

ACS 2026 Report

Nick Strobel

(Note that this report has embedded hyperlinks to web documents for further exploration—blue underlined text. See the [2026 Pre-Conference Journal](#) for the recommendations and reports including the finances).

The theme this year was ***“Healing the World”*** based on Isaiah 58:12

“They will rebuild ancient ruins on your account; the foundations of generations past you will restore. You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets.”



We also celebrated four decade anniversaries shown in the image below of the leadership dais. [Thirtieth year of Order of Deacons](#), [50th year of United Methodist Volunteer in Mission](#), [70th year of Women's Ordination in the Methodist Tradition](#), and [200th Anniversary of Methodism in Tonga](#).

Day 1

[Day 1 archived livestream](#)



Bishop Sandra Olewine used Isaiah 58:6-12 and Luke 4:21-30 for her sermon about “Baptism’s Risky Business” in the [Opening Worship](#). We celebrated communion. The offering was for the [Fred Finch Youth and Family Services](#).

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 \\$2.3M](#) to fund retired clergy health care costs (\$100K increases from prior year), fund financial relief for unexpected hardship via the *Shepherd Fund* (hearing aids, vision assistance, natural disaster relief, funeral costs, extraordinary dental work, or unforeseen relocation costs, etc.), and supporting pension commitments for those with pre-1982 service. We’re the only conference that has such generous support of their retired clergy and spouses and the Endowment Board has been working for 135+ years!

They also presented a check for \$161K for funding the [Retired Clergy Association’s](#) administrative costs in 2026/27, travel and per diem support for conferences and events, spiritual direction and continuing education through the *Parish WISE Fund*, Volunteers-in-Mission (VIM) trips, complimentary clergy tax planning education, and ongoing communications and relational care.

Other morning events included greetings from Rev. Dr. Semisi Turagavou, President of the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, Rev. Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan on behalf of Claremont Theological Seminary, Dr. David Vázquez-Levy of Pacific School of Religion and Rev. Dr. Rick Vance, General Secretary of the General Commission on United Methodist Men. Clergy and laity who had attended many decades of Annual Conference sessions were recognized. I think the longest serving person had been there 67 or 68 years.

Joint Episcopal & Laity Address

After lunch, Bishop Olewine and Conference Lay Leader Micheal Pope gave the [Joint Episcopal & Laity Address](#). Focus on “repairers of the breach and restorers of the streets to live in” (Isaiah 58:12) today, in the here and now. Rather than being consumed by financial scarcity concerns, we remember that we have an abundance of the resources that God uses: us, we the people. Remember our Methodist roots: loving God and loving neighbor because we have

been saved by God's grace. 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?



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.”

We’re called to find out what are the needs of the people outside of the church walls and to re-allocate our time, money, passion, and energy to meet those needs. Churches that continue to thrive after 100+ years are those that have changed, adapted, and refocused their mission several times as the needs of the world around them have changed, even changing sites or the physical plant to meet those needs.” Let’s go into California and Nevada, not as churchgoers but as holy builders, architects of justice, and repairers of the breach and restorers of the streets we live in. Together, let us heal the world.”



Keynote: Wesleyan *Vile*-tality: Reclaiming the Heart of Methodist Identity

By [Dr. Ashley Boggan](#), General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History.
[Link to video of keynote](#)



Dr. Boggan reminded us of John Wesley's going to where the people in need were outside of the church walls tending to their physical and spiritual needs. He got into trouble with the church authorities because he preached "in the field" rather than requiring the people to come to church to hear the gospel (sort of reminds me of that other guy we talk a lot about who lived 2000 years ago). Below are slides from her keynote.

"Wesleyan *vile*-tality"

A willingness to look beyond today's acceptable practices, standards, and norms and bend the rules in order to ensure that more and more persons can be included within the Kin-dom and that all persons, no matter who they are, how they identify, whom they love, or how they live can know and experience the love of God, can know their own self-worth, and can then grow to love themselves and others

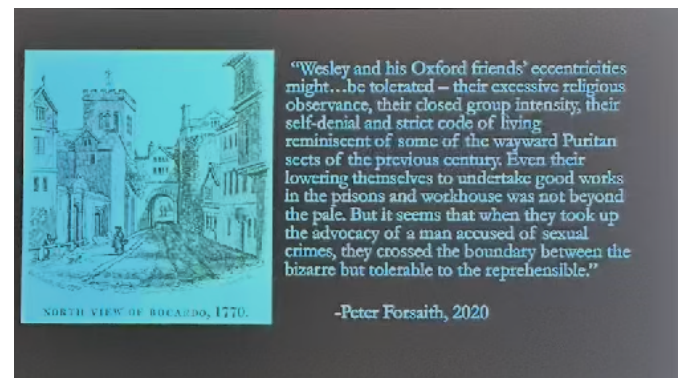
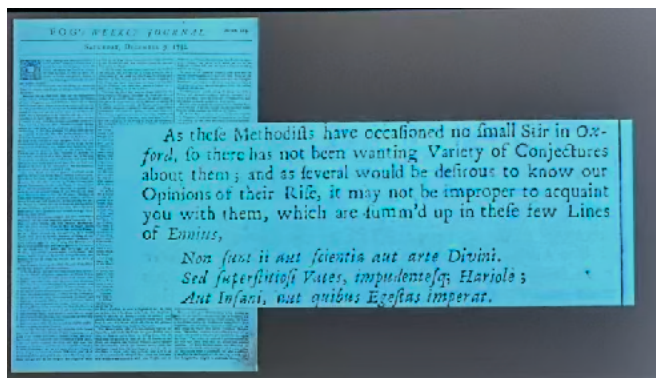


The Holy Club at Oxford

Wesley's ministry to the marginalized outside of the church walls was called "vile" by the proper folk of his day and he embraced the word. The "Holy Club" at Oxford was John Wesley

(actually not an Oxford student but a fellow at Lincoln College), Charles Wesley (actually a student at Christ College), William Morgan, John Clayton, George Whitefield, and perhaps one other Oxford student. During his college years, John Wesley was trying to discern what was his “extraordinary call” that he felt since the age of 5 when he was saved from the fire at the Epworth parish. The Holy Club took religion seriously—working on their faith every day, multiple times in the day; faith as love acted out. It was the expectation of Wesley’s day that only proper people attended church on Sunday to sing a few hymns and hear a pleasant sermon and then leave with nothing asked of them when they left the building. The Holy Club group began leaving the walls of Oxford to where the poor, the outcast were and the imprisoned.

Morgan urged that the Holy Club group should minister to those in the two nearby prisons, the Bocardo and the Castle, asking them what their spirits and bodies needed. They brought food, water, reading materials, worship services, and one-on-one times where they talked about each other’s souls—mutual respect and love, restoring their humanity. Thomas Blair was on death row for alleged homosexuality and was persecuted by his fellow inmates and the guards. John Wesley and John Clayton used their college education to advocate on Blair’s behalf at his trial. Blair’s life was spared and he was fined the equivalent of about \$7000. John Wesley used his connections to raise the money to get Blair released. This story of Blair and Wesley is foundational to our name “Methodist”. First use of the word Methodist:

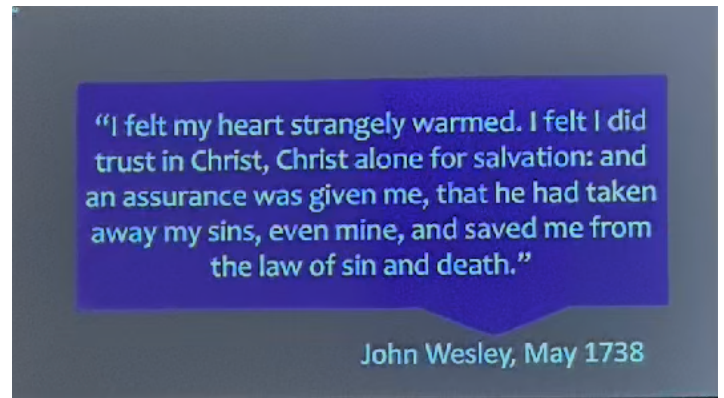
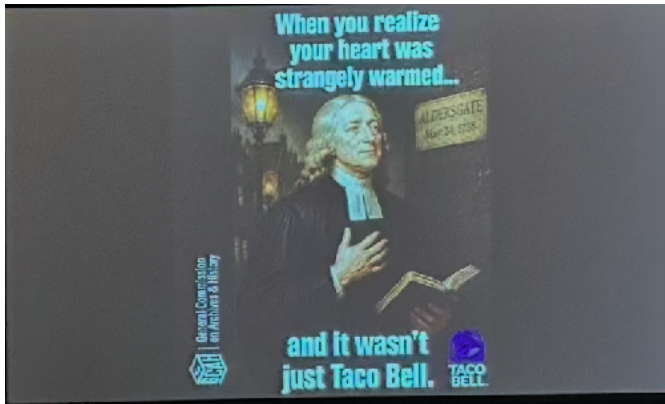


Weekly newspaper at Oxford, “the Fog Weekly Journal”, December 9, 1732 article about the Holy Club’s “bizarre” prison ministry: “as these **Methodists** have occasioned no small stir in Oxford, so there has not been wanting variety of conjectures about them and as several would be desirous to know our opinions of their rise, it may not be improper to acquaint you with them, which are summed up in these few lines of Ennius, “*Non enim sunt ii aut scientia aut arte divini, sed superstitiosi vates impudentesque harioli, [aut inertes] aut insani aut quibus egestas imperat.*”

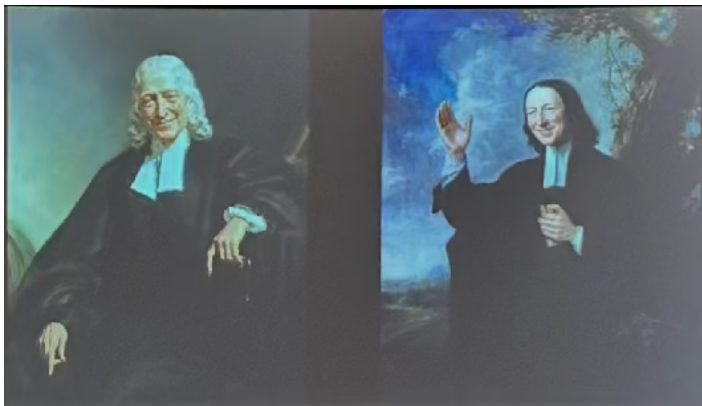
Translation:

“For they are not divine either in knowledge or in art, but rather superstitious seers and shameless prophets, either lazy or insane, or driven by poverty.”

John Wesley wrote more about Thomas Blair in his Oxford diaries than any other inmate he ministered to. Peter Forsaith is the one who uncovered this first use of the word Methodist in 2010s (article published in 2020). See right slide above. People could tolerate the Holy Club’s intense private piety and prison ministry but when they took up Blair’s case, that crossed a boundary of acceptability. “Methodist” describes John Wesley and this peculiar method of loving all.

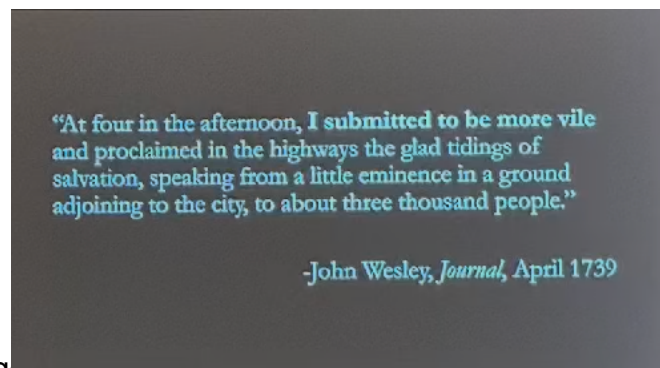
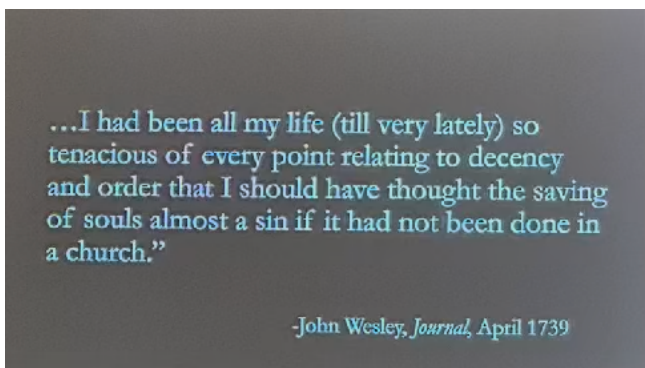


After Oxford, John Wesley still struggled to understand how to live into his “extraordinary call”. May 24, 1738: [Wesley's heart was “strangely warmed”](#); he finally realized that God loves him but what did he do with that? Wesley told the Aldersgate society where he had the heart-warming experience. One of the society members asked Wesley, “If you have faith, where is your joy?” John entered a time of spiritual crisis for over a year trying to answer that.



