



Bishop Ken Carter's reflections on Annual Conference 2017

In reflecting on our gathering in Orlando, I give thanks for the laity and clergy of our Annual Conference. These are the images that remain with me, a few days later:

- Tammy Pawloski's call to our local churches to intervene in the lives of children at risk, and the testimony of her own adopted son.
- Hundreds of people kneeling at the altar at the invitation of Bishop Pereira of the Methodist Church of Cuba.
- Jorge Acevedo and Alice Williams embracing after their witness, which included a statement, a reading of scripture and a moving prayer.
- The response and personal experiences of Corey Jones and Gary Marcelin to the resolutions about support of [Black Lives Matter](#) and Mass Incarceration.
- Robert McMichael and Jarvis Wilson, extraordinary musicians and worship leaders, leading us in singing "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power."
- The insight of Elaine Heath that we need to take discipleship a lot more seriously.
- The voice of Kevin Watson urging us to trust transformation and not just information, and to be vulnerable.

We were able to reduce our number of districts from nine to eight. This will allow us to channel resources toward the vital connectional ministries of our annual conference. We lifted up the vision of doubling the number of vital local churches. We noted that there are now 80 [Fresh Expressions](#) of church. We voted to close 17 local churches, while noting that 17 new churches are projected to be planted this year and next. We acted on a number of resolutions that express the church's convictions about the intersection of church and society. We did not and do not have a consensus about these matters, but the conference expressed by majority vote its sense of where God is leading us. Thirteen men and women were ordained, 12 elders and one deacon. And we assigned clergy to serve in churches across the annual conference for the coming year.

Our theme was "Revive us Again!" And my sense was that God did indeed revive us, renewing us for leadership in our local churches and communities. Annual Conference is always something of a reunion, and it was wonderful to see the faces of friends who are our leaders and influencers, and who will return home to make a difference!



Message from the District Superintendent



Dear North East District Family,

As I write this, I am finishing my first year as your district superintendent. I want to take a moment to tell you how honored and humbled I am to serve Jesus and you in this role. I love the local church, and I have loved being a local church pastor. I truly believe that the local church is the hope of the world. For that reason, I wasn't sure how I would enjoy serving as a superintendent. I can honestly tell you that I love it. Shepherding, connecting, and equipping the amazing people of the North East has been a true joy. I have loved visiting your churches, campus ministries, and Fresh Expressions. Our family quickly decided that Jacksonville is our favorite place we have ever lived. In short, we adore serving with you!

I want you to know that all of you amaze me! The church is very different in 2017. The message of Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected has never changed, but the way we share it must be different. Some of you have crossed that bridge beautifully. Others of you are trying hard to do so. You are my heroes! You understand that we have communities of people who desperately need the saving grace, love, hope, peace, & joy that we know. You're doing your very best to reach those people. Thank you!

If we're honest, we also know that there are some among us who aren't willing to make that change. That's okay, too, as we continue to work a process of helping those faith communities think about what their legacy will be and how it can continue to help the body of United Methodist believers make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. There is much sacred honor and dignity in that choice and work. I honor you and stand with you.

As we begin year two, we will start to focus on the goal that Bishop Carter has set: to double the number of vital congregations in the Florida Conference. We'll, of course, focus on doubling the number of vital faith communities in the North East. We've adopted new vitality metrics and have learned that we have 20 vital faith communities in the new NE District. Our goal now is to work toward 40 of the 72 being vital. Our Operations Team is working hard designing strategies to accomplish this and we're already at work with several of you. I'm excited!

