2015 SC Annual Conference

FLORENCE – The 2015 Annual Conference put the focus on “Becoming disciples GOD can use.” The conference was a mix of worship, business and voting (See Box at right).

“It was an exciting way to become disciples God can use,” Bishop Jonathan Holston said. “This was a wonderful conference for moving us closer to that reality.”

From Bible studies to inspiring worship and song, delegates were pushed to take steps in discipleship.

For the first time, delegates used an electronic voting system. Following an early learning curve, the system proved valuable in the election of General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates and in voting on resolutions and petitions.

In addition, the Conference announced a “God-sized” goal for the next year. Rev. Jeri Katherine Warden Sipes will lead the Conference’s effort over the next year to raise $1 million for Imagine No Malaria.

In other activities:  
- **Petitions to General Conference.** Delegates debated a petition to ask General Conference to amend the language of Paragraph 161F of the Book of Discipline. This petition asked to remove a sentence that says, “Homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.” The petition failed by a 705-519 vote. In addition, the Committee on Petitions recommended non-concurrence on a petition asking the UMC to withdraw from the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). Non-concurrence was approved by a 671-541 vote.

- **Council on Finance & Administration.** Rev. David Surratt presented a total proposed budget for 2016 of $16,789,386 or a 0.48 percent increase over 2015. He also reported that conference’s bonding insurance will be cancelled as of Sept. 1. However, he said local churches can obtain coverage for bonding through their insurance providers. The report, including the budget, was approved.

- **Report of the Cabinet:** Rev. Dickie Knight and Rev. Susan Leonard-Ray challenged attendees to see themselves as a piece of the big puzzle of what God is doing in the church. At registration, attendees had been given a piece of a puzzle to serve as a reminder of the message. The Cabinet report praised the work of Bishop Holston to create a team atmosphere.