(Left slide): No artwork we have depicting John Wesley shows him smiling, so Boggan asked ChatGPT to generate a couple of images of Wesley smiling.

(Right slide): In 1738 at a reunion of the Holy Clubbers, the members make a pact to create a spiritual renewal within the Church of England, to take what they learned at Oxford out into the community. George Whitefield had been in Bristol preaching in January-March 1739. Bristol was the main seaport for the Atlantic slave trade and the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. Lots of manufacturing and surrounded by coal mines. Built for 5000 people, Bristol had 40,000 people within its bounds (with no modern sanitation/sewage), so Bristol was known as the dirtiest town in the Western World. After reaching out to Charles Wesley and three others to relieve him, Whitefield reached out to John Wesley. Wesley found out upon arriving at Bristol that Whitefield had been preaching out in the coal mines, in the fields.



(Left slide): Wesley wrote in his journal April 1739: “I scarcely could reconcile myself at first to the strange of preaching in the fields. For I had been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done inside the walls of a church.” Wesley saw that the coal miners had been transformed when they heard that they too were worthy of God’s love.

(Right slide): April 2, 1739 wrote: “At four in the afternoon, **I submitted to be more vile** and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.” Uses “submitted”: Wesley did not want to do this. Wesley knew that preaching in the mines & fields would get him in trouble with the church authorities. Uses “vile”: Wesley really did not want to do the preaching outside of the church building but God called him out to the fields (a vile, disgusting, unseemly place) and to break the rules of the institution of preaching and proper church practice. Wesley had submitted himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit to take the message of God’s love to people who needed it most. Worthington (historian) notes: “while John Wesley’s heart was strangely warmed in London, it was set afire in Bristol.”

Bishop: “You have no business here! You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore, I advise you to go hence.”

Wesley: “Sir, I look upon the world as my parish...My Lord, my business on earth is, to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore, here I stay.”

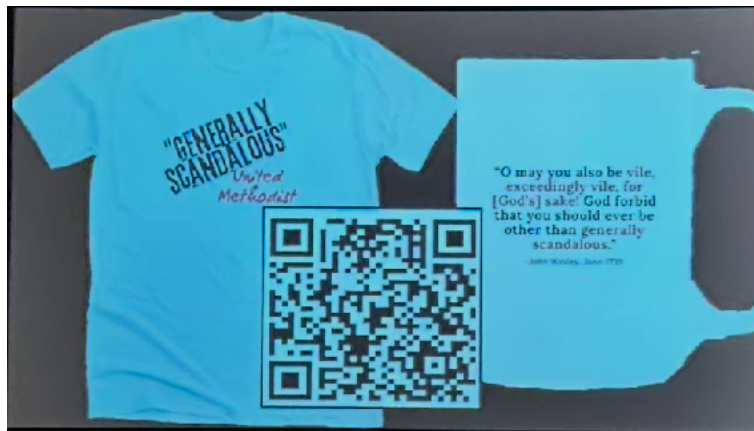
“How...could you ever conceive that being reviled and ‘hated of all [persons]’ should make us less fit for our [God’s] service? How else could you ever think of ‘saving yourself and them that hear you,’ without being ‘the filth and offscouring of the world?’ to this hour is this scripture true; and I therein rejoice; yea, and will rejoice. Blessed be God, I enjoy the reproach of Christ! **O may you also be vile, exceedingly vile, for [God’s] sake! God forbid that you should ever be other than generally scandalous.**”

- John Wesley, June 1739

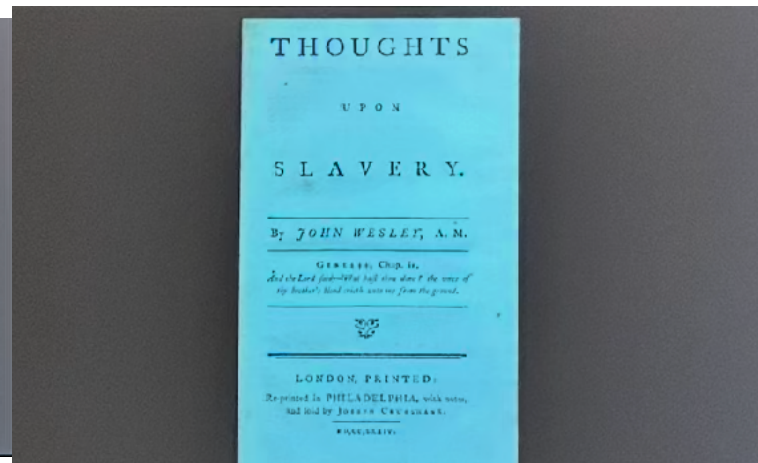
(Left slide): After three days of Wesley being in Bristol, the Bishop writes to Wesley “You have no business here! You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore, I advise you to go hence.” Wesley responds writing back to the Bishop: “Sir, I look upon the world as my parish. My Lord, my business on earth is, to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore, here I stay.” God’s love cannot be confined to human-made space. Holy Spirit both comforts us and pulls us to places that are uncomfortable.

(Right slide): The fellow Holy Clubbers expressed concern to John Wesley and Whitefield about preaching outside of the church walls. They wanted the Church of England to like them so that they could create the renewal inside the church. John Clayton wrote: “How is it that one does good when others are saying that your actions are evil?” How is being vile the doing of God’s will? How is being the scourge of society is showing the love of God; following God’s will? John Wesley’s answer is in his journal in June 1739: “How could you ever conceive that being reviled and ‘hated of all [persons]’ should make us less fit for our [God’s] service? How else could you ever think of ‘saving yourself and them that hear you,’ without being ‘the filth and offscouring of the world?’ To this hour is this scripture true; and I therein rejoice; yea, and will rejoice. Blessed be God, I enjoy the reproach of Christ! O may you also be vile, exceedingly vile, for [God’s] sake! God forbid that you should ever be other than generally scandalous.”

Such a good quote needs to be on a T-shirt or mug—get it from the QR code.



John Wesley calls us to be generally scandalous with him. Our focus should be to take God's love outside of the church walls to those who need it most. After several years, preaching "in the fields" becomes a characteristic of the early Methodists.



(Left slide): In 1742 Wesley returns to his home parish at St Andrews Parish in Epworth, where his father preached for 20 years and all the 8 Wesley children were baptized and confirmed. Wesley asked the pastor if he could be of assistance. The pastor said "No thank you. In fact, I would like it very much if you would leave the premises or else I will have you removed."

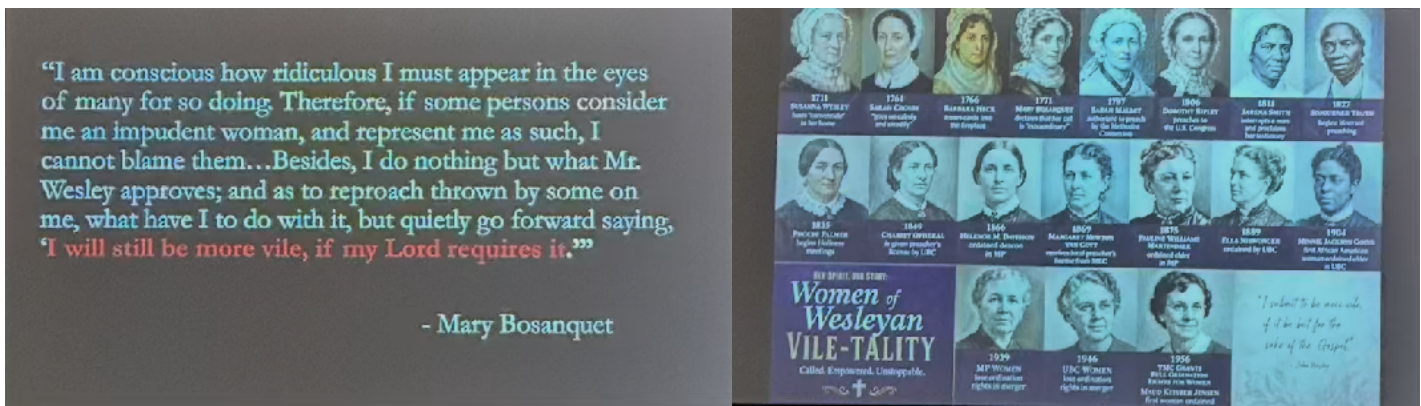
However, the town folk want to hear what Wesley has to say. Wesley finds a way to preach while respecting the wishes of the pastor by preaching from his father's gravesite—a place owned by the Wesley family; bending but not breaking the rules. Early Methodists continually found ways to circumvent rules in order to take God's love to where it was needed most.

(Right slide): John Wesley also wrote/published against slavery. Wesley was reminded about the institution of slavery every time he went back to Bristol. "Thoughts Upon Slavery" in 1774 is his conversation with another abolitionist blaming social & racial hierarchies on rich white persons who enslaved others. Generational trauma that will happen because of the maltreatment and harm done by institution of slavery. Wesley called on Methodists to end slavery. On his deathbed, Wesley wrote to William Wilburforce, asking him to carry on the Methodist witness against slavery.

Wesley had been against slavery as far back as 1735 in his Georgia days. Another story told has Wesley in Georgia denying a woman he loved communion because she married another man, so the popular rendering is that Wesley denied her communion because she broke his

heart. What actually happened is that Wesley denied her communion because of who she married: an enslaver. By doing so, she became an enslaver through marriage and thereby broke the Methodist rules and was doing harm by enslaving others. Wesley was going to be arrested in Georgia because of his denial of communion to the woman but Wesley escaped Georgia and sailed back to London.

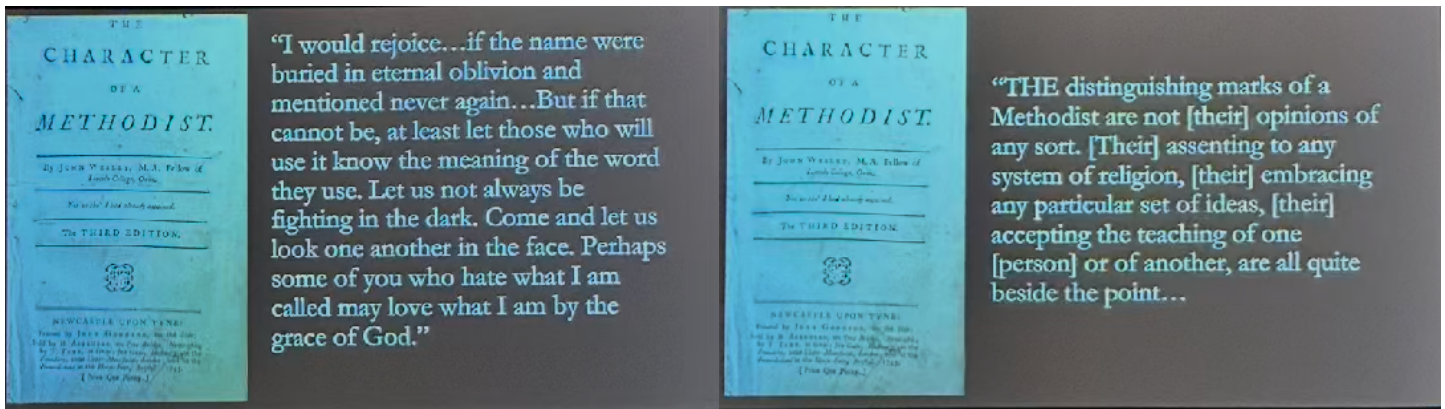
Several years later, Wesley let lay people preach beginning with lay male preachers. Thomas Maxfield was the first lay preacher. Maxfield started preaching in the foundry in 1740. Wesley initially was going to stop Maxfield from preaching but his mother, Susanna Wesley, stopped John and told him to listen to Maxfield first before passing judgement. Wesley realized that Maxfield also had an “extraordinary call” of the Holy Spirit. By 1755, Wesley let lay women preach as well—Wesley had discerned that the Spirit of God falls equally upon us all.