As we begin this new Conference year, let me ask you to do several things:

- Meet with your church leadership and review your vitality metrics. The first step to moving forward is understanding where you are. Sometimes it's hard, but we won't get out of the gate if we don't embrace what's staring back at us in the mirror.
- Work with your leadership to devise a plan as to how you will move forward. Begin that process in prayer. Then do it! It's okay to fail as long as you learn from those mistakes and "fail forward."
- Be willing to change! No one likes change, but we must. The old ways of doing church no longer work. That means someone will have to give up their sacred cow. Ask your people, "What would you be willing to change about our faith community if it meant getting your children or grandchildren to know Jesus?" My guess is that there's nothing people wouldn't be willing to change when they think of things in that way.
- Begin tracking our new metrics of first time guests and monthly Gospel invitations. Right now we're testing the tracking of these numbers. They become official on January 1, 2018. If you have questions about how this will work, please reach out to the district office.

A word from Rev. Barry Andrews, Senior Pastor

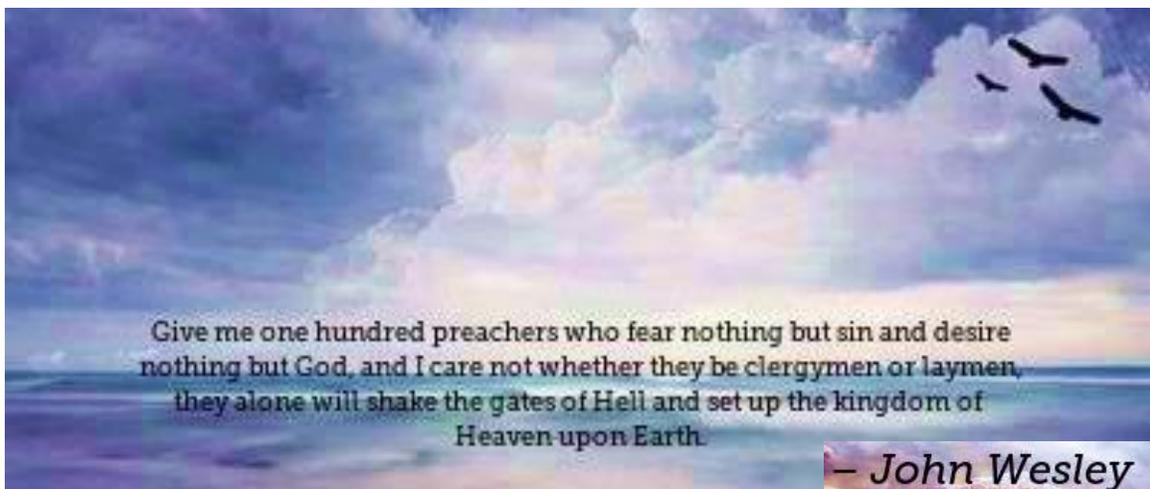
Over the years I've often said, "Better hot in July than cold in January". Well, not only hot, but wet. Really wet. Since the rains began about 5 weeks ago, I've measured about 25" at the parsonage. It surely has made things grow.

Perhaps the rain also was a contributing factor in two large oak limbs falling on the southern addition on Peeler Hall. When the school used this building, it was the student locker room, teacher's lounge, and janitor's office. Now it's our plumbing room, paint room, and electrical room. Having these rooms available in many ways makes it possible for us to contain campus costs by doing our own maintenance, and providing staging and work areas for the NOMADS to work. These limbs, each about 8' around, have heavily damaged the roof structure and the walls of these rooms. We're in the early stages of deciding how to affect repairs, and will work closely with our Florida Conference insurance plan to see that this work is done well.

Trees aren't the only things growing, and changing around here. We've been hosting summer camp for the children of refugees who arrived in the US after Duval County public schools started the summer break. These children are learning English and American manners and customs, led by volunteer instructors. It's amazing how quickly children pick up our ways, and what better place for these newcomers to experience this grand, free land than at a Methodist Church. I expect that as these children grow they, like us, will always have a warm place in their hearts for this sacred place.

