**2022 Desert Southwest Annual Conference Report**

**By Christina Dillabough, Director of Communications**

**Desert Southwest Conference**

The 38th session of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference took place on June 10-11, 2022, as a hybrid event for the first time. In person attendees gathered at the Mesa Convention Center, and online voting participants gathered via Zoom. Through AV support from GNTV Media Ministry, transitions from online to in-person speakers was seamless. The session theme was “Thriving: From Languishing to Flourishing”, with Deuteronomy 30:19 and John 10:10 as the guiding Scripture.

The Clergy Session and Laity Session took place on June 8, 2022, via Zoom. The Laity Session included a guest speaker, Martha Lundgren, a United Methodist deaconess who responded to a call to provide faithful care to dying persons. Much of her work involves educating people about end-of-life issues, how to complete advance directive documents, and how to make dignified, meaningful, and affordable cremation, burial, funeral, and memorial arrangements. Her talk included guidance on overcoming stress and finding joy and God through it all. She said,

*“What I’ve come to understand down to my core is that each of our breaths, our first breath, our last breath, and all the breaths in between, are of God’s spirit. Each is sacred.”*

Bishop Grant J. Hagiya presided over the Annual Conference Session with grace and ease as the Annual Conference body heard reports, debated the various legislation items, and voted online and in person. The resolutions and legislation items are:

**Consent Calendar**

(Recommendations that are grouped under one heading and decided upon as a single item.)

* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation 2](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Council-on-Administration-and-Finance-Recommendation-2.pdf) – Special Days and Causes
* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation 3](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Council-on-Administration-and-Finance-Recommendation-3.pdf) – Conference Advance and Benevolence Specials
* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation 4](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Council-on-Administration-and-Finance-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 1](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Annuity Rate and Past Service Obligation
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation 2](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/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 3](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-3.pdf) – Resolution Relating to Local Church Funding for the Clergy Retirement Security Program in 2023
* [Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits Recommendation 4](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Pension-and-Health-Benefits-Recommendation-4.pdf) – Resolution Relating to HealthFlex Exchange Participant Contribution Levels and Church Payment Rate
* [Conference Personnel Committee Recommendation 1](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Personnel-Committee-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Changes to Exempt Salary Levels
* [Conference Personnel Committee Recommendation 2](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Personnel-Committee-Recommendation-2.pdf) – Changes to Non-Exempt Wage Levels
* [Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation Recommendation](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Equitable-Compensation-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Clergy Minimum Salary Schedule for 2023 – **REMOVED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR**
* [Communication Commission Rule Change](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Commission-on-Communications-Rule-Change.pdf) – Proposed change to Conference rule A.IV.U., as submitted by the Conference Commission on Communications and amended by the Conference Rules Committee
* [Sick Leave Definition Rule Change](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Sick_-Leave-Rule-Change-v2.pdf) – Proposed change to Conference rule B.V.I.4 on sick leave for Conference employees, as submitted by various individuals and amended by the Conference Personnel Committee and the Conference Rules Committee

**ALL APPROVED** with the exception of the Commission on Equitable Compensation Recommendation

**Recommendations for Consideration at Annual Conference**

* [Council on Finance and Administration Recommendation 1](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Council-on-Administration-and-Finance-Recommendation-1.pdf) – 2023 Apportioned Conference Budget – **APPROVED**
* [Board of Trustees Recommendation](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Board-of-Trustees-Recommendation.pdf) – **APPROVED**
* [Conference Commission on Equitable Compensation Recommendation](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Equitable-Compensation-Recommendation-1.pdf) – Clergy Minimum Salary Schedule for 2023 – **APPROVED**
* [Nominations Report](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Nominations-Report-06-11-2022-version-2.pdf) – 06/11/2022 version 2 – **APPROVED**

**Legislation**

* [Resolution Concerning Guns at Annual Conference](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Concerning-Guns-at-Annual-Conference.pdf) – **APPROVED**
* [Resolution Supporting Central Conference Leadership and the Christmas Covenant](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Supporting-Central-Conference-Leadership-and-the-Christmas-Covenant.pdf) – **WITHDRAWN**
* [Endorsement by the Desert Southwest Annual Conference](https://dscumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Florida-Statement.pdf) – **APPROVED**

**Memorable Moments**

Pastor Deontez Wimbley shared a moving sermon during the Saturday morning virtual worship service. Watch the homily at <https://youtu.be/sk39RJIZf0k>.

The Desert Southwest Conference Board of Ordained Ministry recognized the sixteen provisional candidates from the Florida Annual Conference that were not commissioned. Watch a video clip of that portion of the session at <https://youtu.be/mTZ-OTQwjE8>. Learn more about the Florida decision at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/clergy-session-vote-highlights-lgbtq-divide>.

