**2021 Desert Southwest Annual Conference Report**

**By Christina Dillabough, Director of Communications | Desert Southwest Annual Conference**

For the second year in a row, on June 11-13, 2021, the Desert Southwest Annual Conference met virtually via Zoom. This year the ordination service was held in-person at limited capacity and following safety guidelines. The recording of the ordination service is available at <https://youtu.be/swJGTTebC8E>. Officiating bishop, Robert T. Hoshibata’s opening address, “Many Gifts, One Spirit,” highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how through a variety of gifts from God, we emerged a different and better church.

The 37th Laity Session of the Desert Southwest Conference included an opening message from Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata, expressing his deep appreciation for all that our laity and acknowledging that without the laity of our churches, the Desert Southwest Conference could not be as vital as it is today. Laurie Lineberry (outgoing Conference Lay Leader), shared a reminder from her original address to the laity, to embrace Southern hospitality and love all people as Christ loves us, understand our own story of our journey with Christ and be able to share in a non-threatening way, and to become comfortable praying out loud where and when it is needed. The guest speaker for the Laity Session was Pastor Gina Pollard. She led the laity in a session on grief, explaining about the many tangible and intangible ways and reasons we experience grief. [Click here to watch](https://youtu.be/WymkDKB-v9M) the recording of the 2021 Laity Session. After the presentation, Judy Martin, chair of the Clergy and Lay Leadership Development team, shared that there were no nominations for a new Conference Lay Leader. Asking for nominations from the floor, she received those names and led the laity on a discussion and vote to allow the Clergy and Lay Leadership Development team to fill the Conference Lay Leader role. The motion was passed and presented to the body of the Annual Conference and affirmed.

During a point of personal privilege, Rev. Dan Hurlbert reminded the body that this year is the 25th anniversary of the Order of the Deacons.

This year's Bishop's Awards were granted to the following three people.

* Randy Bowman, Director of Finance and Administration
* Marilee Miller Clarke, Desert Southwest Conference Chancellor
* Julie O'Neal, Executive Assistant to the Bishop

Main actions enacted by the conference are listed and linked below:

* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation No. 2](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Council-on-Finance-Administration-Recommendation-2.pdf) – Special Days and Causes
* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation No. 3](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Council-on-Finance-Administration-Recommendation-3.pdf) – Conference Advance and Benevolence Specials
* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation No. 4](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Council-on-Finance-Administration-Recommendation-4.pdf) – Other Recommendations (level 1 exempt compensation, employee expenses, mileage reimbursement rates, and spending within budgets)
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation No. 1](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Board-of-Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Annuity Rate and Past Service Obligation
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation No. 2](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Board-of-Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-2.pdf) – Resolution Relating to Rental/Housing Allowance for Retired or Disabled Clergypersons of the Desert Southwest Conference
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation No. 3](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Board-of-Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-3.pdf) – Resolution Relating to Local Church Funding for the Clergy Retirement Security Program in 2021
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation No. 4](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Board-of-Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-4.pdf) – Resolution Relating to HealthFlex Exchange Participant Contribution Levels and Church Payment Rate
* [Conference Personnel Committee Recommendation No. 1](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Personnel-Committee-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Changes to Exempt Salary Levels
* [Conference Personnel Committee Recommendation No. 2](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Personnel-Committee-Recommendation-2.pdf) – Changes to Non-Exempt Wage Levels
* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation No. 1](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Council-on-Finance-Administration-Recommendation-1.pdf) – 2022 Apportioned Conference Budget
* [Commission on Equitable Compensation Recommendation](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Commission-on-Equitable-Compensation-Recommendation.pdf) – Base Cash Compensation and Housing – 2022
* [Conference Nominations Report](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Nominations-Updated-06.12.2021.pdf) – updated 06/12/2021
* [Resolution from Commission on Religion and Race](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Resolution-from-Commission-on-Religion-and-Race.pdf) (Amended adding persons with disabilities after LGBTQIA+.)
* [Resolution to Address Conference Culture](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Resolution-to-Address-Conference-Culture-1.pdf) (Amended adding chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry after chairperson of the Conference Commission on Religion and Race and to add a representative of the local pastors after chairperson on the Board of Ordained Ministry.)
* [Resolution to Address Term Limits](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Resolution-to-Address-Term-Limits-1.pdf)
* [Rule Change from Covenant Council](http://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Rule_Change_from_Covenant_Council.pdf) (Amended adding who is not Conference Staff after one representative from the ministry areas listed and to include the Health and Caring Committee in the membership.)

This year there were no church closures and no resolutions related to the upcoming General Conference. The body of the Annual Conference passed the motion to allow the Conference Secretary to distribute forms for the nominations of Episcopal candidates to the lay and clergy members of next year’s Annual Conference to be held on June 9-12, 2022, but no nominations were received during this year’s session.

There were no changes during Annual Conference to the list of delegates to General Conference, but during the delays in holding a General Conference, three of our delegates asked to be removed. The updated list of lay and clergy delegates to General Conference is available at <https://dscumc.org/dscumc-delegates/>.

The average age of the ordinands is 43. Changes in clergy status included:

* **Commissioned for the work of an elder**

Class of 2020: Amanda Julia Corella and Stuart Matthew Salvatierra

Class of 2021: Osias Alberto Segura-Guzmán and Diamond Antoinette Pate

* **Ordained as an elder**

Class of 2020: Alma Lilian Aguirre-Olivares and Kimberly Omeka Scott

Class of 2021: Jamie L. Booth and Efrain Zavala

* **Elders in The United Methodist Church**

Class of 2020: David Earl Wasson

Class of 2021: Oskar Antonino Ontanyon

* **Associate Membership** – Posthumously Awarded

James Leonard Nelson, Jr.

The eleven clergy that retired this year are listed below. You can watch the celebration of ministry video which includes some Lay Persons assigned by clicking on the link at <https://dscumc.org/annual-conference>.

1. Rev. Rosemary Anderson
2. Rev. Geraldine Bast
3. Rev. Patricia Blackwood
4. Rev. Nancy Cushman
5. Rev. John Fairchild
6. Rev. Eun Jin La
7. Pastor Bob Lind
8. Rev. Oskar Ontanyon
9. Rev. Sharon Ragland
10. Pastor Linda Stanley
11. Rev. Joyce Steiner

The thirteen clergy or clergy spouses memorialized are listed below. You can watch the memorial video towards the end of the Friday Plenary recording at <https://youtu.be/FpQUZ0ySz-o>.

1. Rev. Kelly Bender
2. Pastor Fred Jameson
3. Rev. Lori Martin DeWitt
4. Pastor James (Jimmy) L. Nelson Jr.
5. Rev. J. Michael Pearson
6. Rev. Gary Prichard
7. Rev. Scott Ritchey
8. Pastor Evelyn Roberts
9. Rev. Harry Ryan
10. Mrs. Shirley Strivings
11. Rev. William (Bill) Usher
12. Mr. Robert (Bob) Wagner
13. Mr. Russel C. Wells

The Desert Southwest Conference membership stands at 24,519, down 5.7% from the previous year.

Worship attendance stands at 14,859, down 16.5%.

Church school attendance stands at 2,781, down 31.0%.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2020 are 302, down 52.4% from 2019.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2020 are 6,239, down 26.8% from 2019.

Worshippers engaged in mission for 2020 are 9,105, down 26.0% from 2019.