

WESLEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, AURORA, ILLINOIS

2020 ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE MINUTES 7:00 pm BY ZOOM

DECEMBER 7, 2020

Rev. Bross met with the SPRC prior to the Congregational meeting to discuss Pastoral compensation and performance.

Present: Rev. Jeffrey Bross, presiding District Superintendent, Pastor John Bell, Kathy Breazeale, Thew Elliott, Ruth Ann Little, Dian Crawshaw, Wally & Paula Loague, Diann Wiley, Meredith Lindgren, Lynn Burnett, Jim Merk, Bob McKnight, Roger & Mari Curless, Larry Miller, Jude Dunn, Bill Nelson, Herb & Emmy Lou John, Phyllis & Bob Starke, Amy Karl, Michelle Curiel, Jessica Garza

Pastor John lit a candle and began the Conference with prayer. He asked God to illumine our wisdom and understanding and gratitude.

District Superintendent Bross opened his remarks by stating this was his 53rd annual conference for this year. He shared a message from Bishop Sally Dyck, who will be retiring at the end of the year. NIC will have interim Bishop Hopkins for 2021. Bishop Dyck stated that the Annual conference is for the purpose of the church business and to take account of the year. She hopes that in this year of the Coronavirus we have discovered that the church is not about the building and we have been given opportunities to go beyond the walls, although we long to be face to face. She quoted Ephesians 2:14-22 (Message Bible). There are no longer strangers or outsiders, we are moving beyond the walls, doing these things God has asked.

Rev. Bross reviewed the Shepherding Team Goals.

#1 – Grow and Reach NEW disciples of Jesus Christ. We are most likely reaching active Wesley disciples, but, on the shaky ground of 2020, where are we reaching New disciples?

#2 – To live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teachings. His observation is that the youth of today are seeking a diverse congregation.

#3 – To increase the number of highly vital congregations. We should ask ourselves, if Wesley disappeared from our site, what would be missed? Pastor Bross remarked that Wesley is a vital church, and it is making a difference.

Pastor John remarked about our church year. He feels the staff pulled together very quickly during the quarantine, right from the beginning with an almost immediate online presence. Most everyone has learned to use and meet online. We had summer gatherings and small group meetings. Our church donated \$13,000.00 to a stimulus fund to help those in need. \$500.00 grants were given out until the monies were used up. We helped Hesus House and other organizations. We have a new Outreach Coordinator, Beatriz Jaramillo who be replacing Debbie Fisher. The Pastor appoints the coordinators. John worked with the Thrive Center to help coordinate non-profits in Aurora. As a congregation we read and studied “Tears we Cannot Stop” by Michael Eric Dyson to help us understand racial injustice and bias and the possibilities for reparations. We began to acknowledge our inherited properties and where they originally came from. We worked in small groups to discuss and decide on Wesley’s identity, in context with our community and the denomination. We had communion in those groups online, which he hopes to continue in 2021. We are now working on Communication and Marketing ideas to apply to the time when we do get back together. They are based on reaching out on Social Media. He encouraged everyone to “Like” and “share” everything about Wesley on their social media accounts such as Facebook and Instagram. We have acquired new Wesley

participants online. We had socially distanced baptisms. There is an upcoming “Longest Night” celebration coming up for Dec. 21, where we will stand with candles outside our church buildings. Other churches will be participating. Pastor John remarked that it is a joy to be the Pastor at Wesley.

Business of the Conference

The Staff Parish Committee brought the recommendation forward that the Pastor be giving a 3% salary increase. The zoom vote was unanimous and the recommendation passed. Staff member previously received at 3% salary increase.

Nominations

Under Wesley’s structure, the Governing Board operates as the Administrative Council, with 3 sections also representing Staff Parish, Finance and Trustees. With the help of Darrell Voitik, a lay member of the congregation, all current Board Members were interviewed and asked if they wanted to remain as a member of the next term for the Governing Board. All current members elected to remain on the Board. Applications for two new members were received – from Diann Wiley and Jessica Garza. That brings us to 8 positions filled of the possible 9 member Board. We will need 2 Lay Members to Annual Conference and an alternate. Wally and Paula represented us for the last four years. We also have an Endowment Committee.

Pastor Bross presented the slate of nominations for vote. The zoom vote was unanimous to elect this leadership slate.

Lay Servants – Roger Curless, Emmy Lou John, and Herb John wish to retain their certification. Each commented on what they been involved in. The zoom vote was unanimous to retain their certification.

District Superintendent Bross addressed the meeting. He stated that at the NIC held in November, the motion passed to go from 6 districts to 5. There are 358 church in the Northern Illinois Conference. There will be one District Superintendent retiring this year. The lines of each district will be redrawn, paying attention to connections, diversity, school districts and racial diversity. Wesley will be in the Prairie Central District, that stretches from Joliet to the Wisconsin border. He asked us to remember that it is the local church where Mission is done. The cabinet has studied how Covid has affected every church and district. According to John Wesley, 1st – we are to do no harm. Those churches that elected to follow all pandemic protocols and reopen, have had to now close again. It is interesting that the pandemic issues have helped the UMC to grow, compared to the Catholic Church, which was slow to respond to online connections. Non-denominational churches stayed about the same, as they mostly already had an online presence. Mainstream churches are seeing growth. Every church in the Aurora District is online. Expenses are down. Giving is steady or slightly down. We are to be the voices crying out in the wilderness of the pandemic, to share light and joy and hope. The Church still Stands. Amen. (We learned how to do Amen in sign language so everyone could respond together).

Respectfully, Kathy Breazeale