169th Session of the California-Nevada Annual Conference  
Saturday, June 24, 2017

Morning Devotions were led the Rev. Lois Black, pastor at Yuba City First UMC with the theme “words are not enough”. Pastor Laurie Hugh led the band and singing.

Emily Allen reviewed the agenda for the day.

The Bishop formally welcomed President Tevita Bainivanua Nawadra of the Methodist Church of Fiji and Rotuma and his wife, Georgina. We’ve been honored to have the President and his wife for several years now and he is finishing his term this year. He was warmly greeted and addressed us by saying how grateful he is for this community of faith and friends, and for being here the past few years. He expressed appreciation for the theme: Testify to love, your story matters. He shared their story of how we have joined hands. In 2009 he came here to request that we come and celebrate with them at their annual conference, which is mostly singing with 100 choirs! Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr. and a team from California-Nevada came, but they faced a military coup and the conference was canceled. The government told them that the Church could not meet the American delegation. But they have friends, from the US, who talked with the embassy and that opened doors for their stay. There was a time when the government tried to stifle the church but the resurrected Jesus cannot be suppressed. They know how to live with these kinds of forces and they found their way through these years. They needed someone to call our brothers and sisters who could pray for them. For three years their conference was cancelled. They thank God that the churches stayed faithful during that time. The church from Fiji and Cal-Nevada signed a document confirming our relationship. Our agreement was that we would have someone to come and help with the Fijian congregations in California-Nevada. They are so grateful to God to have celebrated the ordination of our first Fijian Elders last night. Somehow God has a sense of humor – their names mean “partner” and “remind” – remind us of our partnership. The Methodist Church in Fiji will not forget the UMC in California-Nevada. Now they also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Methodists in Australia and will soon have one with the British Methodist Conference. He wants to give a reminder of how we join together and gave our Bishop Carcano a stole with the logo of Fiji, except this logo was changed to a bigger canoe for traveling further.

Bishop Carcano also expressed appreciation for their very special partnership and said that we are committed to swimming forward. She prays for peaceful waters. There are close to 300,000 members of the Methodist Church in Fiji. It is the largest Christian community there. The President will receive another appointment in the near future.

Another visitor was introduced, Dr. Mator Kpangbai from Liberia. He has recently been appointed to be Deputy Minister of Education for Methodist work in Liberia. He has been working in development for our United Methodist University in Liberia. He asked for prayers for the conference in Liberia, begun in 1833 by the first Bishop (American) to grow the Methodist mission there. Their story is 185 years of presence, one of strength and challenge. They’ve endured civil war and they have been scattered. Now they are back and doing the hard work of providing education and caring for the poor. He told us that 61% of the university students are women. He thanked his friends at UMC Clovis and Pastor Jeannette Saavedra.
Anya Walther, a youth representative from Roseville, is going to University of the Pacific in the fall. She is an immigrant from Kazakhstan. She was seated with the Bishop on the dais.

Dr. Erin Hawkins gave her third address:

I have been so honored and profoundly blessed by hearing these stories and the ways in which you are thinking about your stories. It is important to not just tell our stories, but also, when it is time, to let go of stories and to rewrite them. We’ve looked at individual stories. All creation wants to be heard! To listen to another’s soul, to listen it into life, into a position of disclosure and discovery, is the greatest service we can provide.

What can we say about who we are becoming as a church, a conference, a denomination?

Let’s explore God’s story – but first, what has been coming alive for you as you reflect on your story?

Some folks shared:

Holly Hillman: I’ve deeply moved, especially by the woman who learned English because she finally has white friends. I have been involved in prison ministry and now go to the laundry mat to hear the stories of the poor.

Carol Estes: I am moved by the stories that seem very small. Being blind, I’ve thought that what I do is small, but I am discovering that God can use our limitations, whatever they are, in a mighty way. God is using me and it is all related to everyone else. I can’t claim myself small but need to show up so God can be seen in me. Thank you. I’ve been blessed to be a part of this connection.

