

ACS 2025 Report

Nick Strobel

(Note that this report has a lot of embedded hyperlinks to web documents for further exploration. See the [2025 Pre-Conference Journal](#) for the recommendations and reports)

Day 1

[Archived livestream link of 8.5 hours for day 1](#)

Our new bishop Sandra Olewine used Jeremiah 29 for her sermon in the Opening Worship about living and thriving while in exile. As the people of God we are living in a time of exile in a world that now openly celebrates greed, division, and hate. Evil wants us to believe that we don't have agency and give up but God has plans for us. We must dig in and thrive in the community that God wants us to build. We celebrated communion. The [offering was for VIDAS Legal](#) (vidaslegal.org) that provides trauma-informed immigrant legal advocacy and community wellness programs.

CFA Report and Budget Presentation

Highlights of the past year include:

- 2024 General and Jurisdictional Apportionments full paid. This was our 8th year of 100% payment and Cal-Nevada was one of just 7 Annual Conferences to achieve 100% payment in 2024 (out of 53 Annual Conferences).
- Audits are now up-to-date. The 2022 and 2023 fiscal records audits were completed in 2024 with no issues or concerns noted. The 2024 audit was completed earlier this year with no issues or concerns noted.
- The loan of \$700,000 to Claremont School of Theology has been fully repaid. The Conference also gave them an emergency grant of \$125,000 to ensure completion of the 2024-25 academic year.
- **Fossil Free Divestment.** There was a very successful summit held on March 25-26. The Conference CFA, Board of Pensions, UM Foundation, Conference UW in Faith, Conference Bd Trustees, and Climate Justice Ministries Task Force created the following divestment agreement:
 - We, the undersigned, were present at the Fossil Fuel Free Divestment Summit held on March 25 & 26, 2025, at the Conference Center in Sacramento, as representatives of agencies holding investments made by members or churches in the California-Nevada UM Conference.
 - We agreed that fossil fuels continue to drive climate change and that their production and usage harms the planet, especially poor and minority communities and countries. For these reasons, swiftly moving toward renewable forms of energy and away from fossil fuels is a moral issue that truly honors creation and marginalized communities. Repairing nature and uplifting our negatively impacted neighbors is critically important.
 - We commit to work with our agencies to meet the goal that all California-Nevada conference agency investment portfolios will be transitioned to "fossil-free" through screening out companies that own oil, gas, and coal reserves and companies whose primary business is to extract, transport, or produce oil, gas, and coal.

Also at the summit, they found out through a detailed financial analysis that over the past 5-10 years, the growth and returns from a fossil-free portfolio would have been greater than that for a portfolio that included fossil-fuel companies, so the purely accounting fiscal reasons aligned with the heart goals!

Financial Process Review. CFA contracted with LBMC, a financial services consultant with connections to the General Council on Finance & Administration of the UM Church. Key findings include: our financial systems and processes are in good shape; internal controls and financial processes are “suitably designed and operating effectively”; and members of CFA and Conference staff “...are knowledgeable, experienced, and passionate about their work.”

CFA is pursuing all of LBMC’s recommendations including: increase staff for Finance Administration (bookkeeper position was filled in April '25); expand financial reporting and communication; and evaluate and strengthen Separation of Duties.

