed to supporting churches throughout the Trinity Conference, while keeping connectional giving rates as low as possible. Thank you for the privilege of serving as your chair. I truly believe that God has amazing plans for this Annual Conference and for the Global Methodist Church.

Bishop Jones proposed receiving and voting on these proposals as a block.

Seeing no objections Bishop Jones calls for a vote.

All budgets and proposals presented by the Finance and Administration Committee are approved and adopted as presented in the Pre-Conference Journal unanimously.

Methodist Children's Home

Mr. Trey Oakley

I bring you greetings for our friends here from Texas. Thank you for your faithful support of the ministry. To our new friends in Arkansas and Louisiana, my encouragement to you to find those who are on the front lines serving children youth and families in your areas. And to each one of you an assurance that the food is out there. And in 26 years of ministry I know the importance in this time slot is to say exactly what needs to be said and be quiet so people can go eat. So here is what I want to say to you.

First, as an outsider coming in God is at work in this conference. Amen. It is evident in the words that are spoken in the ministries that are happening to my new brothers from Tanzania and Panama. Godspeed and continue your great work that you are a part of and what you're doing. And to every member in this place a reminder that God is still at work I see it every day in the ministries of Methodist Children's Home. Our board of Directors sponsors lunches because they want me to come and tell you straight forward that Methodist Children's Home is not owned by any entity. We are guided by who God is calling us to be day in and day out. Our hand of fellowship goes out to any individual that says we're tired of talking about making a difference in the lives of hurting children youth and families. We are ready to stand shoulder-to-shoulder and be a part of what's happening. Never because we're smart enough or we have it all figured out but because we serve a God who we have yet to out imagine and outdream and who has big plans in our communities that we have the privilege to serve. Amen.

And so, I want you to know you are also not alone. For our pastors, for our individuals those of you who know someone in this place who thought they were done raising children have had to stand up and stand in the gap. For those individuals for those that come into your churches and share their stories, and you look, and you go, "How am I

going to help?" I want to be your first phone call. Even if we're not the place who ends up serving. We want to be your first phone call because we build the relationships. We build the connections that are out there so that we can be a part of you serving that individual so that you can be a part of their discipleship story as they're moving forward. And when it happens and it's happening every hour of every day my friends we are careful to give God the praise and the glory. Thank you for your support for your friendship and call on us when we can connect you for helping those who need us. Bishop, thank you.

Closing Remarks and Prayer Rev. Jason Burnham and Rev. Ben McGehee

In preparation for the Tanzania Convening Annual Conference I was working through the budget with Upendo. We had some funds allocated from Trinity to help support that gathering, but the request came back higher than our budget. So, when I met with Upendo I shared our budget and told him that he have to work to determine what cuts needed to be made in order to make the budget work, but I had one suggestion. There was a line item for "Feeding the Widows." I said to him, you could definitely cut that, because that doesn't fit within the primary purpose of Annual Conference. To my surprise and as a beautiful blessing to me, when we were there for the conference, one afternoon, Upendo calls all of the widows of the community to come forward. He shares with them how much God loves them and how much the Global Methodist Church loves them. Suddenly, young men from the conference start walking in with heavy sacks of flour slung over their shoulders. One for each widow. We gathered around the widows and blessed them, and Bishop Kimba prayed over them, and I repented. And I learned. Throughout scripture we hear a clear witness, like in James, "*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress and the keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*" So today I'm calling on the Trinity Conference to learn from our sisters and brothers from Tanzania. As they took up the cause to care for the widows, today we will take up the cause to care for the orphans. As we leave this session we are going to receive a special offering for the sole benefit of the Methodist Children Homes in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana that will be divided equally. You can give with this QR code or in the baskets at the exit to the sanctuary. Let us be generous in this act of faith.

Ben McGhee invites Mandy Murray to come forward to offer our closing prayer.

Dates for 2026 Annual Conference are announced as for June 4-6, 2026 at Christ Church in College Station, TX.

Mandy Murray, lay member of Vesta Methodist Church in Charleston, AR closed the session in prayer.

Ministry Session adjourned at 12:54 PM.