John Pavoni: Our church building burned down in the wildfire and connectionalism has kept us alive. We have received everything from chairs, altar items, people still call us, and we’re in the process of rebuilding. I thank God we are United Methodist.

Pat Ravis: I was touched by the story of the Punjabi congregation in Yuba City. We share our congregation with Haitian Seventh Day Adventist and Haitian Baptist churches. We wish we could do things together. Listening to our stories here, I am getting ideas for how we can do things together.

Karen Pugh: Our church can now recycle food rejected by schools. We are looking at tiny houses on our property.

Donna McKibben: I was deeply moved by the stories and the passion of them; I learned that I want so much to serve and I’m learning that it is not about people seeing me serve but about the service itself.

Larry Pasquale: I am the music director at Hillsdale UMC, and since this is gay pride weekend I brought this Rainbow Flag with me. Last night one vision struck me, (at the ordination service) as Pastor Schuyler “planted and watered” Tikiko Lesumo into a tree; and as gay pastor Matthew was ordained, it just spoke volumes; this is what love is – the most tender and most momentous thing for me to witness.

Erin Hawkins noted the Power in these stories.

How does one tell God’s story? What we do is reflect on what God reveals about God’s self. The divine narrative is contained in the commissioning of Moses. “I have heard my people crying out and I have come to rescue them.” “I am sending you”, “I will be with you”, “I am who I am”, “I am has sent me”, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
Unbearable suffering has its limits. The suffering comes to public speech and then the cry comes to God’s ears. We see it in the re-emergence of the protest movement. Unbearable suffering is becoming public narrative.

The cries can become “normal” – the processes we have in order to handle them, the protest, the automatic arrest and bail, etc. We don’t like to be made uncomfortable or inconvenienced. How jaded and numb we have become to the cries of the suffering. How do we become sensitized again to the suffering? How do we hear their stories? How much can our communities take?

The cries bring about a divine resolve, but what about human resolve? God meets us where we are in the dark place and on the mountain top. When the breaking point of suffering has been reached, God is resolved to transform the situation. It is a divine moment to turn away from oppression and turn toward opportunity. When God decides, we must act.

God says “don’t put me in a box”, also says it in the declarative future “I will be who I will be”. You can’t know who God is unless you are willing to join God in God’s “being-ness”. You must sign up for mission in the world. We must take risk and step out on the road even when we can’t see beyond our doorstep. Eventually Moses does this. God is being in the world. I will be with you.

So what is God’s story? It’s a story that leads to hope, healing, relief of suffering; it is always revealing, always convicting our hearts, always right now. It is Urgent. The suffering of the world is reaching a breaking point. All of creation longs to be heard. The call is made for faithful Christian’s to act, to be God’s agents of transformation. In God’s story there is always a call for faithful and hopeful action.

God will go with you all the way. “Where you lead me, I will follow,” is the hymn. God’s story is when we follow. Where God leads us, let us follow.

Dr. Hawkins received a standing ovation from an appreciative audience.

Micheal Pope, our Lay Leader, announced she is leaving early to serve a congregation. She thanked the Bishop and encouraged us to bring back what we have learned and to be passionate about our faith. We were made for the journey that is before us.

After a brief break we returned to fix the appointments for the Great Northern District, which were read by D.S. Samelson and the Bishop, followed by prayer.

The Bishop announced that by the end of next week we will know who will be the new District Superintendent for the new District.

Commission on Nominations and Leadership – Chairperson Sunae Cho presented the following motions regarding the Report of the Commission on Nominations and Leadership:

1. I move that the Conference Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for the election of the Conference Board of Trustees and to fill vacancies as listed.

2. I move the election of the new officers and members on all Conference boards, commissions, committees, and agencies.
3. I move to elect all the District Boards of Church Location and Building, District Committees on the District Superintendency, and District Committees on Ordained Ministry and other affiliated District committees.

4. I move the confirmation and acknowledgment of the Boards of California-Nevada Methodist Homes, Clergy Spouse Association, Conference Claimants’ Endowment Board, Fred Finch Youth Center Committee, Glide Foundation, Retired Clergy Association, Sierra Service Project, United Methodist Foundation, United Methodist Men, and Conference United Methodist Women.