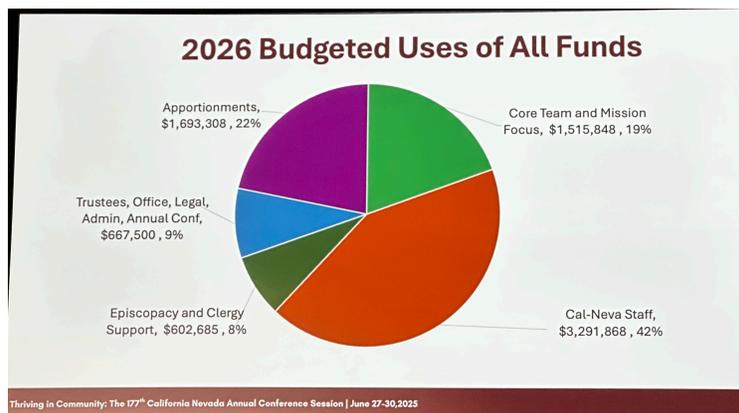
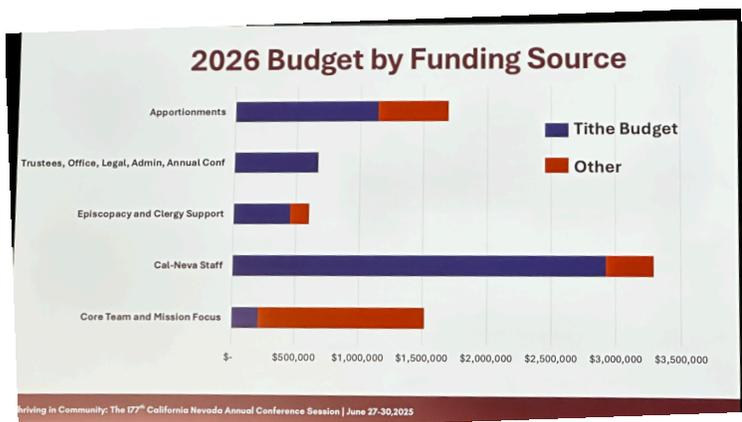
Transitions: Rev. Burke Owens stepping down as chair of CFA. Vice chair/lay member Kelly Ratliff will be the chair as of July 1st. She has been serving on CFA since 2022.

Gratitude: Conference Treasurer Diane Knudsen for 31 years and her Finance/Admin team Angelina Garcia, Yvonne Dees, Kryziah Tieuco-Weis, Ajesh Kumar.

CFA decreased the 2025 Tithe Budget from \$5.8M to \$5.4M—Tithe collections for 2024 were \$5,323,815. CFA is recommending a 2026 Tithe Budget of \$5.4M.

Our Funds: The tithe receipts and budgeted spending flow through the Operating Fund. CFA manages the Operating Fund balance to begin each year with 2.5 to 3 months’ budget in reserve (for cash flow) in accordance with Standing Rule V.F. The balances and activity of all Conference funds held by the Conference Treasurer are reported quarterly at cnumc.org/for-committees .

Graphics below show the funding sources for the various areas and where the money will be spent. Detailed view of the budget with all the tables is found in Item 1 of the recommendations in **Pre-Conference Journal**.



Joint Episcopal & Laity Address

Later in the morning, Bishop Olewine and Conference Lay Leader Micheal Pope gave the Joint Episcopal & Laity Address. Pope used her experience as a new grandmother (“ne-ne”) to say that the surrounding communities we serve need us to be their “ne-nes”—they need to know that we care about them. Highlight quote slides:

- Notable quote from Dr. Ashley Boggan, author of “*Wesleyan Vile-tality*”: “Within the Christian tradition, being Wesleyan and/or Methodist calls us to actively stand as a beacon of justice in this world. You cannot identify as Wesleyan or Methodist without constantly seeking to ensure that all people, no matter who they are, how they identify, or where they come from, feel worthy of God’s love, have their basic physical and bodily needs met, and have the ability to seek happiness and perfection in Jesus Christ.”
- **Goal for each congregation** in our Conference: What if in a one-mile radius around every United Methodist community, there was food security, affordable housing and health care, a healthy environment, fair and just work, great education and care for seniors, support for working parents and places to gather to celebrate life and connection?
- **Goal for Conference:** We will work together to develop and equip a conference-wide strategy for leveraging and strengthening our United Methodist presence for the thriving of communities, evaluating our assets, including property, and how we can leverage them for ministry.
- We need to be ready to die—letting go of everything we think is precious, putting everything on the table, willing to let it all go, to truly be open to what new thing God is doing in us, around us, in others.
- The United Methodist Church communities of the California-Nevada Conference are dreaming of ways to engage the community in a way that ensures love endures the pain, grief and the trauma of everyday life. They are being intentional by finding ways to ensure that people have the tools they need to thrive within their communities.

Constitutional Amendments

On Saturday we’ll take [four ballots to amend parts of the UMC Constitution](#).

