

the spire

wesley student center & united methodist church at the university of illinois

May 2024



The UMC reshaped at General Conference into a more inclusive and grace-filled body

(Adapted from news article by Joe Henderson May 03, 2024, flumc.org)

The 2024 General Conference in Charlotte will be known as perhaps the most consequential and unifying large-scale gathering in the history of The United Methodist Church.

As the conference that began on April 23 concluded on Friday, May 3, delegates could head home knowing they had reshaped the UMC into a more inclusive, welcoming, and grace-filled body.

That is in sharp contrast to the season of rancor that led to the disaffiliation of thousands of churches throughout the denomination. This Conference reaffirmed that The United Methodist Church again reflects the promise it made more than twenty years ago: *open hearts, minds, and doors.*

Delegates overwhelmingly voted to remove a clause in *The Book of Discipline* that prohibited the ordination of openly gay pastoral candidates. They also voted to allow same-sex marriages to be performed on church property and will now allow – but not force -- pastors to perform such unions.

They removed language from the UMC’s Social Principles that stated, “the practice of homosexuality...is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

They further affirmed “marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith (adult man and adult woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age) into a union of one another and into a deeper relationship with God and the religious community.” *(continued)*

General Conference continued . . .

All of that was possible because the Conference began with delegates approving the concept of regionalization. The four UMC regions – the United States, Africa, Europe, and the Philippines – can adjust portions in *The Book of Discipline* to allow each area to do ministry in their own context.

Read a full recap of General Conference:

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/general-conference-legislative-recap>

Read a message from Bishop Frank Beard of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference

<https://www.igrc.org/blogpostsdetail/18358873>

Read the revised Social Principles

www.umcjustice.org/documents/124

Other articles of interest:

Church ends 52-year-old anti-gay stance

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-ends-52-year-old-anti-gay-stance>

‘Get out of God’s way,’ bishop urges

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/get-out-of-gods-way-bishop-urges>

Climate justice legislation fares well overall

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/climate-justice-legislation-fares-well-overall>

**How will Wesley respond to the General Conference decisions?
Join Pastor David for a General Conference debriefing and discussion.**

Wednesday, May 15

5:30 pm

in-person in the West Lounge *and on Zoom*

Zoom Meeting ID: 890 5283 1938

Passcode: 563245



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®



General Conference Highlights

prepared by Rev. Corey Read, Arkansas Annual Conference
updated 05/02/2024

Regionalization Passes by 78%

This means that while we will remain united by our shared doctrine and theology, this legislation will allow each area of the world to do ministry in its own context.

Full Communion with Episcopal Church Approved

This will allow for the sharing of clergy and recognition of sacramental rights.
*Awaiting Episcopal Church Vote

Lower Annual Conference Apportionments

U.S. Annual Conferences will be asked to pay lower apportionments compared to what delegates passed at the 2016 General Conference. Conferences will shift from the current base rate of 3.29% to a base rate of 2.6% for 2025 and 2026. Then, if the apportionment collection rate is 90% or higher in those years, the base rate will jump to 2.9% for 2027 and 2028.

First Black Female President of the Council of Bishops

Bishop Tracy S. Malone, resident bishop of the East Ohio Conference, is the first black woman in the history of the worldwide denomination to be elected president of the Council of Bishops!

First Native American Bishop to Preside at General Conference

Bishop David Wilson, resident bishop of the Great Plains Conference was elected the first Native American Bishop in a historic election in 2022 and thus becoming the first bishop to preside at a General Conference in our history!

40 Year Ban on Gay Clergy Lifted

With a 93% approval rate, General Conference votes to remove the ban on ordination of clergy who are "self-avowed practicing homosexuals."

In addition, delegates voted that superintendents are not to penalize clergy or churches for holding -- or refraining from holding -- same sex weddings.

Social Principles Revised

General Conference delegates supported a revision of the Social Principles that deletes the phrase "the practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching."

Deacons Granted Sacramental Authority

Deacons can now offer Holy Communion and conduct baptisms where they have been appointed to serve, whether that is a church, outreach ministry or mission.

Honoring Julie Dowler, Coady Murphy, and Kim Woods Sunday, May 19



On May 19th, let's come together during the 9:30 service and afterwards in the Watseka Lounge to show our heartfelt appreciation for the incredible work of Pastors Julie and Kim, as well as honoring Coady Murphy, our dedicated Campus Ministry Assistant.

Take a moment to write a special card, note, or poem expressing your gratitude and support, and place it in the basket at the back of the Sanctuary during services for the upcoming Sundays. Alternatively, you can drop it off with Donna Giffen in the church office. Love gifts are also welcomed.

