

1 **Section 4: Leadership/Commissioning**

2 **COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY**

3 *Evelyn R. Brunson & Rev. Bette Johnson Sohm, Chairpersons*

4 101. "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify, a never dying soul to save, and fit it for the sky. To serve the
5 present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do my Master's will!" United
6 Methodist Hymnal

7 102. The current members of the Episcopacy Committee are: (clergy) Ebenezer Aduku, Constance Pak, Timothy
8 Riss, John Simmons, Bette Johnson Sohm, Ximena Varas. (Laity): Fred Brewington, Evelyn R. Brunson,
9 Betty Gannon, Roena Littlejohn, Kevin Smith, Rashid Warner.

10 103. At last year's Annual Conference Session, the local churches of our conference were organized into a
11 series of "Cooperative Parishes." This new format was designed to provide an opportunity for our
12 congregations to experience a more intimate and supportive relationship with one another while sharing
13 and receiving vital information. Consequently, within a 4 month period, Bishop Bickerton met with each
14 pastor and each church/charge in our conference for a face-to-face conversation around the ongoing
15 concerns about the future of our denomination. These gatherings with Bishop Bickerton gave clergy and
16 laity an opportunity to not only hear directly from our bishop but to share their questions and concerns.

17 104. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), under the leadership of Bishop Bickerton, provided
18 outstanding leadership and support following the devastation caused during last year's hurricane season.

19 105. On March 4, 2020, members of the New York Annual Conference received a memorandum from Bishop
20 Bickerton's office, regarding the first known cases of the Coronavirus within the bounds of our
21 Conference. A few days later we received Bishop's memo regarding the rising concerns about the virus in
22 New Rochelle and among members of our conference.

23 106. Throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic, a time of fear, uncertainty and unbelievable loss, our Episcopal
24 Leader kept all of us connected with his office each step of the way with: updated information from the
25 governors of New York and Connecticut, with words of encouragement and support, with opportunities
26 for worship and prayer, with the sharing of Scripture, information about church closings and a 26 page
27 document with plans for reopening our churches. Step by step, Bishop has walked with each of us
28 through these unbelievable days! He has "stepped in" to a number of Zoom Meetings. He has also had a
29 number of Zoom meetings with clergy and with laity. He has been "high touch" throughout this period,
30 very visible, and very much in the midst of the people of the NYAC.

31 107. While in the midst of the Coronavirus Pandemic, we witnessed yet again, the ongoing acts of racism in our
32 country and we were quickly connected as a conference with "A Call to Prayer" by our bishop.

33 108. With the postponement of our Annual Conference Session (June 11 - 1), Bishop Bickerton called for all
34 local churches to support their pastors in taking this period for rest, renewal and reflection.

35 109. We are so thankful for the amazing, Spirit filled leadership that we receive from our Episcopal Leader and
36 we solicit your prayers and support as "the journey continues."