- **Ballot 1: *Worldwide Regionalization*.** The primary goals of Ballot #1 are to better reflect the UMC’s global diversity and nature, allow regions to more effectively serve their unique communities, and shift from a U.S.-centric structure to a worldwide denomination with increased regional autonomy.
- **Ballot 2: *Gender and Ability Inclusion*.** This amendment addresses Paragraph 4, Article IV of the UMC Constitution and aims to add “gender” and “ability” to the categories of persons that cannot be used to exclude someone from membership in the UMC. This strengthens the commitment to inclusivity within the church.
- **Ballot 3: *Racial Justice*.** The amendment aims to reinforce the UMC’s efforts to end racism. It specifically identifies certain forms of racism and commits the church to addressing them both internally and in society. The amendment reiterates the UMC’s stance that racism is contrary to God’s principles.
- **Ballot 4: *Educational Requirements for Clergy Delegate Elections*.** This ballot focuses on determining which theological Schools are authorized to offer degrees for licensed Local Pastors.

Conference Claimants Endowment Board

At every Annual Conference Session, the Conference Claimants Endowment Board presents a large check to support our retired ministers+spouses. This year they presented a check for \$2.2M to fund retired clergy health care costs (\$200K increases from prior year). We're the only conference that has such generous support of their retired clergy and spouses and the Endowment Board has been working for 134+ years!

They also presented a check for \$136K for funding the [Retired Clergy Association's](#) administrative costs in 2025/26. They described three other funds that help our retired clergy:

- *Shepherd Fund*: offsets costs in times of need. Examples include hearing aids, vision assistance, natural disaster relief, funeral costs, extraordinary dental work, or unforeseen relocation costs, etc.
- *Wisdom in Scholarship and Education (WISE) Fund*: (launching July 1, 2025). Fund ensures all retired clergy have access to education and spiritual growth activity.
- *Complimentary Norton LifeLock Protection*: According to Norton LifeLock, there is a victim of identity theft in the U.S. every 3 seconds and more than 63 million Americans (mostly age 60+) have been victimized. With these statistics in mind, the Endowment Board is dedicated to their mission of supporting the retired clergy and spouses and is now offering complimentary Norton LifeLock protection against identity and cyber theft.

After the Endowment Board report, we received greetings from several General Agencies and Seminaries that you can view on the ["Digital Displays" page](#).

Laity Session

Bishop Olewine and the Executive Director of Connectional Ministries Rev. J. Martin Lee briefly addressed the laity before they went to the Clergy Session. Rev. Lee told us about the "Fresh Expressions" event October 16-20: a training and inspirational event coming to every district and new tools coming in Spring 2026 for Intentional Discipleship Systems.

We recognized three outgoing district lay leaders: George Beckman (Great Northern), Tyree Johnson (Bay), Kandi Weider (Los Rios). Central Valley's district lay leader is Kimberli Parenteau (Davis UMC). El Camino District lay leader Aton Abril shared the new website for United Methodist Men (ummen.org). Each [lay leader posted their reports on the CNUMC website](#).

Cal-Nevada Conference leader of United Women in Faith Linda Wright told us about their various ministries and invited women to attend the annual celebration on October 4th at Centennial UMC in Sacramento and the national UW Faith Conference on May 15-17, 2026 in Indianapolis. Their current campaigns include: Just energy for all; Ending mass incarceration & criminalization of communities of color; and Charter for racial justice. See canvuwf.org.

A panel of four youth+young adults shared their answers to three questions:

- 1) **What does thriving in community look like to you today?** Answers: diversity is embraced; empowering young people to truly lead, actually listening to what young people are saying, teaching them how to be true followers of Christ, being in a love relationship with Jesus, and walking with young people in need where they are rather than expecting them to come to you.

- 2) **What does a multigenerational church community look like?** Answers: sharing home-cooked meals together and sharing festivities, including young people in leadership positions.
- 3) **How can we partner with CA Coalition for Youth (calyouth.org)?** The organization supports disconnected, runaway, and homeless youth to transition into successful adulthood. They ensure public policies and programs are designed to support these youth. Youth from any background can call or text the CA Youth Crisis Line 800-843-5200 24 hrs/day, 7days/week.

Sandra Hardin, the Lay Servant Ministry leader told us about the [Lay Servant Ministry classes](#).

Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand from the Western North Carolina Annual Conference was the keynote speaker for the Laity Session. She led a mini-workshop on doing evangelism in the new world of exile, great hurt and loneliness, and AI we're living through today.



She celebrated the great diversity of the Cal-Nevada Conference (the most ethnically diverse conference in the denomination). She did challenge us to the changes we needed to make in the new world. We have to go out beyond the walls of the church building. Phylis Tickle noted "The Great Emergence of Christianity is undergoing a massive upheaval as part of a pattern that occurs every 500 years, in which old ideas are rejected and New Ones Emerge." Rev. Dr. Hand used a [video about a hometown grocery store vs. church](#) to show one organization (the grocery store) changing and adapting through the decades while the other (the local church) did not and was later sold.