Your kind words and gifts will surely brighten their day and show them how much they mean to our community. Let's join in celebrating these wonderful individuals and the positive impact they have had on all of us.

Julie will be taking a well-deserved break and will return for Annual Conference. She will be back in the office on a flexible basis through July. We extend our heartfelt gratitude and admiration to Julie, who has dedicated nearly eleven years to Wesley, bringing an infectious enthusiasm and love to the Campus Ministry of Wesley Foundation and Wesley United Methodist Church.

Kim Woods, our devoted Director of Children and Youth Services for almost a year, will be transitioning to a similar role at Tuscola United Methodist Church, leaving a void in her passionate care for our kids.

Coady Murphy, began as a seminary intern and took on a larger role over time serving as our campus ministry assistant. His hard work behind the scenes and many hours spent leading Queer Space and meeting one-on-one with students was invaluable and made a huge impact on Wesley. We look forward to continuing our support of his seminary education.



Peace with Justice Award Presented to Avicenna

On Peace with Justice Sunday this year – April 14 – Wesley recognized the good work of Avicenna Community Health Center with the Jean Cramer-Heuerman Peace with Justice Award and a donation of \$1,000. We heard several of the Avicenna medical students, physicians and community health professionals talk about the spiritual principles that inspire them to provide free healthcare services to the uninsured and underinsured people of Champaign-Urbana.

Avicenna is an interfaith team of volunteers providing a free primary care clinic on Sundays and an expanding range of services to serve the needs of our community, including an eyecare clinic, Women’s Health clinic, a Lifestyle Medicine team for preventive healthcare, and community outreach to shelters and community events.

You can learn more about Avicenna by visiting their website: www.avicennahealth.org.



Lenten Offering Update

Each year, the SAM committee designates two recipients for the Lenten offering. This year, the Wesley congregation generously donated a total of \$5,483, which will be split between Doctors Without Borders and Champaign County Healthcare Consumers.

Doctors Without Borders uses donations to provide compassionate healthcare to various international areas affected by conflict, disease outbreaks, disasters, or exclusion from health care.

Locally, Ms. Claudia Lenhoff has shared that Wesley's donations will go toward direct client services, and more specifically, toward CCHC's Rx Fund. This fund helps cover prescriptions for clients who have either lost insurance or cannot afford their medications. Additionally, funds will help cover supplies—such as diapers, over-the-counter medications, bus passes, etc.—that are not covered by insurance or food stamps.

Wesley Celebrates Graduation Sunday on May 5





Braver Angels

On Sunday, April 21, interested church members attended a Braver Angels presentation in the West Lounge. Braver Angels is a national organization that offers tools, workshops, and gatherings designed to foster communication and even find common ground across the political divide.

We invite you to explore Braver Angels more in-depth as we consider ways our congregation can be in partnership with their initiatives in our community. If you have an interest in being on the information list to receive updates and more information, contact Craig Chamberlain (craigchamberlain@mac.com).

If you want to explore Braver Angels more in-depth, visit their national website (braverangels.org) and their state website (il.braverangels.org), which includes links to the local column in the New-Gazette (il.braverangels.org/news).

One exciting initiative, which got robust discussion at the local East Central Illinois Alliance meeting, is the Trustworthy Elections Campaign (braverangels.org/trustworthy-elections). Take a look at the summary report for encouragement about what can be accomplished in moderated red/blue discussions. I'm guessing you'll be surprised.

Also check out the e-courses on topics like "Depolarizing Within" and "Families and Politics" (and the unique challenges there): <https://braverangels.org/what-we-do/take-an-ecourse>

And for something quick and easy, here's an excerpt from a Braver Angels column in another part of the country, with tips on how to talk to those you disagree with:

Your Trump-loving uncle is not evil (and neither is your Biden-loving aunt)

If we're going to hold this country together, we must break the cycle of dehumanizing political opponents <https://www.deseret.com/opinion/2021/5/14/22435442/your-trump-loving-uncle-is-not-evil-politics-violence-conflict-resolution-listening/>

Excerpt:

From our own work trying to bridge divides and reduce polarization between liberals and conservatives over the last decade, here are some simple tips for conversations that build trust, rather than contempt:

- First, try to understand others' viewpoints before responding with your own.
- Try using "I statements" ("this is how I see it") rather than truth statements ("This is how it is!").
- Try sharing your own perspective rather than simply making broad pronouncements.
- Try asking people about their own lived experiences and what's led them to their position. This will help people explain why they feel the way they do, in a way that's unique to them.