5. I move the election of the Board of Directors for the UC Merced Wesley Foundation.

6. I move that we wave the Standing Rule V Guideline #5 concerning term limits for service on a conference committee so that the Commission on Archives and History may have an additional year to organize their membership.

7. I move to receive the entire 2017 Nominations Report as printed and amended.

8. I move that the remaining vacancies and other occurrences following the adjournment of the Annual Conference Session may be filled by the Conference Committee on Nominations and Connectional Leadership Development consultation with the Bishop and the Core Team.

The motions were approved by the Session.

**Legislative Section report** - Linda Caldwell asked Bruce Pettit, chair of his section, to introduce Item No. 28. The section recommended a “no” vote, 41 yes and 54 no.

*In favor* – this is a non-binding petition to consider report of Way Forward Commission. There were concerns expressed about cost, but shouldn’t we invest the same way the commission is? We should be coming together closer.

*Point of Information* – the recommendations won’t be available until 90 days before the February 2019 General Conference.

*Against* - This kind of networking has been going on and will continue. We are in constant communication with all the other delegations. I see no point in expending limited resources to duplicate the work continuing our Jurisdictional work together.

*In favor* – saying this would be the only opportunity to come together and formulate a unified response. The delegation may change, and that is something to consider as well.

*Question: Is this a motion that could be brought to annual conference next year and still have time to be effective? Answer: Can’t respond to effectiveness.*

*Against: It is important to recognize the hard work of the delegation, and that they are already strategizing; for us to say that you need to strategize would undermine their work.*
The vote was taken and Item 28 is not supported.

*Item 14* was presented and reference made to the amendment. The section recommends not to support.

*Question*: amended but what was it? *Answer*: Linda Caldwell read the Amendment.

*Question*: the vote in the section was 60 yes and only 13 no. The report says that it was not approved? *Answer*: After double checking the record, the Bishop said that we must follow the minutes of the section and that the Item was indeed recommended by the section.

*In favor of* – support to show we are an accepting church and all are welcome.

*In support of* – in favor because we cannot testify to love and subject these people (LGBTQA+) to fear, violence.

*Colin Kerr-Carpenter* moved placing a comma after “transgender,” then insert “gender-nonconforming, and gender non-binary people at risk”. Motion was seconded.

*Information* – Has a Grandmother who is gender non-conforming.

*In favor of*: I am a non-gender woman, and appreciate the edits as they are more consistent with the way the community understands themselves.

The vote on the Kerr-Carpenter amendment was supported.

Discussion returned to Item 14 as amended.

*Austin Eikenberry* – moved to strike sending our action to Texas and North Carolina. Seconded. It is not good for members of California to write to those constituencies. He fears that our work would contradict our stated goal.

Motion approved.

Back to item 14 as amended twice.

*Alyss Swanson* – moved that we change “gender non-conforming and gender non-binary” to “gender expansive.” Motion was seconded.

*Question* – what is transgender non-conforming and gender non-binary? I would like the knowledge. *Swanson response*: gender nonconforming and non-binary are between male and female on the gender spectrum; somewhere in between.

*Against*: She is a child of a transgender parent and also identifies as non-conforming. Adding “gender expansive” might bring down someone else’s identity.

*Against*: wants to add expansive but not delete the others

*Against*: adding expansive isn’t good

*In favor*: supports this addition, language is fluid, and we are looking to include not exclude.

Donna Fado Ivery – moved the question
The vote was taken and the Swanson Amendment was not supported.

*Donna Fado Ivery* moved that we add "gender expansive" throughout the item. Motion was seconded.

**In favor of:** I support.

**Point of Information:** There is a petition from the Norway conference to the Judicial Conference, and suggests that everyone look for this information and study.

**Against:** concerned that the definition gets longer and those that profess hate are going to care.

The vote on the Fado Ivery amendment was taken and is supported.

The whole item 14 as amended is before us, the vote was taken and was approved.

