

S.C. Annual Conference Summary

Highlights

■ The ongoing Million Book Effort has led to the packaging of more than 330,000 books for children across South Carolina.

■ 38 pastors were commissioned or ordained during the Conference. 25 pastors were licensed as local pastors.

■ 31 pastors were honored during the Retirement Service.

■ Attendees paused during a Memorial Service to remember those who died since the last Annual Conference.

■ A Local Church Mission Fair, held during the Conference, attracted hundreds to share ideas for children- and poverty-based ministries.

■ Dr. Robin Dease, leading the Conference in daily Bible study, challenged attendees to be in ministry with those in need and to create corridors of faith, hope and love.

■ S.C. Camps & Retreat Ministries reported their board has decided to sell its Sewee property.

■ The attendance for the Conference: Laity, 861; Clergy, 747.

■ Congregational Development announced new projects including the exploration of a church start.

■ Conference approved a slate of officers, board and committee members beginning in 2015.

■ A resolution to form a task force on race reconciliation was referred to Connectional Ministries.

■ The 2015 Annual Conference will be held on June 7-11 at the Florence Civic Center.

FLORENCE — United Methodists put the focus on “creating corridors of faith, hope and love” as they met for the 2014 S.C. Annual Conference at the Florence Civic Center.

Bishop Jonathan Holston shared the challenge for the Annual Conference in the opening worship service on Sunday evening. “I believe God will give us visions and dreams that are God-sized because He’s taking us and exposing us to a higher standard.”

The recipe for the Conference that followed was a mix of worship, celebration, remembrance, business and challenge.

In addition, the Conference tied into the energy generated through the Million Book Effort to remind attendees to be in ministry with those in need. The 2014 Annual Conference provided challenging sermons, inspiring music and a message of hope.

Bishop Holston saw the Conference as an energizing time of hope for Methodists across South Carolina.

“This has been one of the best annual conferences I have ever been a part of,” he said. “The willingness of the delegates to engage in conversation and to be attentive to the needs of the church has been inspirational.”

The following are highlights of some of the major actions and votes by the 2014 Annual Conference:

■ The Conference approved the budget submitted by the Council on Finance and Administration. The 2015 budget is \$16.71 million and is a 0.6 percent increase over the 2014 budget. In addition, there will be a change in the apportionment calculation formula moving it from a four-year average of net giving to a two-year average of net giving.

■ Delegates approved a new proposal regarding direct billing (the bill churches receive for a pastor’s insurance and pension). The Direct Billing Forgiveness Plan would allow some churches who are behind in their direct billing to apply for forgiveness of a portion of their past-due direct bills.

■ The Conference approved a “blended premium” for pastors — one flat rate regardless of the pastor’s insurance tier. Instead of paying for the pastor’s exact amount — individual, plus-one or family coverage — the church will pay a flat \$823/month cost. The goal of this change is to lead to a smoother way for churches to budget and for the Cabinet to appoint clergy, according to the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

■ The Conference approved a resolution that encourages the Conference to change the focus on guns and gun violence in our society, to raise awareness of gun violence and to provide information on gun safety and security.

■ A resolution on “The Need for Services to Individuals with Mental Illness in the South Carolina Department of Corrections” was approved by the Conference.

■ A resolution was approved to designate Central UMC in Spartanburg as a historic church.