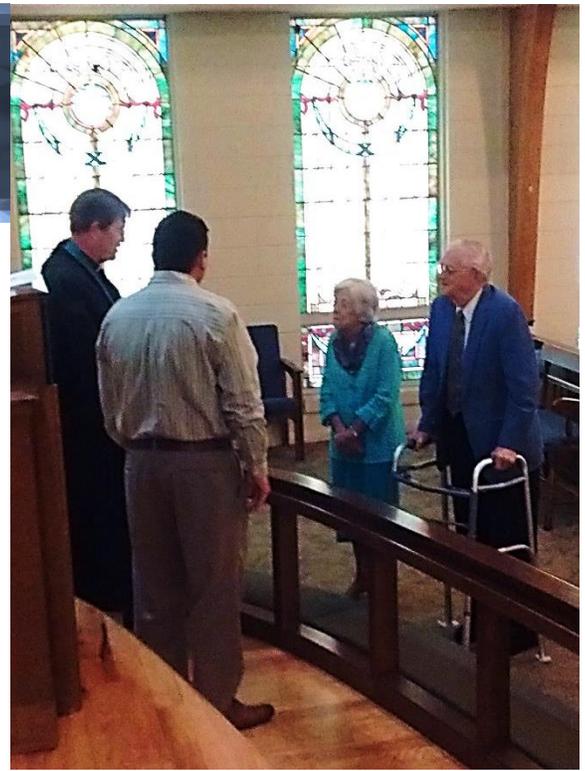
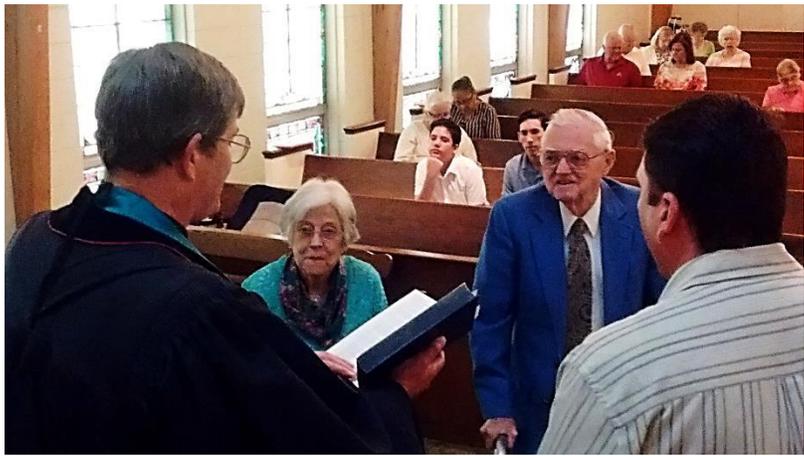
July also is my anniversary month, and I've begun my twelfth year of ministry here at Faith. I don't want take lightly the privilege of service, and am very grateful for the mercies and graces that have made these last 11 years go by so quickly. Many things have changed, for all of us, in these years, but we continue to grow in our relationships with one another and God, and, God willing, we'll continue on His green paths in the year to come.

Yes, indeed, we have all the ingredients we need to for growth --- a bright sun; hot, long days; and plenty of rain. God has planted his Holy Spirit in all of us; let his grace bring you to growth, and we'll all work and grow towards a greater perfection of Spirit and action.



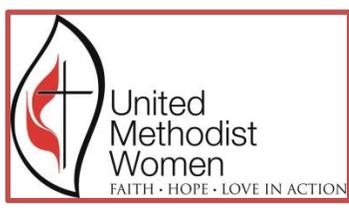


We welcome Mel and Flo Clark into our church family!



Colonel David Emory Shank, son of Richard and Cynthia, received his master's degree in Strategic Warfare on June 9th from the Army War College in Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Myrna, are now stationed in Stuttgart, Germany for two years.

As of June 24, Colonel Shank became in command of the 10th Army and Missile Defense Command / U.S. Army Europe. He serves as U.S. Army Europe's executive agent for all theater air and missile defense operations and air missile defense force management.



The Annual UMW Auction will be August 27th. Please see Susan Speicher to donate goods and services for the auction. Then plan to join us in Wesley Hall for a wonderful lunch and the auction after the English Worship Service.