Rev. Dr. Hand asked what are the “3rd places” in our community (beyond church and work where people meet+talk+play together). We have two free tools in our tool box: [MissionInsite](#) to tell who are our neighbors and [Readiness 360](#) to tell us what is the pulse of our church community.

She called us to claim 1 Peter 2:9-10 as being a personal message to each of us: “But you aren’t just anybody—you’re chosen by God. You’re royal priests, a holy people, God’s own special possession. God picked you to be His voice, to tell others about the amazing things He’s done—how He called you out of darkness in His wonderful light. At one time, you didn’t belong, but now you do. You didn’t know mercy, but now you’ve received it fully.”

God’s assignment for the church leaders is in Ephesians 4:11-13: “Christ gave gifts to the church—some to be Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers. Why? *To equip God’s people to serve, to build up the church, the body of Christ.* The goal is that we all grow up—united in our faith and knowledge of God’s son—so we become spiritually mature, measuring up to the full standard of Christ.” (Modern-Day Language)

Questions for us: Are you on the sidelines? Are you giving YOUR very best? Are you the best leader you can be or are you ALL IN? Do you truly believe the Church is the hope of the World?

She will be leading a webinar “AI & the Gospel” for UM Leaders (lay and clergy) on September 15, 2025 from 10 AM to 1 PM (not sure if that’s Pacific time). >> [Registration link](#) << “Whether you’re just beginning to explore AI or already experimenting with tools like ChatGPT, this event will equip you to use technology to amplify your ministry without compromising your calling.” The workshop is for those who want to use technology to spread the love and hope of Christ beyond Sunday, for those curious (or cautious) about AI and want a faith-filled perspective, and for those who are looking to reclaim their time and amplify their voice in ministry beyond Sunday.

For more about her message, see the [in-depth interview of her and co-author Michael Beck about their book “Doing Justice Together”](#).

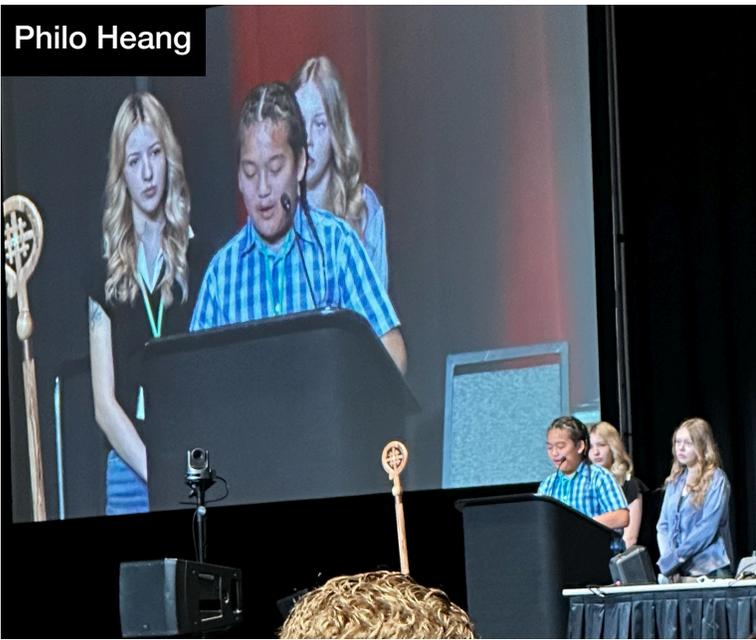
Day 2

[Archived livestream link of 8.5 hours for Day 2](#)

The day started with praise-filled worship led by the Youth delegation and music leaders Pittsburg CA UMC’s [Cafe Agape](#). Three youth gave the homily. The first one, twelve-year old Philo Heang from the Bay District, wowed the congregation with his self-awareness, humor, and eloquence. The next two, 17-year olds Opal Starkey & Sydney Ricketts from the Central Valley District were also articulate and eloquent in their joint message.