(Left slide): Two women in particular showed Wesley that lay women are also called: Sarah Crosby and Mary Bosanquet—on right slide they are the 2nd and 5th women from the left in the top row. Crosby and Bosanquet established the community center called Cross Hall, providing housing for widows and orphans, kindergarten and day care, food & hygiene products, and vocational training regardless of social standing. Many people (women AND men) came to hear Crosby and Bosanquet speak. Crosby apologized to Wesley for speaking in public in 1760 but Wesley responded: “Go on calmly and steadily. You have done nothing wrong.” In 1770 Bosanquet wrote the premier theological treatise of women preaching. She was often asked why she felt she had the audacity to preach. She would respond, “I am conscious how ridiculous I must appear in the eyes of many for do doing. Therefore, if some persons consider me an impudent woman, and represent me as such, I cannot blame them. Beside, I do nothing but what Mr. Wesley approves; and as to reproach thrown by some on me, what have I do do with it, but quietly go forward saying **“I will still be more vile, if my Lord requires it.”**”

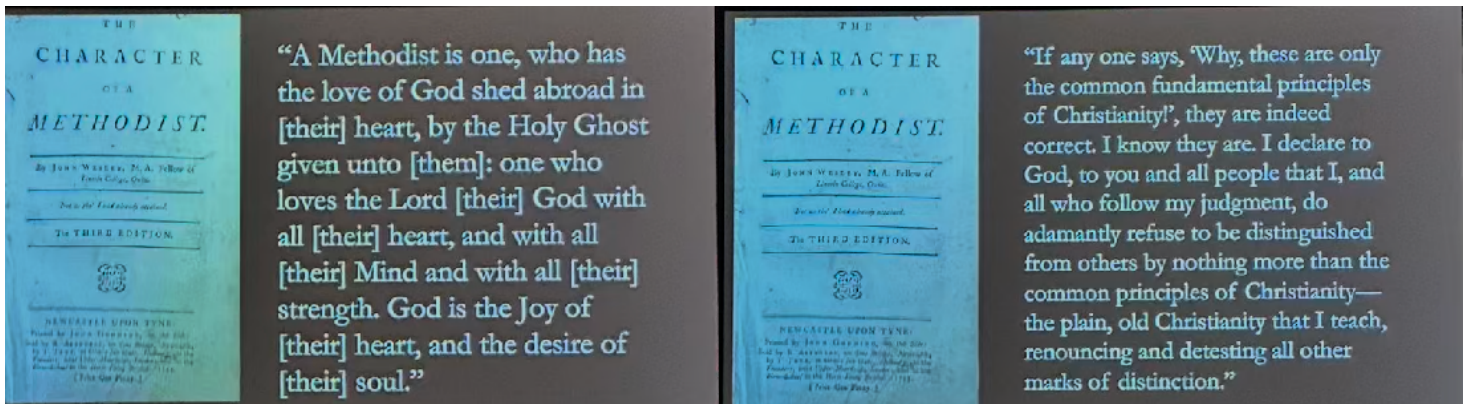
(Right slide): In honor of the 70th Anniversary of Clergy Women in full connection, let’s remember that long history of Methodist women from Susanna Wesley (top row, far left 1711) to Maude Keister Jensen (bottom row, far right 1956). They saw the “vile-tality” as a holy willingness to cross boundaries for the sake of the gospel and the transformation of the world. All of these Methodist women (and others), their ministries show that Wesleyan vile-tality is not fringe behavior detached from Methodist identity. It is one of the animating engines of Methodist history: holiness is not passive piety but grace enacted boldly in this world.

In 1742, John Wesley wrote a treatise called “The Character of a Methodist”. Next several slides below. What it meant to be a Methodist back then and what it means to be a United Methodist today in 2026.



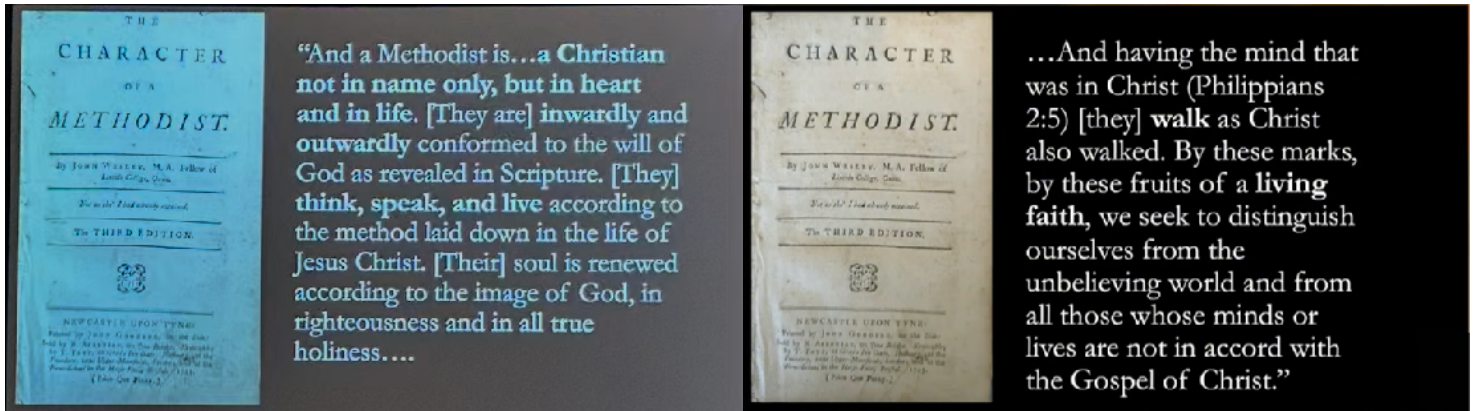
(Left slide): John Wesley hated the name “Methodist”, preferring “United Societies” but “Methodist” stuck, so he began his treatise with: “I would rejoice if the name Methodist were buried in eternal oblivion and mentioned never again. But if that cannot be, at least let those who will use it know the meaning of the word they use. Let us not always be fighting in the dark. Come and let look one another in the face. Perhaps some of you who hate what I am called, may love what I am by the grace of God.”

(Right slide): Typical British way of defining something by stating what it is NOT. Wesley stated, “THE distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not their opinions of any sort; [their assenting to any system of religion; [their] embracing any particular set of ideas; [their] accepting the teaching of one [person] or of another, are all quite beside the point.”



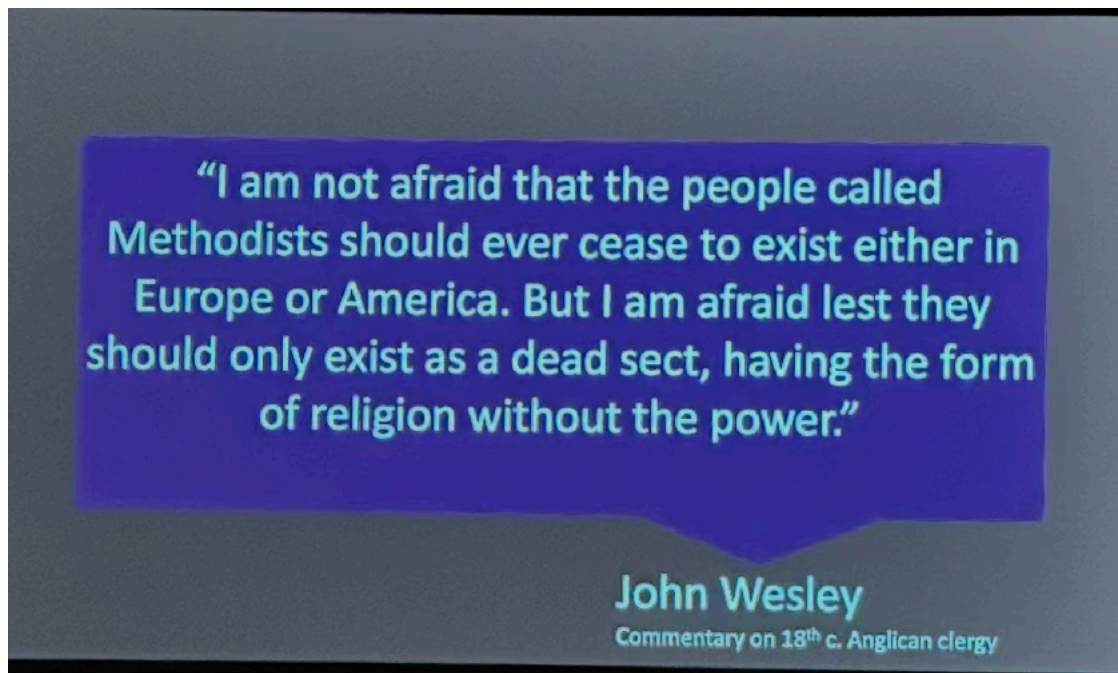
(Left slide): So what are Methodists known for? “A Methodist is one, who has the love of God shed abroad in [their] heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto [them]: one who loves the Lord [their] God with all [their] heart, and with all [their] Mind and with all [their] strength. God is the Joy of [their] heart, and the desire of [their] soul. (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30). John finally found his joy when he submitted to the Holy Spirit and preached in the fields. Other early Methodists shared the same joy.

(Right slide): Wesley could be a bit snarky: “If any one says, ‘Why, these are the only the common fundamental principles of Christianity!’ They are indeed correct. I know they are. I declare to God, to you and all people that I, and all who follow my judgment, do adamantly refuse to be distinguished from others by nothing more than the common principles of Christianity—they plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all other marks of distinction.” Wesley is proving to the Church of England that Methodists are indeed Christian.



(Left slide): Wesley takes a dig at the Church of England though: “And a Methodist is a **Christian not in name only but in heart and in life**. [They are] **inwardly** and **outwardly** conformed to the will of God as revealed in Scripture. [They] **think, speak, and live** according to the method laid down in the life of Jesus Christ. [Their] soul is renewed according to the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness....”

(Right slide): “And having the mind that was in Christ (Philippians 2:5) [they] **walk** as Christ also walked. By these marks, by these fruits of a **living faith**, we seek to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world and from all those whose minds or live are not in accord with the Gospel of Christ.” So above all else, Methodists are persons who act. In light of what’s happening in 2026, we need good theology today! A theology rooted in the grace and love of God now more than ever. Also need new forms of connection, community, and watching over one another in love. Be vile for God’s sake. Institutional survival alone is not a compelling mission. Obsessing over denominational decline is what Wesley feared most.



Wesley did not find joy sitting safely inside systems that already worked for him. He found joy when he followed the Holy Spirit into the fields that he was never supposed to enter. May it be so for us United Methodists as well.

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. A [panel of youth](#) gave their views of their hopes for the church and how to do effective ministry to and with youth (select the link).

There was a [presentation about the revamping of United Methodist Men](#) that's been happening over the past few years. The Commission now includes Scouting. Men are looking for a meaningful life that has purpose. Here's the framework that should be used in a local church.

THE STRATEGIC QUESTION

Who is our men's ministry built for — and who is it missing?

Younger Men (18–35) Often invisible in traditional men's ministry. Different rhythms, different questions, different entry points. Many have never been personally invited.	Unchurched & Dechurched Men Men who found a club and left — or who never tried at all. They will not come to us. The commission's vision calls us to go to them.
Men in Crisis Divorce, addiction, job loss, isolation. The men who need brotherhood most are often the hardest for a comfortable institution to welcome.	Men of Other Backgrounds Men from different cultures, life experiences, and faith journeys. A community makes room for all. A club keeps the door narrow.