**Item 24** – presented by section leader and was voted 23 for and 67 against. The author has requested that the Item be removed so that more studies can be done and the Item rewritten for next year. The Body allowed the Item to be withdrawn. The Bishop encouraged us to study the information presented.

**Point of Personal Privilege:** Linda Prendergast reported that the action we took in a previous annual conference session concerning the Camp Liberty prisoners in Iran has resulted in the prisoners being freed. Many of us signed the petition for freeing a Christian prisoner and he was finally released. Those who brought the action to our attention are very grateful for our assistance.

**Consent Calendar** was before us, the vote taken and approved.

The Bishop spoke about *electing a delegation* for the special called General Conference in 2019 next year at our Annual Conference in 2018. At that time, we can decide to elect another delegation in 2019 for the 2020 General Conference, or to keep the newly elected 2019 delegation for the 2020 GC.

DS Schuyler Rhodes offered prayer concerns for: John Auer, John Dodson, Kathleen Kaplan, and Nadra in Forest Hill. We were dismissed for the lunch break.

*When we reconvened,* Jaelin Brun, a student at St. Patricks/St. Vincents High and a youth member from Glide Memorial UMC in San Francisco, joined the Bishop and was seated at the dais.

**Budget for 2018:** Scott Wylie, CFA Chair and Diane Knudsen, Treasurer, presented the budget for discussion and approval.

**Question:** Is there any strategy to bring us up to paying 100% World Service apportionment? **Answer:** Without enthusiastic giving in the churches, no strategy will do it. There is no magic answer. We paid four of our apportionments at 100% in 2017 and we have consultants coming in and hope for some ideas to increase our giving.

**Information** – I know that our Bishop brought the Cal-Pac Annual Conference to 100% apportionment giving and hopes that she might help us do that too. We need to take our responsibilities seriously to the general church. It’s embarrassing to always be almost at the bottom. We are not without capacity, but without willingness.

**Response from the Bishop** – it is true that we were able to reach 100% and it took collaboration of all. Our Cal-Nev council on finance is very open to ideas and hearing from others and to have an internal
audit. We have greater stewardship capacity, it’s been growing, but God has given us more resources than we are aware of.

The Budget for 2018 was before us, the vote taken and it was passed. We thank CFA for their work.

*The appointments beyond the local church* were then fixed. Dean of the Cabinet Debra Brady and the Bishop read the appointments, followed by prayer.

*Children and Youth at conference* – a video created during the conference of the activities and thoughts of the children and youth was presented.

*Diversity Monitoring Report:* Shan McSpadden, member of our Conference CORR, reported that they are very encouraged by the expressions of intentionality to move from diversity to inclusion, and by hearing those who are often on the margin. The commission is encouraged by the Cabinet responding to their challenge and intentionally taking time to hear specific stories from our caucuses.

Jose Ramos, member of CORR, told his story. My experience with the Bishop meeting with the Hispanic ministers was that she was especially mindful of language, addressing us in English and Spanish. All of us know that the Bishop took time to hear our stories of conversion and call to ministry. Jose told of being persecuted as a child by Catholics. Our Bishop is a role model for all of us as we work together to be more inclusive.

Shan continued with thanks for approval of listing the racial ethnic backgrounds of members in our Nominations report. Our leaders during this conference had us in small groups sharing stories which also model something we have to do day by day. Language really is a barrier to full inclusion. Inclusion means people are taken seriously, and it takes time and struggle. The question for all of us: Do we have the intentionality and are we willing to take the time?

*Commission On the Annual Conference Session:* Bob Chicou, chair, reported our next annual conference session will be in the Modesto Convention Center at the Double Tree Hotel, June 20-23 2018. He spoke words of appreciation for the staff at the Hyatt in Burlingame for our last 4 years. This year has been a tremendous conference under our new bishop, united in a theme that has resonated among so many of us. Thank you Bishop. Many are committed to making this conference happen and work fabulously as a team. Many thanks to the members of the Commission.

*Wrap up video:* Larry Hygh presented a video synopsis of the entire conference session for our review.

There being no further business, we closed the conference an hour early with thanksgiving, prayer and singing.