(continued on next page)

There are also certain things to avoid if you want to have a constructive conversation:

- First off, try to avoid raising your voice and getting agitated. Even something as simple as taking a breath before you speak or respond can help you avoid counterproductive escalation.
- Try to avoid asking “gotcha” questions rather than questions of understanding. A “gotcha” question is a question that sets the other person up to look stupid or ignorant or cruel, versus a question designed to actually understand what someone thinks.
- Try to avoid taking the worst characteristics you see in certain politicians and then ascribing it to anyone who supports that politician. Making these assumptions makes people feel like you are intentionally misrepresenting them.

All of these do’s and don’ts could all be summarized in one overarching tip: *Try to respect the worth and dignity of the person you’re talking to, even if you are dumbfounded or appalled by their views.*

Summer Support: We’re Here to Help

If you or someone you know needs assistance with tasks such as moving or yardwork this summer, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Discipleship and Family Ministries Team at Wesley. We're eager to assemble a team of volunteers to lend a hand. We want to make sure that no one feels alone in their struggles. Please feel free to contact Jane McCulley: janekmcculley@gmail.com, or Libby Johnston: ljohnston326@gmail.com

Sunday Tech Volunteers Needed

Each week, an important part of our worship ministries are the faithful volunteers who run our sound and livestream. We are seeking to grow our volunteer team with those willing to serve once per month. Training is provided. Please contact Pastor David (david@wesleyui.org).

Office Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to volunteer occasionally in the office during the week, helping with projects such as folding of the church newsletters, folding and stuffing the Sunday bulletins, and miscellaneous projects, contact Donna Giffen at donna@wesleyui.org. Thank you!

Sympathy

We extend sympathy to Virgie Young at the passing of her husband and long-time Wesley Member, John (Jack) Young, on Wednesday, April 17th. There was a Memorial Service for Jack on Saturday, May 11 at 11:00 am at Wesley with Rev. David Fuquay officiating.



Thank You

Thank you so much to everyone for the cards, notes of appreciation, and gifts given to us for Administrative Professional's Day!

Donna Giffen, Dawn Longfellow, and Chanda Davidson



Wesley Food Pantry receives Orange Krush Foundation Grant

Wesley Food Pantry was chosen to receive a \$1250 grant from the Orange Krush Foundation. The funds are to be used to supplement the purchase of produce and culturally significant items during our busiest months of the year (September-December). It's in these months when our garden and other community gardens that donate produce to us become less productive. To ensure that we continue to have a selection of fresh ingredients, we supplement donations with purchased products in these months. In addition, we purchase ingredients that help fill the needs of our diverse population including spices, ingredients to complete bundled recipes, and Halal and vegetarian protein options that are not readily available through donations. Grant funding from Orange Krush will help us make these purchases throughout the year.

Dawn Longfellow and Cassie Alpers represented the pantry at a reception held April 22 to recognize the work of Wesley and other grant recipients as well as Orange Krush member's dedication to the CU community. This year, grants will support over 25 organizations including projects throughout Central Illinois. We are so grateful to be included!

Community Support for the Wesley Pantry

We'd like to recognize the support we've received from community and student groups in the last few months. Through group volunteering, food drives, fundraisers, and events, we thank these groups for giving back to help build a strong and healthy community!

- American Institute of Chemical Engineers • Jerardo Felipe
- Gies School of Business-James Scholar committee • Illini Student Musicals
- Latino Student Association • Men's Safe House • NAAMA • Phi Delta Epsilon
- Public Interest Law Foundation • Theta Tau Engineering Fraternity • University Library

A special "THANK YOU" to the following groups who have contributed to our services throughout the semester: Avicenna • Illini Medical Screening Society • Project for Less • Volunteer Illini Projects



Wesley United Methodist Church
1203 W. Green St.
Urbana, IL 61801

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Wesley Staff

Senior Pastor/Director **Rev. David Fuquay** | Campus Minister **Rev. Julie Dowler**
Associate Pastor **Rev. Yiwen Bi** | Director of Children and Youth Ministries **Rev. Kim Woods**
Director of Choral Music **Dr. Barrington Coleman** | WesCare Coordinator **Dr. Emily Lux**
Director of Advancement and Engagement **Donna Camp** | Business Manager **Chanda Davidson**
Office Manager **Donna Giffen** | Childcare Coordinator **Christina Holderly**
Food Pantry Director **Dawn Longfellow** | Food Pantry Assistant **Brian McDermott**
Maintenance Specialist **Rick Sansone** | Part-Time Custodian **Christopher Livesay**
Residential Custodian: **Josh Hall**

Main Office: 217.344.1120

Emergency Contact: Donna Giffen – 217.377.8042

Sunday Services

9:30 a.m. Traditional Service

Eleven20 Coffeehouse Worship (11:20 a.m.)

Wesley Building Hours:

Open Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Sundays 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m