THE UMM VISION IN ACTION

The General Commission provides the framework. Your congregation provides the mission.

UMM Small Groups The foundation of men's formation. Trial, consistent, relational groups where men grow in faith, accountability, and brotherhood — across every life stage.	Scouting Ministry One of the most strategic mentoring pipelines available to the local church. The UMC's century-long scouting legacy is a living call — not just history.	Fresh Expressions Ministry that goes to where men are. Tradesmen's guilds, campfires, recovery groups, neighborhood collectives — community built in the spaces men already inhabit.
Mentoring Relationships The 2 Timothy 2:2 model: experienced men intentionally walking alongside younger men. The most transferable ministry a man can offer in his presence.	Young Men's Ministry Intentional, structured pathways to reach men 18–35. Not a program add-on — a strategic priority for the future of the church.	Service & Mission Teams Men who serve together bond in faith together. Service is the front door for unchurched men and the formation engine for those already inside.

01 LOVE BOLDLY

Go first. Cross the distance. Reach the man no program ever could.

"Love one another as I have loved you." — John 15:12

Bold love is the posture behind every UMM strategy
 Every program the commission offers — small groups, scouting, mentoring, fresh expressions — only works if the men behind it are willing to go first, love without conditions, and stay.

Bold love reaches the men our structures miss
 The unchurched man. The man in crisis. The younger man who has never been personally invited. Bold love is personal — it goes where programs cannot.

Bold love is the same posture for every group we're trying to reach
 Whether it's a 22-year-old who's never been to church, a man in addiction recovery, or a man from a different cultural background — go first, love without conditions, stay.

02 SERVE JOYFULLY

Service is the front door for the unchurched man — and the formation engine for the rest

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others." — 1 Peter 4:10

Men come to faith through their hands before their hearts
 Give a man a project, a purpose, and a community — and you have given him an entry point to transformation. UMM service teams are one of the most effective outreach tools available to the local church.

Joyful service draws in every group we're trying to reach
 Men in recovery. Younger men. Men from different backgrounds. When they encounter a community serving with genuine joy — not obligation — they want to be part of it. Joy is the most effective apologetic we have.

Small groups multiply through shared service
 UMM small groups that serve together are more cohesive, more durable, and more likely to grow than those that only meet. Service is not a supplement to community — it is how community deepens.

Release every man into his actual gift
 Ministry of All People means every man serves in what God wired him for — not just what the institution needs filled. That's where joyful service lives. That's where burnout doesn't.

03 LEAD COURAGEOUSLY

The future of men's ministry in this conference depends on leaders who will go first

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." — Joshua 1:9

Start the fresh expression no one else has started
 Identify the group you're not reaching. Find 3–5 men. Choose a format that fits their life. Begin. The commission will resource you. But somebody in this conference has to go first.

Build bridges across age and background — intentionally
 Invite a younger man or a man from a different background not just to join your group, but to help shape its future. That posture changes who stays and who the ministry eventually reaches.

Ask the questions that move organizations forward
 Are we reaching anyone new? Are our small groups forming disciples or maintaining members? Is our scouting ministry a program we host or a ministry we own? These are leadership questions.

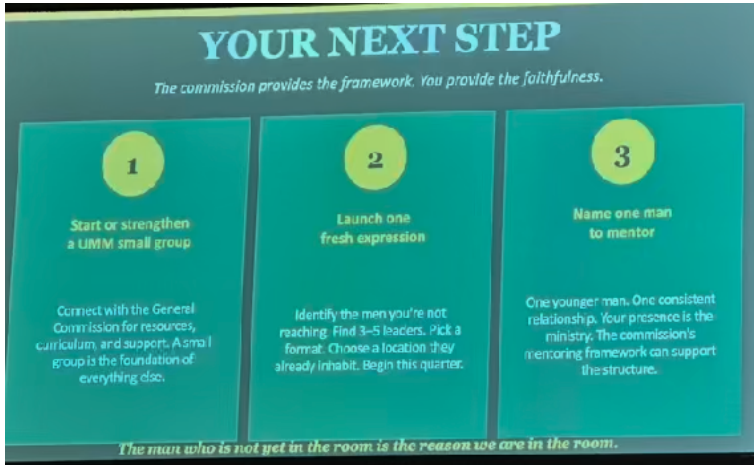
Give the ministry away — and multiply it
 The goal of courageous leadership is not a great men's group. It's men who form other men — who form other men. The 2 Timothy 2:2 chain, multiplied across this conference.

THREE STRATEGIC SHIFTS

What the General Commission is calling every UMM ministry to pursue

- From maintenance to movement**
 Stop asking "How do we keep this going?" Start asking "Who are we not reaching — and what will we do about it?" The commission's mandate is growth — in depth, in reach, and in multiplication.
- From one format to a family of expressions**
 Your UMM small group stays. Alongside it grows a fresh expression, a mentoring cohort, a young men's table. Different entry points. Same mission. One connected community of men.
- From program participants to disciple-makers**
 The goal is not a well-attended men's group. The goal is men who form other men — across age, background, and life experience. Ministry of All People, multiplied through the 2 Timothy 2:2 chain.

The commission is ready to resource every one of these shifts. Are you ready to lead them?



The church is not a club. And men's ministry is not a club.

*It is Ministry of All People, by All People —
reaching every man, in every season, through every expression.*

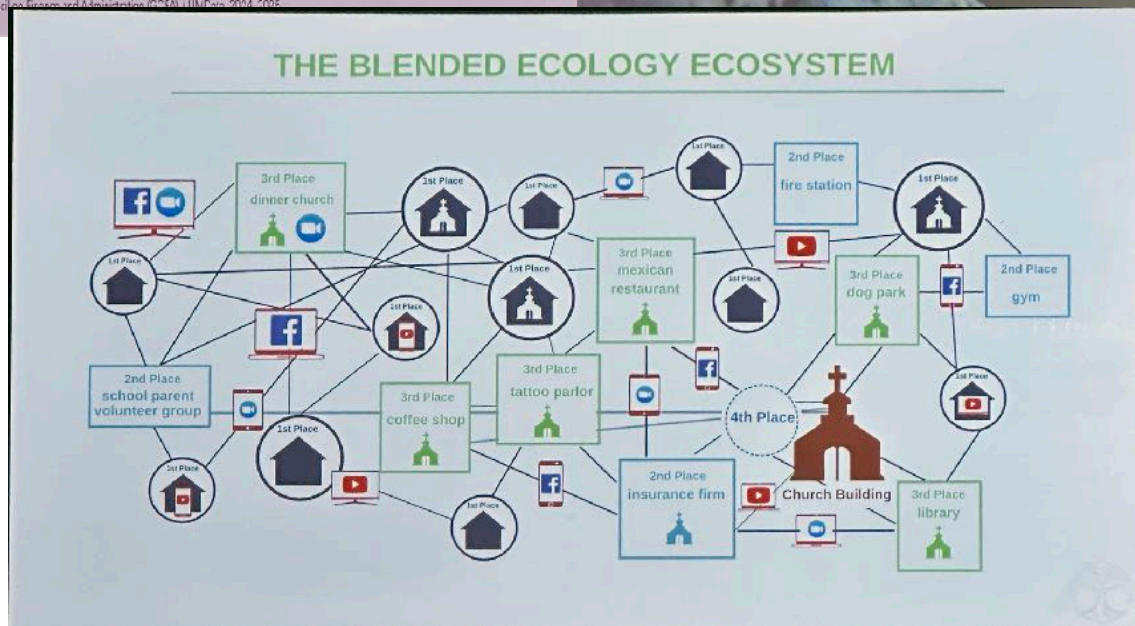
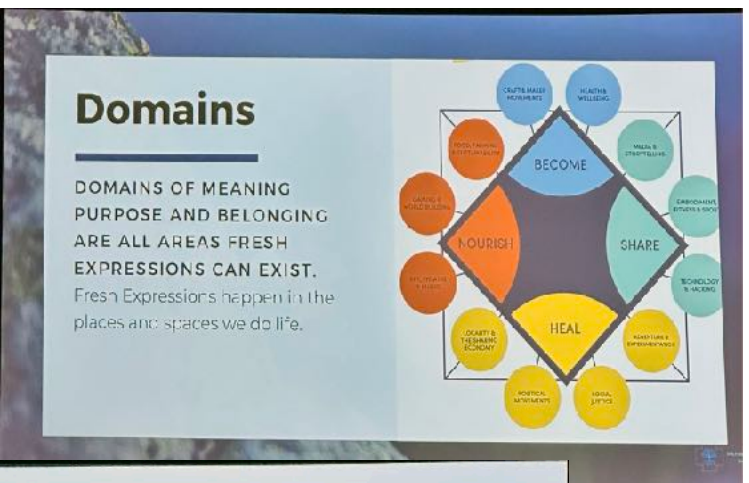
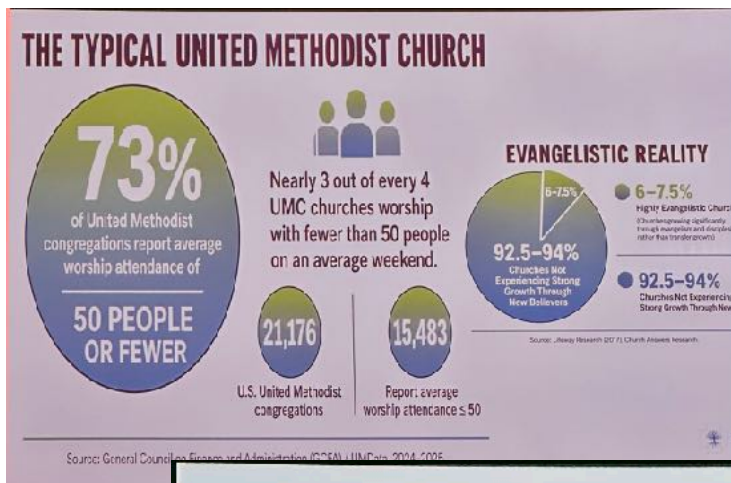
Love Boldly • Serve Joyfully • Lead Courageously

The man who is not yet in the room is the reason we are in the room.

General Commission on United Methodist Men • ummen.org

MEN'S & SCOUTING MINISTRIES
a General Commission of United Methodist Men

Michael Adam Beck of [Passional Church: Centering Mission in the Compassion of Jesus](#) project has been [working with Cal-Nevada](#) on creating [fresh expressions of Christian community](#) outside of the church walls. [Rev. Dr. Beck shared briefly](#) why local churches need to consider a new way of reaching out to a world that very much needs help and how to do it.



Day 2

[Day 2 archived livestream](#)

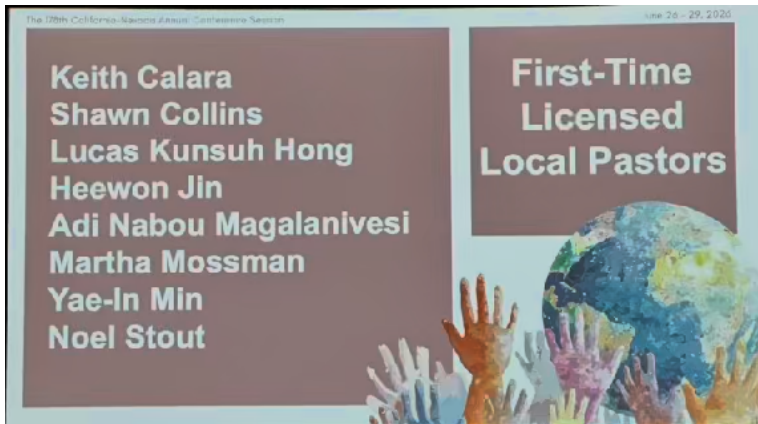
The Youth & Young Adult Delegation led the morning worship for Day 2. [Payton Sowala](#) (sp.) from Stockton Central UMC and [Nate](#) from Kingdom House campus ministry at Sac State associated with St. Andrews gave the sermon (select the links to hear them). Our young people really do understand discipleship and where the church needs to go.