Philo Heang



Opal Starkey & Sydney Ricketts



Youth Delegation



UMC Constitutional Amendments

We then voted on the four UMC Constitutional Amendments. As noted on [Wesley's website](#), each of the 127 Annual Conferences from around the world act like a polling site, so only after ALL of the annual conferences have voted will we know if the amendments were ratified. The vote from all of the annual conferences are added together and if at least two-thirds of the total combined vote is in favor, an amendment becomes part of the UMC Constitution. Therefore, it won't be until November that we find out the results.

Board of Ordained Ministry Presentation

Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) presented the ordinands and first-time local pastors. The Bishop asked the ordinands the historical questions of examination.



First-time local pastors: Madeleine Guekguezian, Prisilla Ling Lee, Robert Poseley, Inoke Qarau, Tevita Samate, James Skidmore, Kathryn Snipes.



(Left) Four commissioned toward Elder's Orders: Darrell Lee Arnold, Ivoni Maama, Latu Paea, and Lauren Michelle Stevens.



(Right) Five ordained as Elders in Full Connection: Akesa Fakava, Molly Knappen, Tevita Koroï, April Sousa, and Palenitina Tiueti. BOOM chair Rev. Susan Foster is also in the pics.



(Left) Two ordained as Deacons in Full Connection: Kristina Sinks and Jacob Wilbur.
 (Right) Four transfers from other UMC Annual Conferences (but only three on the dais): Jung Min Kim from Cal-Pacific, Jeremy Steele from Alabama - West Florida, Deborah Jungmi Kang from Northern Illinois, and Sun Wha “Noah” Park from West Ohio.



(Left) Rev. Joshua Back is a transfer from the Korean Methodist Church.

Fifteen pastors are participating in the “Called to Wholeness” program of spiritual renewal this coming year.

Below: Ten pastors are retiring this year including former Wesley pastor, Rev. Karen Stoffers-Pugh. The picture below shows some of them with their spouses.



There were also eight people who were certified or re-certified as Lay Ministers in the 2024-25 year and three commissioned as Deaconesses.

Morning Plenary Keynote

Rev. Stephanie Moore Hand was the Keynote speaker for the morning plenary. She used Revelation of John 7:9+13 and the story of Ananias with Saul (Paul) as the scriptures. She talked about the fasting and prayer disciplines and healing. We need to focus on the Bible as the major/primary source for building up discipleship with all other sources as minor/secondary. Evangelizing as United Methodists we remember that it is God who transforms people, so we need to show up and listen for the Spirit in order that we can ask the right questions. For example, in our hunger ministry, we ask “what is causing the hunger?” To promote healing in our community, we should look at sharing the space we have at church for community work and organizations and dismantle the systems that oppress.

Legislative Sections

After lunch we went to our Legislative Sections. This year’s recommendations were split among four Legislative Sections. I was in Section A, so we dealt with all the changes to the Conference’s Standing Rules (items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 20). All of them passed unanimously, so they went on the Consent Calendar. In fact, all of the recommendations sent to Legislative Sections received the necessary 85% of those voting to go onto the Consent Calendar (abstentions are treated as non-votes). Other items (#1: Budget, #2: Nominations, #3: closures of three UMC’s, #4: Past-Service Pension rate, #5: retired clergy rental/housing exclusion, and item #6: minimum salary) were dealt with exclusively in the full plenary per the Conference Standing Rules.

Memorial Service

We ended the day with the Memorial Service to honor the clergy and clergy spouses who have passed in the last year. >> [Link to the 2025 Memorial Booklet](#) << . Bishop Kristin Stoneking who was elected in the 2024 Western Jurisdictional Conference (along with Bishop Olewine) [gave the sermon](#) using Revelation 21:1-6 as her scriptures. Bishop Stoneking came from the Cal-Nevada Conference and is now serving at the Mountain Sky conference (includes Montana, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and a far eastern sliver of Idaho).

She noted that the conviction of our own certainty on theological matters can be a trap. When her father, who served as a UMC pastor for nearly 40 years, was in hospice, she asked him what he thought happens to us after we die. He said “I don’t know what happens”. She was shocked but he then said “what we believe to be true on Earth will still be true in Heaven.” His answer was not an absence of faith but one from an extraordinarily high level of faith, a radical trust in God. “We don’t know everything but what we do know is God’s love and care, God’s will for us to be healthy and whole, and God’s action toward a just and lasting peace are constant. What we do know is that God’s goodness never fails. We walk by faith not by sight.”

Some folks went to the Sacramento River Cats vs. Oklahoma Comets baseball game in the evening.

