

Annual Conference Report

The 2022 Michigan Annual Conference was held in Traverse City on June 2-4. **Ron Stansifer, Jill Sestok, Pastor Mary Butler-Loring and I (Joy Dubin)** were your delegates to Conference. As a member of the United Methodist Church and the Methodist Church before that for 69 years (yes, I joined at age 8) in 5 different states, this was my first annual conference.

Previously hearing reports of the excitement and meaningfulness of Annual Conference, I can attest that it is true. There was a buzz in the crowd, inspiring music and worship services, opportunities for ministry and outreach, and recognition of laity and clergy for their service. However, there was also a lot of work to be done. I was impressed with the order and thoroughness of the business sessions. Numerous resolutions were written by individuals or groups before the conference that needed to be discussed and voted on. Both pros and cons of an issue were presented before the entire session.

While I cannot cover all of the voting here, I would like to share one that was passed. In part it reads:

LGBTQIA+ clergy and laity are a gift to the Church. We implore all in the North Central Jurisdiction (NCJ) to do no harm and to create a culture in which abundance and diversity can be celebrated and lived. Therefore, we urge all members of the NCJ to avoid pursuing charges for LGBTQIA+ clergy and allies, and request our episcopal leaders to dismiss charges related to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same gender weddings. Because we are all beloved children of God, we, in the NCJ, implore all conference leaders, boards and agencies, to bring no harm to LGBTQIA+ people. We will not restrict God's calling based solely on a candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity. We commit to doing good by pursuing healing and reconciliation with all who have experienced harm and exclusion related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Other Significant Action:

- Voted overwhelmingly to take action to address the rise in gun violence
- Affirmed disaffiliation of four churches (including Canton Friendship UMC) and the closing of ten others
- Supported partial cancellation of federal student loan debt;
- Affirmed previous actions of the UMC
- Advocated for U.S. Peace Economy
- Urged contacting legislators in support of immigrant Michigan Driver's Licenses/State I.D.s
- Approved a \$480,000 fund-raising campaign, "Readers to Leaders" for children in Michigan and Liberia
- Supported the reduction of the number of districts from nine to seven effective July 1, 2023
- Endorsed the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai as an episcopal candidate in the North Central Jurisdiction

Additional information on these actions will be forthcoming.

If you have questions or would like to talk more about Conference, please contact Ron, Jill, Pastor Mary or me.

Joy Dubin, Chair
Administrative Council