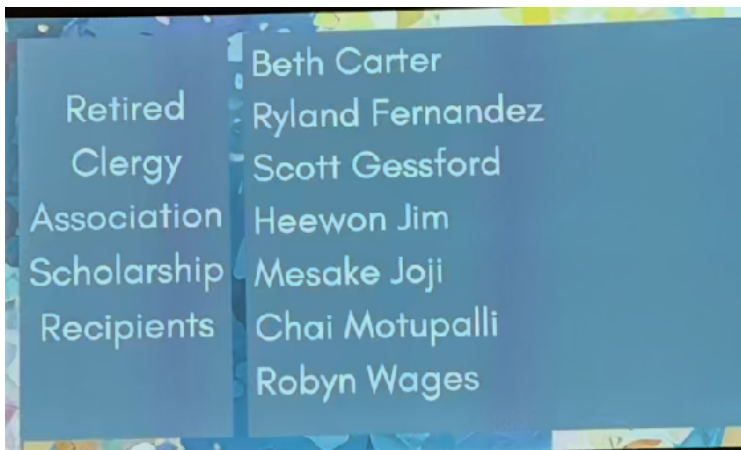
The Psalms 108, a youth and young person led worship band from Daly City UMC, led all of the ACS worship services. There was also a young persons dance/colorguard group as well.



In the morning we recognized the first-time Licensed Local Pastors, including our own Shawn Collins.



We also gave thanks for scholarships given by the Retired Clergy Association to pastors working to complete their ordination/seminary education, including our own Robyn Wages.



The Board of Ordained Ministry presented those who were to be commissioned and ordained in the Day 3 ordination service. The Bishop asked them the [historic questions](#).

Laity and Clergy elected their [delegates to the General Conference 2028 and Western Jurisdictional Conference](#). Laity took only 5 ballots to get their slate while clergy took quite a bit more (they went even into Day 3 to finish their slate).

LAITY		
Ballot Number	4	
Total Ballots Cast	258	
Needed to Elect	130	
Emily Allen	230	89.15%
Makelesi Mataitonga	217	84.11%
Linda Wright	203	78.68%
Ryland Fernandez	193	74.81%
Gayle Shearman	188	72.87%
Joanne Cho	184	71.32%
Amanda Bulls	183	70.93%
Rosie Kumar	177	68.60%
Megan Everitt	175	67.83%
Merrie Bunt	165	63.95%
David Troescher	164	63.57%
Chéri Harris	124	48.06%
Lillian Sacun	119	46.12%

LAITY		
Ballot Number	5	
Total Ballots Cast	249	
Needed to Elect	125	
Chéri Harris	177	71.08%
George Sandridge	172	69.08%
Lillian Sacun	146	58.63%
Kimberly Hines	129	51.81%
Kimberly Mark	123	49.40%

Before the lunch break, the chair of the Conference Committee on Finance & Administration Kelly Ratliff, Conference Treasurer Diane Knudsen, and Conference Statistician Adrian Pell gave the budget report for the coming year and explanation of [Item 1 Budget Resolution](#) that we approved later in the session. A lot of finance information for local churches, district & conference committees, and other entities and statistics is posted on the [Finance & Administration website](#). Below are slides from the presentation. More details in the [Pre-Conference Journal](#) pages 35 (shared giving report), 36–39 (statistics report), 66–67 (CF&A report).

BRIEF HIGHLIGHTS

- 2025 General and Jurisdictional Apportionments fully paid
 - Cal-Nevada was 1 of 19 Conferences to achieve this in 2025 (out of 51)
 - 9th Year of 100% payment fully paid with tithe funds
- Financial Reporting Improvements
 - New accounting system – Aplos – allows direct access
 - Monthly reports available to all from Finance & Administration website
- CFA Charter, Finance & Administration Team roles
 - New tools to guide our work and strengthen our partnerships
 - Finance & Administration Team is fully staffed
- 12/31/2025 Audit is on track

FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT UPDATE

- Board of Pensions is in compliance with the 2025 ACS legislation with no direct investments in fossil fuels. There are some funds that Wespath manages with some fossil fuel exposure, but the amount invested is less than 0.5%.
- California-Nevada United Methodist Foundation is in compliance with the legislation's interim goal and are below the "low carbon" target of 2%.
- CFA and District Unions has a portfolio of corporate bonds with Merrill Lynch that does not include fossil fuel companies.
- The Conference Claimants Endowment Board concluded that there is less than 1/10th of 1% of our portfolio is fossil fuels.

FINANCIAL REPORTS



Transparent and efficient stewardship of resources to support the mission of our faith community.

TRANSITIONS

- Kelly Ratliff, Lay Member, Chairperson of CFA as of July 1, 2025
- Rev. Kate Snipes, Vice Chair and Clergy Member as of July 1, 2026
- Rev. Quentisha Davis Wiles, Rev. Eun-Joo Myung, Rev. Kristie Olah, Rev. Burke Owens and Lay Member Gayle Shearman

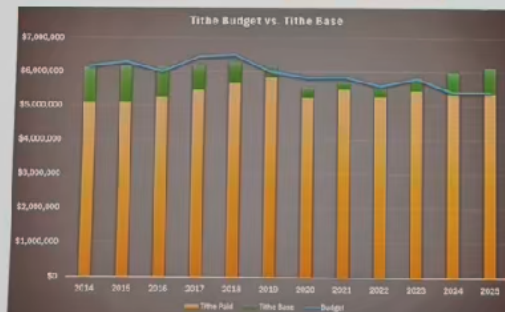
GRATITUDE

- Conference Treasurer Diane Knudsen
 - Dedicated Service and Leadership for 32 years
 - Retirement planned for January 2028
- Finance and Administration team
 - Angelina Garcia, Yvonne Dees, Ajesh Kumar, Natasha Jones

2027 BUDGET RECOMMENDATION

- Process
 - Conference Treasurer issues budget call including baseline assumptions (i.e., assume flat tithe budget, CFA approved Cost of Living Adjustment, health benefit rates from Board of Pensions).
 - Note: Current year actuals are difficult to incorporate
 - Core Team, BOOM, Episcopacy Committee, Trustees and Cabinet/HR Committee submit budget requests.
 - CFA prepares recommended allocation of tithe funds using budget requests and staffing needs aligned with overall goals and consideration of all fund sources.
 - Annual Conference has final decision authority for the budget (Monday, June 29th) for next calendar year.

2027 BUDGET – TITHING TRENDS



The Dilemma... Since 2022, a steady increase in the full tithe base.

However, there is a decline in the amount of tithe paid:

- 94% in 2024
- 87% in 2025

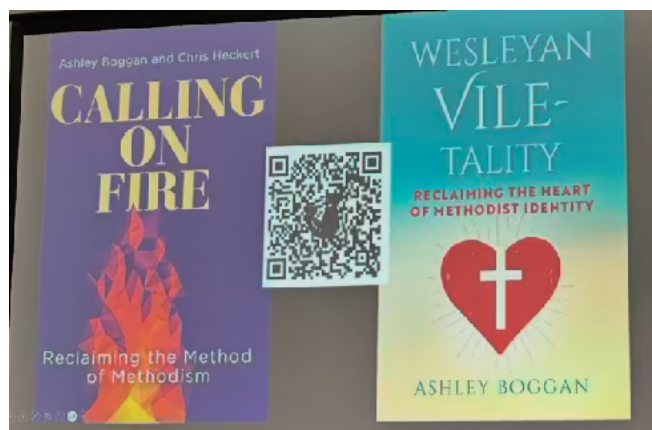
CFA has recommended holding the annual Budget flat.

A modest increase in Tithe Paid supports payment of our full general church apportionment and support an overall increase in the tithe budget for future years.

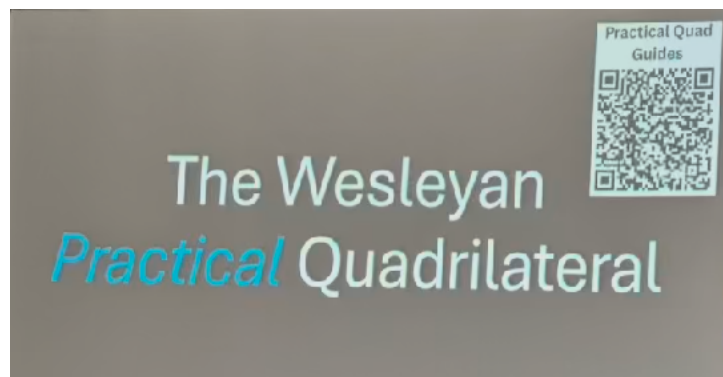
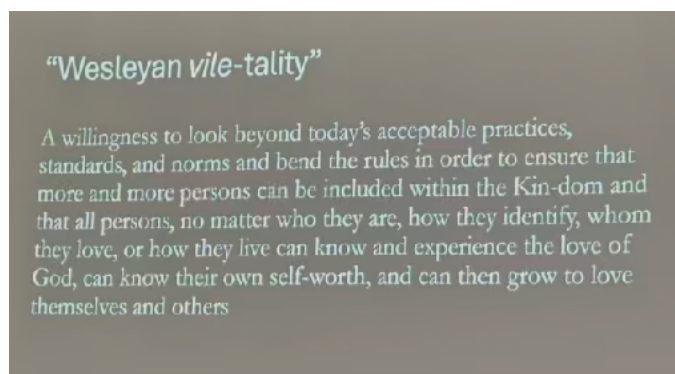
Cal-Nevada has fully paid (100%) of its apportionments to the General and Jurisdictional ministries—the ninth year of doing so. [Finance & Administration website](#) and accounting system allows easier access to timely information. CF&A charter and member descriptions now finalized. Fossil fuel divestment in investments has been realized. Diane Knudsen retires in January 2028, so we need to start ASAP finding her successor. Many groups are involved in coming up with the budget recommendation. Conference tithe receipts has remained flat. Churches are asked to pay the biblical tithe of 10% of their income. Income has increased but number of churches fully paying the tithe has decreased. Wesley Bakersfield has consistently paid its tithe every year!

Afternoon Workshop

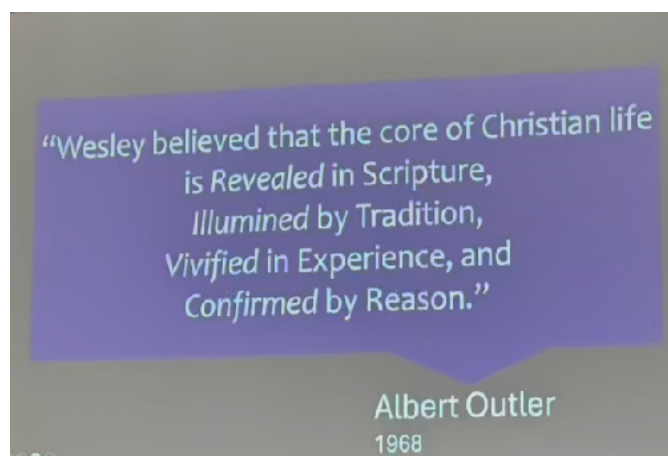
In the afternoon, I attended Dr. Boggan's workshop on John Wesley PRACTICAL Quadrilateral of living out Methodism in today's world; true discipleship in today's context. It is important to remember that the four parts are all essential pieces of ONE package that must be implemented if the method is to work. They are not a menu of options to choose from. Here are pictures of most of the slides from the presentation.



[Link to book.](#) Boggan's son ran the slides.



Reminder of previous day's keynote
[Link to Practical Quad Guides.](#)



Practical Quadrilateral of Action and Discipleship, Page 18 of 31. We have heard of Wesley's methodology of theological discernment.

“The Liberating Love of God is Proclaimed through Field Preaching, Experienced in Micro-Communities, Embodied in Social Engagement, and Renewed by Leadership Activation.”

Chris Heckert
2025



IT'S A METHOD
.....not a menu

Need all four parts for method to work. Can't pick and choose.

Liberating Love of God is proclaimed through Field Preaching, experienced in Micro-Communities, embodied in Social Engagement, and renewed by Leadership Activation.