July 30th will be our next special fifth Sunday for the Children's Home Offering. But, of course, a donation can be given at any time. The Home is getting the children ready for the next school year, so they need extra donations to help purchase the supplies and special needs for school. Keep this in mind when you make your donation.

During this year the Children's Home Foster Care Program is currently serving 250 children per day. At present, there are over 150 licensed foster homes in Volusia, Flagler, Hillsborough, and Broward counties. Fostering is a very vital need and the Home hopes to continue enlarging this program.

The Independent Living program for the youth who are transforming from childhood to adulthood is going strong. The young people who are in this program learn to live independently, get into a work program, and some go on to college. This program helps the youth to have better relationships, build self-esteem, and elevate their standards of behavior. They not only learn about dating, integrity, responsibility, and hygiene, but take on a service project. Isn't the Children's Home wonderful?

Let's keep our Children's Home functioning. Remember to give as you are led for the Fifth Sunday Offering and to keep these children in our prayers.

Cynthia Shank
Local Church Representative

Quick, Funny Jokes!

Q: At what time of day was Adam created?

A: A little before Eve.

Q: Why didn't they play cards on the Ark?

A: Because Noah was standing on the deck

Q: Why didn't Noah go fishing?

A: He only had two worms.

Q: Did Eve ever have a date with Adam?

A: No, just an apple.

Q: Where was Solomon's temple located?

A: On the side of his head.

Q: How do we know Peter was a rich fisherman?

A: By his net income.

Q: How do you make Holy Water?

A: Get regular water and boil the devil out of it.

Q: How long did Cain hate his brother?

A: As long as he was Abel.

Q: Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?

A: Samson, because he brought the house down

Q: What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?

A: Your mother ate us out of house and home!

Q: Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?

A: Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once

And for Rev. Barry:

Q: What do they call pastors in Germany?

A: German Shepherds

Don't blame me! These jokes came from: <http://www.quickfunnyjokes.com/christian.html>.

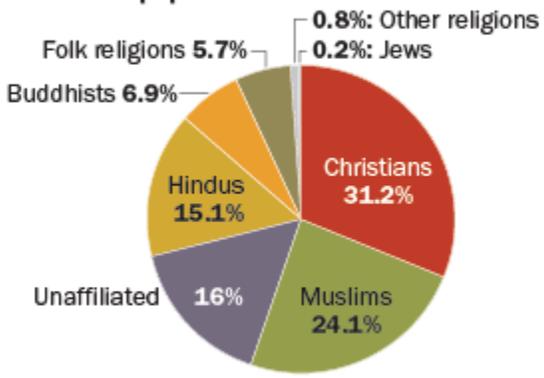


Tuesday, July 11th is World Population Day, the day set aside by the United Nations to draw attention to issues related to a growing global population, such as displaced people, rights and needs of women and girls, and population safety on a global level. It serves to highlight the challenges and opportunities of this growth and its impact on planet sustainability, heavy urbanization, availability of health care and youth empowerment.

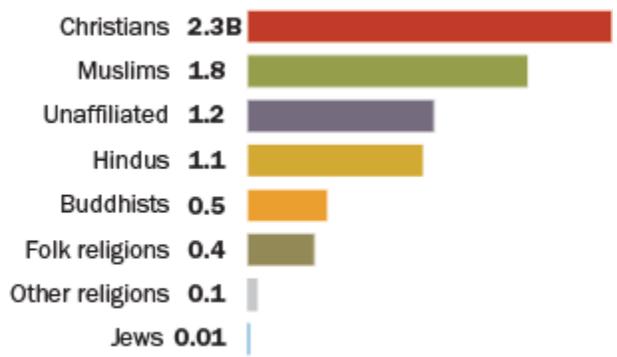
The world's population as of April 2016, was over 7.4 Billion. But in 2015, the number of Christians was only 2.3 Billion. Although we should be proud that there are more Christians than any other religion, the numbers make it apparent how much work we have ahead of us to make Christ known throughout the world.