The two Desert Southwest Annual Conference delegates for General Conference, Rev. Dan Hurlbert and Mr. Paul Gómez, and the reserve delegates, Rev. Anthony Tang and Ms. Julie O'Neal, addressed the body. Rev. Dan Hurlbert provided information about the nomination process for Episcopal candidates and encouraged prayerful discernment for nominations using the shared nomination form for the Western Jurisdiction available at <https://dscumc.org/ac>. Rev. Hurlbert announced that the Jurisdictional Conference will take place on November 2-5, 2022, in Salt Lake City, where bishops will be elected. Event information is available at <https://westernjurisdictionumc.org/jurisdictional-conference>.

Paul Gómez provided an update on the latest status of the General Conference. He encourages everyone to read Heather Han's UM News article, *Protocol's day has passed, some negotiators say*, at <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/protocols-day-has-passed-some-negotiators-say> and the recent article, from the authors' that produced the *Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace through Separation*, at <https://www.protocolresponse.com/> to learn why the authors' and most delegates no longer support this legislation.

Rev. Anthony Tang and Julie O'Neal updated the body about Jurisdictional and General Agency nominations inviting persons interested in serving to enter their names to be included in the Jurisdictional Nomination pool using the form linked in a green box labeled Western Jurisdiction Nomination at <https://dscumc.org/ac>.

During the Saturday evening ordination service, Rev. Melissa Rynders, Chair of the DSC Board of Ordained Ministry, named the Florida candidates to honor them. Watch a video clip from the ordination service at <https://youtu.be/wwgb0TBsiNo>.

Bishop Grant Hagiya’s message, “Remember to Whom You Belong,” was a personal reflection of his own ordination experience. He addressed the ordinands, saying,

*“It is your time to enter the representative ministry of Jesus Christ. It is your time to commit to lead the people of God. It is the church’s time to revel in a new generation of spiritual leaders, and it is all of our time to take stock of who we are and to whom we belong.” (Bishop Grant Hagiya)*

The featured scripture, Matthew 25: 31-46, brought out stories of how difficult it is to be in ministry, committed to caring for the least, and a reminder of the sacrifice for all of us being judged daily. Watch the ordination service at <https://youtu.be/BxGUcasz1U0>.

**The Desert Southwest Annual Conference candidates for ministry were:**

* Brooke Burris Isingoma ordained as an Elder in Full Connection.
* Linda Larsen recognized as an Associate Member.
* Sylvia Harris, Michael Wilkerson, and Christopher Wurpts commissioned as Provisional Elders.
* Meredith Joubert, commission as a Provisional Deacon.

**Clergy retiring this year are:**

Watch the video clip of the retirement celebration at <https://youtu.be/P7RYp7znBxc>.

* Rev. Nancy Susan Brims
* Rev. Deborah Lerner
* Rev. Lyndon Mason
* Rev. David McPherson
* Rev. Donna Morley
* Pastor Deborah Schauer
* Rev. Dr. Richard Smith
* Rev. Stephanie Soon
* Rev. Jaime Vazquez

**Church closures are:**

* Korean United Methodist Church of Las Vegas, Nevada
* Aldersgate United Methodist Church

**Memorial Service**

During the memorial service on Friday night, Rev. Hannah Adair Bonner preached a heartfelt sermon recognizing those who have died over the past year. You can watch the service at <https://youtu.be/97XuwprVijc>. The following persons’ lives were celebrated as this year’s honored dead.

**From the Council of Bishops**

* Bishop Joseph H. Yeakel
* Bishop Beverly J. Shamana
* Jeffrey Joe Swenson
* Dania Soriano
* Jack D. Middleton
* Bishop Wilbur Choy
* Marjorie “Marji” Tuell
* Margaret Rose King

**Desert Southwest Conference Death**

* Pastor Lenore Renfro
* Mrs. Gladys (Rickey) Wise
* Pastor Sefo Jeffrey Fata-Misionare
* Mrs. Joanne "Betty" Mathis
* William "Bill" Denlinger
* Rev. John "Jack" Wise
* Rev. Robert "Bob" Peale
* Rev. Dr. Bert Lewis
* Rev. Michael Chamness
* Mrs. Aud Gundersen
* Rev. J. Lloyd Ewart Jr.
* Rev. Paul Self-Price
* Rev. Roy Ludlow
* Pastor Avis J. Emerson Black
* Rev. Lee Hirt
* Mrs. Kimberly Parrott
* Mrs. Judith Bobbitt
* Rev. Allan Nesbitt
* Mrs. Sandra Gladding
* Mr. Benjamin Bealor

**This year’s statistical updates are as follows:**

* Membership stands at 23,033, down 6.1% from the previous year.
* Worship attendance stands at 9,277, down 37.6% from the previous year.
* Church school attendance stands at 2,507, down 9.9% from the previous year.
* Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2021 are 282, down 23.0% from 2020.
* Adults and young adults in small groups for 2021 are 5,125, down 17.9% from 2020.
* Worshippers engaged in mission for 2021 are 7,656, down 15.9% from 2020.