Field Preaching

taking a message of God's love outside the walls of the church to those who are most vulnerable, most outcast, and most in need of affirmation.




“I scarcely could reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields...”

-John Wesley, *Journal*, April 1739

...I had been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.”

-John Wesley, *Journal*, April 1739

“At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.”

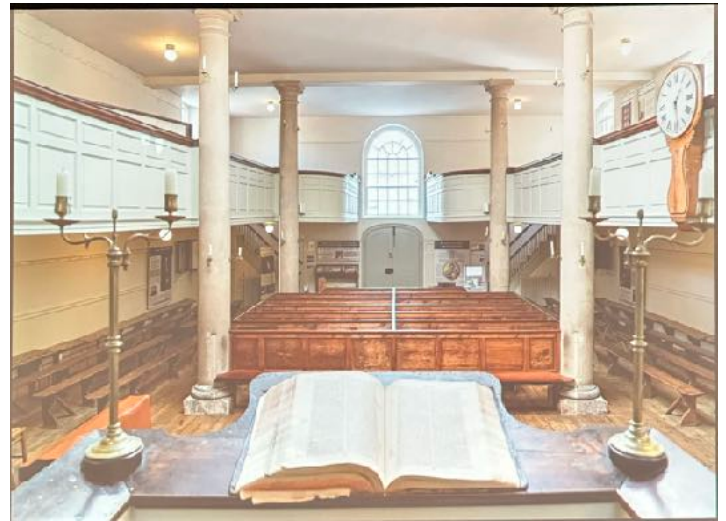
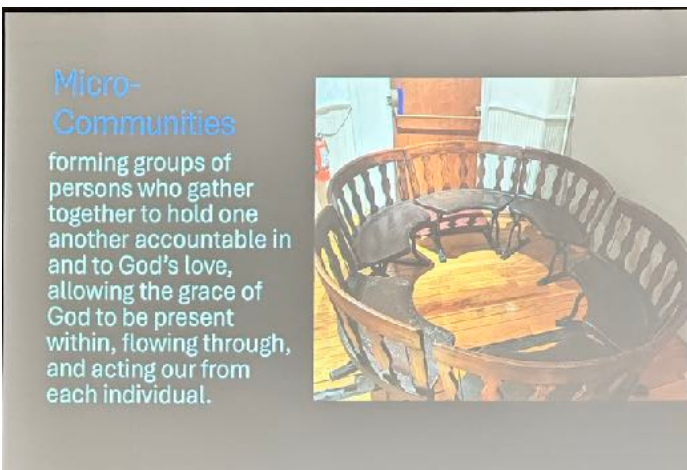
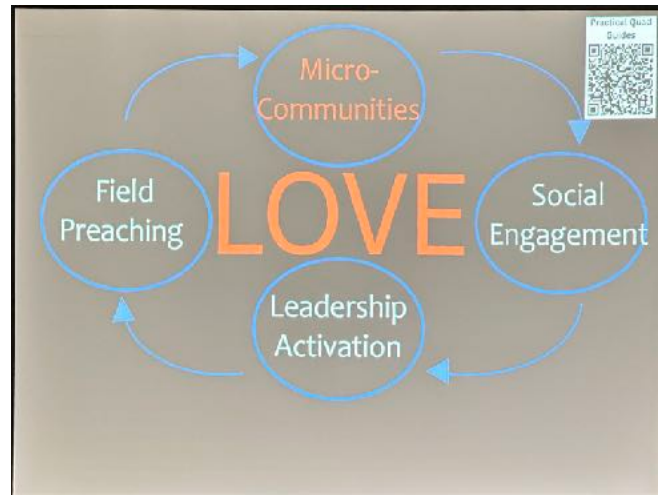
-John Wesley, *Journal*, April 1739

“What religion do I preach? The religion of love; the law of kindness brought to light by the Gospel. What is this good for? To make all who receive it enjoy God and themselves: To make them like God; lovers of all.”

John Wesley



[Link to Checkpoint Church YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IP6-gR7Q3s) . Church for “nerds, geeks, and gamers in mind.”

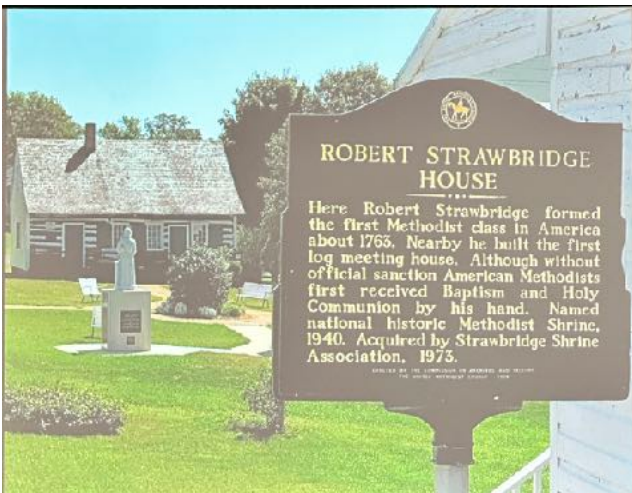


Covenant Disciple groups and [Wesley's New Room](#) in Bristol, England UK ([virtual tour](#)). From [Methodist Heritage](#): In 1739 George Whitefield invited John Wesley to preach in the open-air in Bristol. John accepted the invitation and began preaching to miners in Kingswood, 4 miles from the centre of Bristol. Within a few weeks work started on building a meeting place for two religious societies in the city. The building was put up in such haste that 9 years later in 1748 a 'New Room' was needed, adding an upper floor in order to accommodate visiting preachers' bedrooms and a common room around a beautiful octagonal window. Being well placed in the heart of the city, the New Room became a centre for the Wesleys' work in Bristol. It was where John's strong sense of social justice was first expressed. The New Room became a base for running a school for the poor, for providing food and clothes to the needy, for offering free medical care to the sick, and for helping those in the nearby prison. It was also the first place to use John Wesley's 'class' system, where members were divided into sub-groups for mutual support and development. The New Room was one of John Wesley's three key centers. Many of the annual conferences were held there, including the one that first created Methodist circuits. Bristol's trading links encouraged the growth of American Methodism. Thomas Webb, Francis Asbury, and others committed themselves to working there and sailed from nearby Pill. It was in Bristol that Wesley ordained some lay preachers in 1786 to become clergy in America and the New Room was a launching pad for his anti-slavery campaign.

Story of holding each other accountable: [Barbara Heck](#) was a cousin of Philip Embury. Embury was a Methodist preacher in Ireland before immigrating to America but lost his zeal and left off

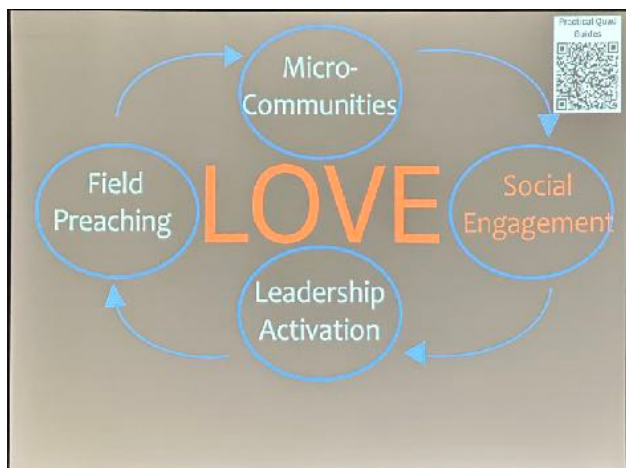


preaching. One evening he, Heck's husband and some friends were playing cards (gambling) at the Heck household. Heck was so indignant at what was happening, she burst into the room where they were playing cards, she seized the pack of cards, and threw them into the fire. She then forcefully scolded Embury for mingling in the frivolities and sinful amusements of life: "You must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell together, and God will require our blood at your hands!" Embury went back to preaching and organized a Methodist class. Barbara Heck converted and organized other women to form the [first Methodist congregation in New York City](#).

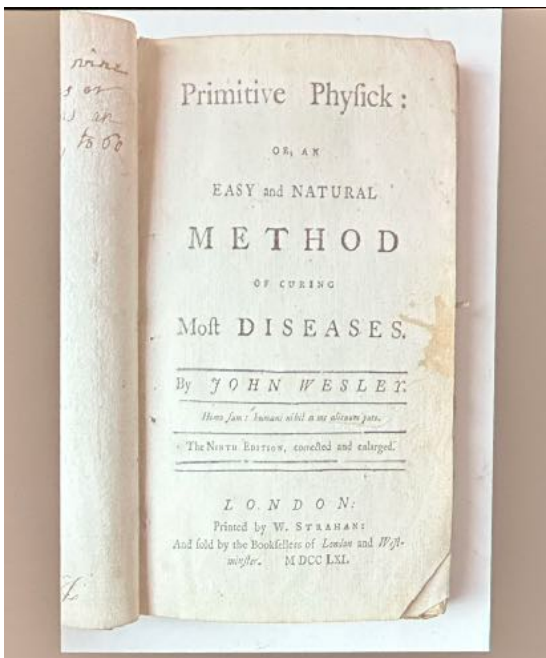


Where is a message of God's love needed in your ministry context?
Where and how are folks gathering in your ministry context?

Practical Quad Guides



[Kingwood School](#) founded by Wesley in 1748 for boys and girls of all social classes.



As part of caring for his community in Bristol, Wesley researched medical remedies and published what he found in the “Primitive Physick”. He updated it every year. Wesley allowed people to address the bodily hurts alongside or before spiritual hurts. Although, a lot of the remedies are now considered medical quackery, the idea of addressing the physical needs of people along with the spiritual needs was revolutionary in Wesley’s day of asceticism and physical self-denial. Wesley was trying to provide some relief that was accessible. Willing to admit when he was wrong, he published many revisions.

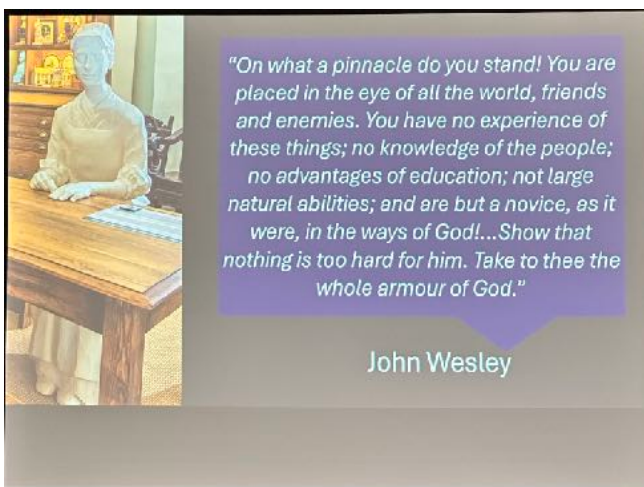
Get the micro-communities out into the world to address the hurts and needs of their communities.



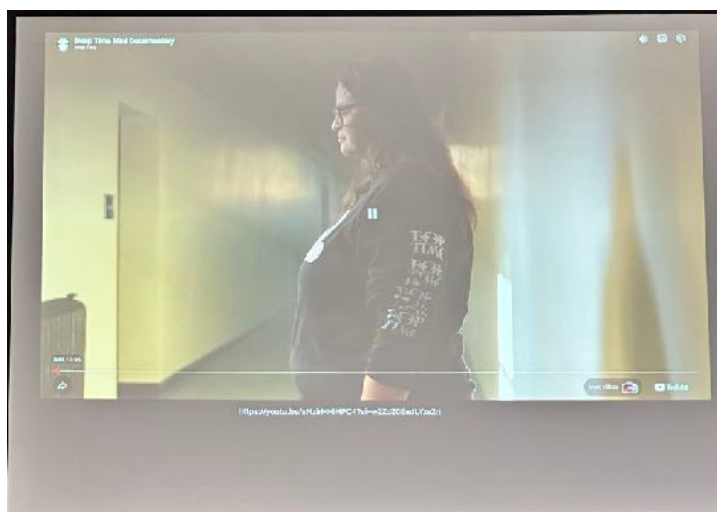
“indolent, pleasure-taking, money-loving, praise-loving, preferment-seeking Clergymen’ who were “the pests of the Christian world; a stink in the nostrils of God’.”