Christians are the largest religious group in 2015

% of world population



Number of people in 2015, in billions



Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details. "The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Per: <http://www.wincalendar.com/World-Population-Day> and <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>.

Here's an easy way to improve your physical and spiritual health!

Anyone who knows me knows that when I saw an article in our UMC Newsletter, "United Methodist Now: Inspiration for Daily Living", titled "Choir members enjoy health, spiritual benefits", I had to stop everything and read it. And what I found can help each one of us. Especially this summer!



In order to help improve physical and spiritual health for each of us, we will ask each person in the congregation to sing our hymns at the front of the church from July 23rd through August 16th based on your answers to questions like, "What color are your eyes?" and "Were you a nerd in school?" Are you ready to join the choir this summer and get healthy?

*Below are excerpts from the **Choir members enjoy health, spiritual benefits** article
By **Christopher Fenoglio** explaining how this will make you feel better.*

There they are, on the seventh page of the United Methodist Hymnal, "Directions for Singing" from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism:

"... Sing lustily and with good courage... Sing in time... Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing... So shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven."

Rewards in heaven? Sounds like a good enough reason to sing in a church choir.

But what is it about singing that seems to be part of our Wesleyan DNA? How does singing help choir members enjoy a greater understanding of how and why we worship our God, a deeper connection with one's church and community, and even better health?

"It's natural for Methodists to sing in harmony. They are too modest to be soloists, too worldly to sing in unison... it's an emotionally fulfilling moment. By joining in harmony, they somehow promise that they will not forsake each other." – *Attributed to Garrison Keillor.*

Better Worship

A common statement about singing in church is "To sing is to pray twice." Although the statement is often attributed to Augustine, the actual author is unknown. Still, the sentiment is true. Music is an art form that lifts up ordinary text to another level that inspires us and nurtures our souls.

Rev. Laura Jaquith Bartlett said, "It is how we understand at a deeper level what goes beyond words, what our relationship is with the Divine, and how we are shaped together as a community of faith."

Better Health

"Singing in a choir can promote healthy aging," says Dr. Julene Johnson. Preliminary results from a study in Finland on the benefits of singing suggest that choral singing provides a better quality of life.

Increased lung capacity and greater oxygenation of the blood resulting in improved alertness are all associated with singing. Singing is also good for the brain, especially when memorization is involved. "Singing is of great interest to neuroscientists as it would seem that there is more of the brain given over to the processing of music than almost any other activity," says Dr. Graham Welch.

So with this evidence that one's health is improved through singing, how important is singing to our faith as United Methodists? "It all goes back to Wesley's words 'Do all the good you can,'" says Palant. "This is the outlet that singers choose to act upon those words. Choir members find their spirituality and their faith through song and through the choral community." **So get ready to sing!**

See this full article and other articles in this edition of "United Methodist Now: Inspiration for Daily Living" at <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/united-methodist-now-inspiration-for-daily-living>.



Fill-In-The-Blanks
BIBLE VERSES ABOUT SUMMER
 (The answers can be found in the ESV Bible and below.)

1. **Psalm 74:17** You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you have made _____ and winter.
2. **Luke 21:29-30** And he told them a parable: "Look at the ___ tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves & know that the summer is already near.
3. **Amos 8:1** This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, a basket of summer _____.
4. **Genesis 8:22** While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, ___ and night, shall not cease."
5. **Psalm 32:4** For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the _____ of summer. Selah
6. **Proverbs 6:6-8** Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be _____. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.
7. **Jeremiah 40:10b** But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your _____ that you have taken."
8. **Proverbs 10:5** He who gathers in summer is a _____ son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.
9. **Amos 8:2** And he said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord said to me, "The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again _____ pass by them.
10. **2 Samuel 16:2** And the king said to Ziba, "Why have you brought these?" Ziba answered, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who _____ in the wilderness to drink."

Fill-in-the-blank Answers:

1. summer 2. fig 3. fruit 4. day 5. heat 6. wise 7. cities 8. prudent 9. pass 10. faint