Day 3

[Archived livestream link for Day 3](#) (includes the workshop led by Rev. Dr. Hand held in the main ballroom but not the three others held at the same time in other smaller ballrooms). I went to the one titled “Forming Christlike Disciples in a World on Fire” led by Rev. Blake Busick.



(Above): We gave a warm welcome to Bishop Sally Dyck who was our interim bishop for 18 months (Feb 2022 to Sept 2023) while Bishop Carcaño was on leave.

Fixing of Appointments

They streamlined the Fixing of Appointments process by having all of the districts done at the same time and reading just the appointments that had changed from the previous year. The rest of the pastors then stood and we prayed over them. We welcomed Pastor Cindy Lawler as our new pastor and said goodbye to Pastor Anne Schlesinger.

The Laity were also given a charge. The Bishop asked “Dear laity, God calls all Christians to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness... by your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness?” We responded: “Participating with the pastors in Christ’s ministry, we will pray for you as you pray for us. We will be generous in our support. We will be good stewards of all gifts. Together, we will reach out to the world, ministering wherever the Spirit leads, witnessing with loving deeds and words that heal and free.”

Core Team Report

The chair of the [Conference Core Team](#), Rev. Sam Yun, shared the work of the Core Team over the last year. The Core Team oversees the work of the Annual Conference and allocates the resources needed for the work/ministry in the four focus areas: Compassion & Justice, Congregational Development, Leadership Development, and Partners in Ministry.

The new vision statement of the United Methodist Church is “The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.”

The UMC has four core values:

1. **Collaborative Ministry** of empowered laity and clergy rooted in Wesleyan Discipleship
2. **Diversity and Inclusion** that invites and engages all for world transforming actions.
3. **Innovation** that creates new ministry expressions and opportunities for transformation and renewal.
4. **Connectionalism** that is fruitful and faithful.



We then had a Panel Discussion on Peace and Justice Ministries, led by the chair of the [Conference Advocacy and Justice Committee](#), Rev. Michele Robbins. The panel consisted of Rev. Nathan Sam Whistler from Native American Ministries, Rev. Joan Pell from the Climate Justice Task Force, Rev. Ella Luna-Garza from the Immigration Task Force, Michael Yoshi from

the Palestine Task Force, Rev. Myrna Bernadel-Huey from Reparations, and Hubert Ivery from the White Christian Nationalism Task Force.

We had a report from the Bishop's Cabinet (all the District Superintendents). Three churches were approved for closure: Klamath UMC of the Redwoods, Mt Shasta Community UMC, and First UMC of Lemoore. We also watched a video that gave snapshots of thriving at a church from each district.

The [Consent Calendar](#) was passed unanimously.

Ordination Service

The "Service of the Ordering of Ministry" was held in the afternoon. Bishop Sandy Olewine was joined by Bishop Sally Dyck and Bishop Jeff Johnson of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA. Bishop Johnson gave the sermon. The four pictures below are from the service. The ordinands are in white robes on the right. BOOM members and bishops have red stoles. Bishop Johnson is one in the red robe and cloak. See the Day 2 BOOM report for the list of people being ordained and commissioned.







Day 4

[Archived livestream link for Day 4](#)

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get there in time for the morning devotional given by DS Blake Busick and most of the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits Report. We approved Recommendation Item #5 (Retired Clergy Rental/Housing Exclusion) and Recommendation Item #4 ["Past-Service" (Pre-1982 Service) Pension Rate].

One significant piece of bad financial news is that the cost of the current Kaiser health care plan for active clergy (not retired clergy) is going to increase by 50% next year (2026). Yes, 50%! The cost increases for the past seven years has been very low. No information yet about the other health care plan we have with Sutter Active Plan.

We approved Recommendation Item #6 (Minimum Salary). Since 2016, the cost-of-living increase metric we use for the next year is this year's January CPI-West, so for 2026, the minimum salary will increase by 2.40%

We approved Recommendation Item #2 (Nominations). There are A LOT of people working on the various committees, task forces, agencies, boards, etc. in our Conference! I will be one of the Central Valley reps on the Council on Finance & Administration for this coming year.

We approved Recommendation Item #1 (2026 Budget). See the CFA Report and Budget Presentation in Day 1 above for the details. I left the session after the budget approval to get started on my nine-hour trip back to Portland.