John Wesley
Commentary on 18th c. Anglican clergy

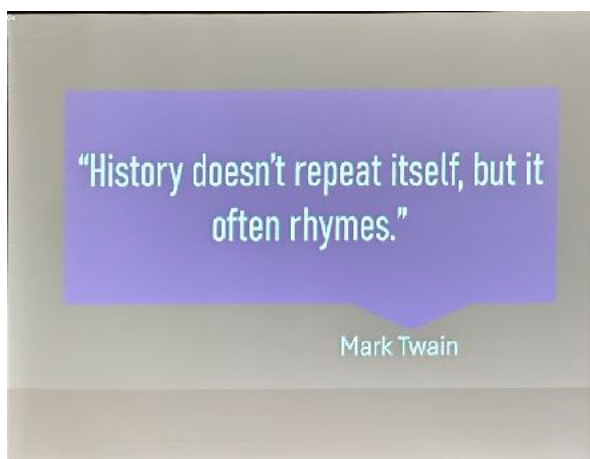
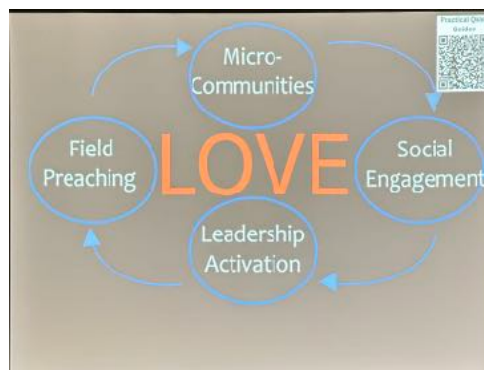
Wesley’s commentary on the Anglican clergy of his day—why Wesley used lay ministers.



[Sarah Ryan](#) (an “untouchable” woman) disowned by her father at age 12, worked as domestic servant, escapes an abusive husband, is abandoned by another husband, and third husband is believed to have died at sea. Wesley recognizes that she has a gift from God. He puts her in charge of running the first Methodist preaching house in England. She is tasked/entrusted with making sure every word preached is of a Wesleyan Methodist theological understanding. She thrived! Use new leaders and pay special attention to those who may be the “untouchable” of today.



[Link to YouTube video](#) about [Deep Time](#) leadership activation in North Carolina.



The state of the world today is not that different from John Wesley's day. The state of the church was distressed. People thought that what was preached from the pulpit had anything to do with what happened outside the church walls. Distrust of institutional religion. Theology of fear. Methodism came in and disrupted all of that. Message of love and joy. Challenge to make Christianity real in the lives of hurting people. Remember our Methodist roots, our DNA!

Afternoon concluded with the [Memorial Service: Remembering the Saints](#) — [Memorial Booklet link](#). Evening 7:30 to 9-ish PM was Legislative Sections. Legislation that was approved by 85+ % of a legislative section went onto the [Consent Calendar](#). Two or three items were later removed by petition to be brought to the full Plenary session in Day 3 or Day 4.

Day 3

[Day 3 archived livestream](#)

Fixing Appointments

Today was fixing of all of the appointments of the clergy to local churches and extension ministries. Our pastor, Robyn Wages, was appointed to Wesley Bakersfield! Rather than reading every single appointment, they only read the names of who was moving (and the

church they were moving to). It seemed like Central Valley District had more moves than all of the other districts combined!



Nick Strobel, Josie Renforth, Robyn Wages, and Bill Blair on Day 3 of ACS 2026

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. Below are slides from their presentation.

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.

The 178th California-Nevada Annual Conference Session

Where This Became Visible:

1. Vision-driven budgeting (\$210,600 + \$1,305,248*)
2. Conference-wide leaders training event
3. Legislative stewardship and shared governance
4. Leadership development, onboarding, and succession
5. Preparation for 2026 focus on "Healing the World"

The 178th California-Nevada Annual Conference Session

The Real Question Before Us:

It is not whether we had a productive year.
It is whether our common life together is becoming more available to the work of God in the world.

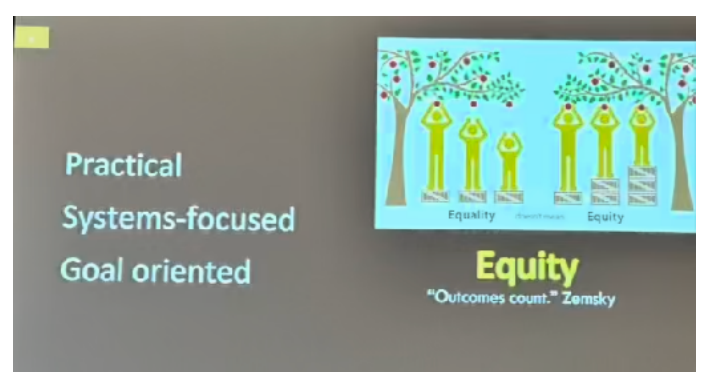
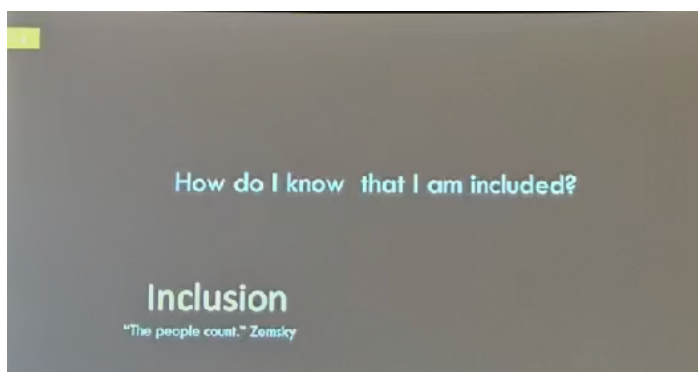
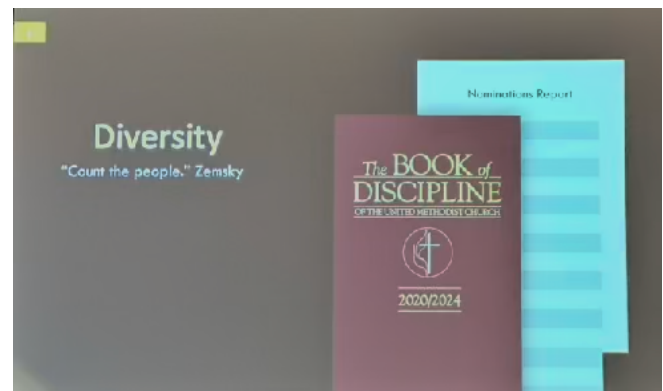
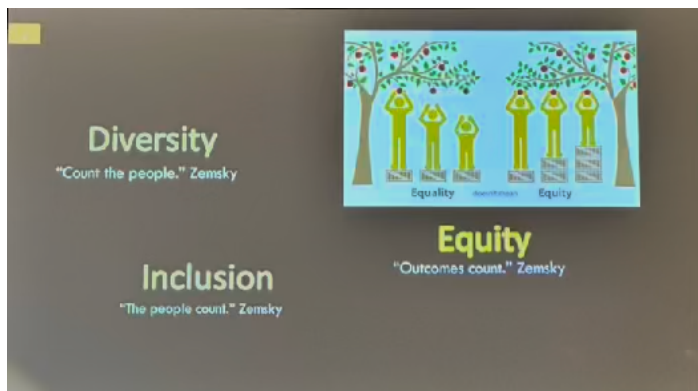
The Bottom Line:

"Thriving in Community" cannot simply mean that we are better organized, better connected, or better resourced. It has to mean that we are becoming the kind of people who can bear one another's burdens, tell the truth across difference, resist cynicism, and remain open to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

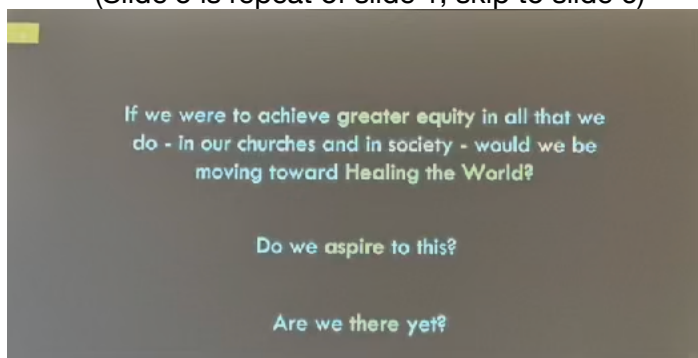
***"The Church is the Church only when it exists for others... not dominating, but helping and serving."
~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer***

Equity: Aspirations to Practice (Panel)

As preparation for the [panel discussion on equity](#) [Kristina Gonzalez](#), who moderated and led the panel discussion, gave some opening remarks for background on equity work and how it fits into DEI. Panelists included Rev. Dale Weatherspoon, Rev. Sun Hee Kim, Rev. Sandie Richards and Rafael Saavedra. Slides from Gonzalez's opening remarks (some slides were repeated and are not included in this set of pictures).



(Slide 5 is repeat of slide 1, skip to slide 6)



One example Gonzalez used was the curb cuts in sidewalks developed for wheelchairs but they serve everybody. People using walkers, strollers, bicycles, etc. appreciate them.

Equity: who is most marginalized in our system and then creating a new/adjusting the old, so they can participate fully makes it easier for everyone else as well.

Slide 8: "Jesus life and ministry

As UM Christians, we have two powerful motivators for this work:

Jesus life and ministry

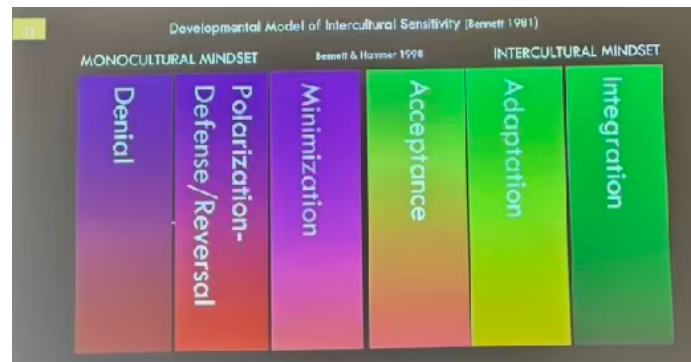
John Wesley's notion of Practical Divinity

John Wesley's notion of Practical Divinity

"We proclaim no *personal gospel* that fails to express itself in relevant social concerns; we proclaim no *social gospel* that does not include the personal transformation of sinners." BOD 2020/2024 p. 55

To make Jesus teachings practical in the world:

What issues must we address - in the church and society - to reach greater *equity*?



Rev. Dale Wetherspoon shared his thoughts about the isms we need to confront and how to respect others in a way that the other would appreciate ([22:04 in recording](#)). Then we looked at the developmental model. **Denial**—the other people don't matter; "I don't care". **Polarization/Defensive**—my culture is the correct one; actively work against inclusion. Skipped slides 12+13. The dominant culture says that we're in danger if we're uncomfortable, so we **Minimize**.

12. MINIMIZATION - OVEREMPHASIS ON COMMONALITY AND SIMILARITY

- Minimize differences
- Overemphasize being Comfortable - (Insistently nice)
- Avoid stereotyping and denigrating
- No longer see culture as threat
- See the core humanity of each individual
- "Deep down, we're all the same"
- Lack of awareness of own cultural lens and use of own experience as the 'standard' interpersonally and institutionally
- Project cultural lens & assumptions on other

Based on Bennett and Hammer

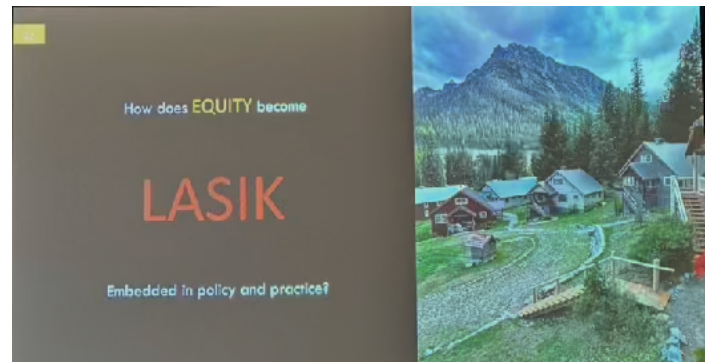
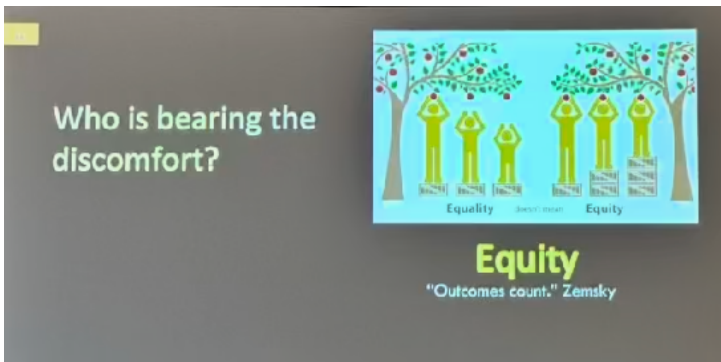
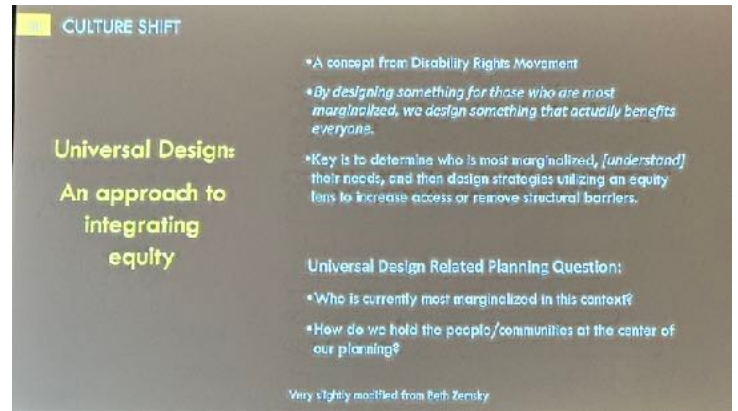
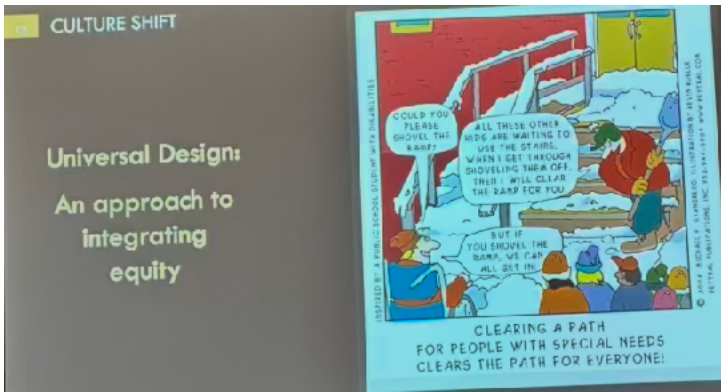
13. MINIMIZATION - OVEREMPHASIS ON COMMONALITY AND SIMILARITY

Organizational Impact

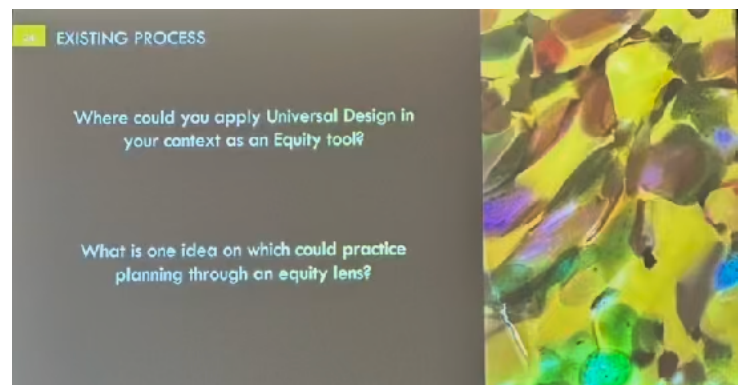
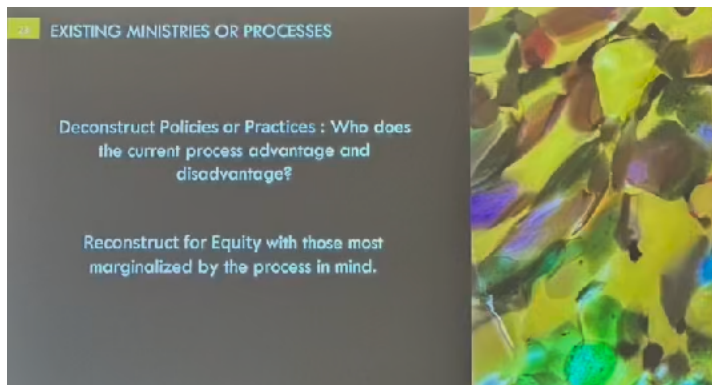
- Select for difference, onboard for similarity due to emphasis on comfort & fit with dominant culture
- Pressure to assimilate to the dominant culture
- Implicit bias that contributes to micro-aggressions
- Conflict avoidant
- Organizational processes designed from perspective of, and to support, current organizational culture

Beth Zemsky MAEd, LICSW/www.bethzemsky.com

Rev. Sandie Richards shared her thoughts on becoming aware of the dominant culture lens—whiteness ([37:26 in recording](#)). It's ok to be told when our good intentions don't lead to a good impact. We learn by making mistakes and growing (but don't keep repeating the same mistakes!). [Skipped slide 16. Slide 17 = slide 11. Slide 18 = slide 4]



Rev. Sun Hee Kim shared her thoughts on shifting from minimization to acceptance ([48:56 in the recording](#)). Recognize that one mode/language/style of communication/training doesn't work for everyone. Make adjustments to fit the needs.



Rafael Saavedra shared his thoughts as a lay member about laity working with clergy to move along the equity continuum to transform our church culture so all feel they truly belong—aligning intention and impact ([56:40 in the recording](#)).

District Reports

The [District Superintendents reported](#) on what new ministries and celebrations are happening in the five districts. Five threads weaving together through all districts.

II

Faithfulness in the Face of Challenge

"The ones who remain astound us with their grit, grace & willingness."

Great Northern District

Rural landscape — visiting pastors, conducting conferences, supporting Lay Ministers.

El Camino Real District

Weathered decline and polarization — yet faithfulness and determination remain.

Central Valley District

Despite losses, those who remain press forward with grit, grace, and faith.

III • THE GIFT OF MULTICULTURAL WITNESS

Multicultural Diversity as Strength

Headline news across our five districts

77%

of Bay District churches are ethnic or multicultural

80%

of Bay District leaders are people of color

5

districts united in multicultural witness

IV • MERGERS AND THE COURAGE TO REIMAGINE

Mergers and New Possibilities

Growing Hope UMC

Almaden Hills + Cambrian Park united
Led by Rev. Yoshino • El Camino Real

La Trinidad + Peace UMC

Hispanic & Vietnamese congregations
Moving toward multicultural union
• El Camino Real

New Bridges UMC

Twin Towers & Embrace united
• Bay District

Porterville & Vida Nueva

Porterville First, Grand & Vida Nueva
Reimagining bilingual ministry
• Central Valley

Hmong UMC — newly chartered, now at Fresno St. Paul's.
A new church born. Thanks be to God.

V • NEW MINISTRIES AND INNOVATIVE MISSION

Innovative Mission in Action

Saturday Dinner Church

Berkeley Korean UMC — monthly dinner worship for young adults & families

Café Agape & Kapwa Collective

Conference-supported ministries bearing fruit in Pittsburg & Vallejo

Creation Spirituality App

Windsor UMC's app: creation care, Indigenous history & spiritual reflection

Young Adult Ministries

Students & Young Adults at Christ Church Santa Rosa

United San Joaquin — grew from 5 to 18 institutions, empowering citizens for change.
The church in the public square.

VI

Reimagining for the Future

Strategic Planning & the 213 Process

District Teams active across all five districts.

Planning & Strategy Teams

Newly active in every district — accompanying congregations in discernment.

The 213 Process

Centered on mission, not just closure — reimagining how to serve communities.

Property & Community Discernment

Churches exploring property use, community need, and future ministry.

Vital Mission Strategists

Three strategists in place — helping shape new possibilities for local churches.

This Is a Story of Renewal

- Mergers being born
- New churches chartered
- Dinner Churches gathering generations
- Ethnic ministries finding a home
- Community organizing expanding
- Rural churches being resourced
- Multicultural witness celebrated
- Vital Mission Strategists deployed

With God's blessing, may we press on — loving boldly, serving joyfully, leading courageously.

While some new ministries are being created, some have lived out their time and are closed. We approved the recommendation to close Fair Oaks UMC in Fair Oaks, CA and celebrated chartering the [new Hmong church](#) in Fresno at Fresno Saint Paul's UMC.

Before lunch we celebrated four major anniversaries: [Thirtieth year of Order of Deacons](#), 50th year of United Methodist Volunteer in Mission, [70th year of Women's Ordination in the Methodist Tradition](#), and [200th Anniversary of Methodism in Tonga](#).



30th Anniversary of Deacons Orders above and on right, sisters Ginger and Susan Foster led the 70th anniversary of Women's Ordination.





Two-hundred voice choir of Tongans wowed us with singing two hymns for the 200th Anniversary of Methodism in Tonga and also singing the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah.

[Ordination Service](#) was in the afternoon. Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey of the Rio Texas Annual Conference gave the sermon. Presiding also with Bishop Olewine were two other bishops who have a special relationship with Cal-Nevada: Bishop Sally Dyck and Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr. Commissioned as provisional members preparing for elders orders: Mesake Joji, Tevita Pauleisia Samate, Kate Snipes, and Iunisi Tovo. Commissioned as provisional members preparing for deacons orders: Da Hye Jung, Chaitanya Motupalli, and Mark Allen Teagle. Ordained as elders: Sosaia Fineaganofa, Tupou Veikoso Taufatofua, David Seung-Heung Yang. One elder transferring from another denomination: James HyoGyum Kim.





Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey of the Rio Texas Annual Conference

Day 4

[Day 4 archived livestream](#)

We approved the [Consent Calendar](#). We approved the two items removed from the Consent Calendar and other legislative items. There was some concerns about selling the Camp Lodestar (in Wilseyville, CA) but it was approved in the end. Although, the recommendation did not actually say that the camp was to be sold—it said the Board of Camping and Retreat Ministries was to be given time to study the issue and be given the authority to sell the camp if they found that to be the best option—but since the leaders of the BCRM had already expressed their view that the camp was no longer functioning and drain on our resources, we all knew that the camp will be sold.

Also some concerns expressed about meeting in Oakland for the 2028 and 2029 Annual Conference Sessions. Our ACS Sessions committee needs at least a two-year advance reservation for the venue and the Sacramento Convention Center is no longer willing to do that. The Convention Center offered to guarantee a reservation for Memorial Weekend 2028 but presents problems for local churches and conference leadership. The [Oakland Marriott City Center](#) is the probable venue for 2028+2029.

The [2027 Budget Recommendation](#) was approved. [Resolution Item 9](#) about caring for congregations during closure of local churches was referred to the Cabinet and creation of a task force.

A number of awards were given: One Matters Awards to one church/district. [Sanger UMC](#) was recognized from Central Valley District for their multicultural and intergenerational outreach & growth. Also, Bishop Malvin Talbert Award and Bishop Warner H Brown Jr. Award (to Regina Eng of Daly City UMC and Conference Lay Leader, Micheal Pope, respectively).



We had a [closing worship service](#) with communion. Next year's Annual Conference Session will be **in Sacramento June 11–14, 2027**.

This is my last Annual Conference as a lay delegate from Wesley Bakersfield UMC. As far as I can tell from my [past reports posted](#) on the church's website, I've attended most of the ACS since 2000. Thank you for allowing me and trusting me to represent you all these past years!