37 **BOARD OF LAITY**

38 *Roena Littlejohn, Conference Lay Leader*

- 1 101. As Conference Lay Leader, it is imperative that answering my call to mission and ministry is ever before
2 me. My deep love for God guides every action taken as we begin a new year. We are mindful of the
3 Scripture from Matthew 28: 19-20 . . . “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. . . Every
4 layperson is called to carry out the Great Commission.
- 5 102. Serving as Chairperson of the Conference Board of Laity is a responsibility that gives me great joy. I am
6 able to provide spiritual leadership, offer guidance, nurture and support lay participation on the district
7 and conference levels, offer appreciation and recognition to laity, organize and plan activities and events
8 for local congregations, district, conference and jurisdictional levels.
- 9 103. And so was the beginning of our 2019-2020 Conference year. The Board of Laity’s schedule was a
10 continuation of activities begun before the Annual Conference ended. Since the NYAC-BOL would
11 be hosting the Northeastern Jurisdiction - Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders'(NEJ-AACLL) Fall
12 Meeting, September 27-29, 2019, followed by the Laity Convocation, November 16, 2019; committees
13 were deep in the planning stages for both. Events of this magnitude required all hands on deck as we
14 sought involvement and participation from each district. District Lay Leaders, Co-District Lay Leaders and
15 Associate Lay Leaders were allowed to attend the meetings but have no vote, only the business meeting
16 was closed to non-voting members. The NEJ-AACLL Fall Meeting was an overwhelming success, there was
17 a feeling that the committees were in competition with each other. My fellow colleagues enjoyed the
18 weekend and gave high praise for the content. Thanks again NYC-BOL, I couldn’t have done it without
19 you!
- 20 104. The recommended membership to the Conference Board of Laity includes: associate conference lay
21 leader, the conference director of Lay Servant Ministries, the conference scouting coordinator, and the
22 presidents and two representatives elected by each conference organizations of United Methodist Men,
23 United Methodist Women, United Methodist Young Adults, and the conference council on youth
24 ministries; and in addition, the district lay leaders, two laymen, two laywomen, and two youth elected by
25 the annual conference, a district superintendent designated by the cabinet, the director of the conference
26 council on ministries, and the presiding bishop.
- 27 105. God has blessed me to lead a strong group of men and women who love God, take seriously their
28 commitment to serve, support and advocate for the laity. Our District Lay Leaders and Co-Lay Leaders are
29 key members of the Board of Laity and play a major role in equipping the laity to make disciples of Jesus
30 Christ, ministry and training in the local church, district, community and the world.
- 31 106. Plans for the BOL Laity Convocation, featuring the Rev. Dr. Jacqui King, presenter and using, Soul Reset by
32 Rev. Junius Dotson was a huge success. Again, due to the diligent work of our BOL committee members;
33 170 participants filled the Mary Duke Ballroom to be inspired, uplifted and engaged by our presenter for
34 the day. The message for Devotion was delivered by Monique Blount, MET District Lay Leader. Bishop
35 Bickerton offered words of encouragement to the laity and served Communion. All were fed spiritually
36 and physically. Mr. Trapp led the Convocation Ensemble in melodious anthems and hymns.
- 37 107. Following two huge successful events, the Board of Laity had agreed to alternate between face-to-face
38 and conference call meetings until time to prepare for annual conference.
- 39 108. The Cooperative Parish – Laity conversations with Bishop Bickerton were very informative as changes are
40 taking place and both Clergy and Laity in leadership roles were able to take part in the conversations.
- 41 109. My heartfelt thanks to our NYC – BOL for the unanimous decision to contribute to my trip to England on
42 the Wesleyan Heritage Tour, March 8 -14th. I’ve heard about John Wesley since I was a child, but never
43 imagined visiting the place of his birth, touring the house where he grew up. I was touched by the fact that

1 when he was banned from preaching in the church; in protest, he stood on his father’s grave in the
2 churchyard at Epworth and preached a sermon. We were privileged to walk in his footsteps and receive
3 an oral history of some of his major accomplishments. I’m looking forward to a time of sharing when it is
4 safe to do so. God granted us a safe return to New York . . . AND THEN THERE WAS COVID-19!

5 110. Cooperative Parish Laity Coordinator –In April questionnaires were sent to the laity to get some insight
6 about their involvement in mission and ministry during the pandemic. Realizing the anticipated need of
7 laity to do ministry alongside the clergy going forward; district lay leaders were invited to join the
8 conversation. We are hopeful of identifying potential candidates to serve as a Cooperative Parish Laity
9 Coordinator for each parish. Some progress is being made, however, there is more work to be done, you
10 will be hearing more soon.

11 111. Thanks again for your dedication, support and willingness to serve. In closing, *“May mercy, peace, and*
12 *love be yours in abundance.”* Jude 2:2

13 **District Reports**

14 **113. Catskill Hudson**

15 114. The District Lay Leaders from the picturesque Catskill Hudson District shared ways in which their role is
16 realized in their district. This district with its natural amenities leaves everyone longing to visit its 101
17 churches and desire to know how they are able to accomplish the successes reported. Meet the Catskill
18 Hudson's four member **District Lay Leader Team: Al and Diane McDowell are from Saugerties UMC; Toni**
19 **Vessey from Colchester Community Methodist Church and Margaret Howe, from New Paltz UMC.**

20 115. Toni, Diane and Al meet regularly with DS-Karen which allows sharing about what is happening in the
21 district. This leads to questions about how they can offer assistance with planning and decision making
22 around meeting the needs of the district and different ways to connect with church families. During the
23 time of quarantine, she and the District Lay Leaders had frequent Zoom meetings which has proven
24 important and essential.

25 116. The District Lay Leaders welcomed their new DS at their 2019 Annual District Meeting. The Rev. Dr. Karen
26 Monk came home to the Catskill Hudson District to become District Superintendent. The beautiful and
27 meaningful installation service was performed at the Overlook UMC last September. The church seemed
28 to be bursting at the seams as it filled with well-wishers, Bishop Bickerton, the Cabinet and her colleagues
29 celebrated with her. Catskill Hudson is delighted to have an inspiring DS.

30 117. This Conference year, Bishop Bickerton established Cooperative Parishes within each district of the NYAC,
31 a total of 56, Catskill Hudson District has 9 Cooperative Parishes. Bishop Bickerton has conducted 56
32 information sharing conversation meetings separately with clergy and laity. He led each meeting and
33 opened the floor for Q&A. The District Lay Leader are confident that Bishop Bickerton knows the people
34 and the churches of the Catskill Hudson District.

35 118. The District Lay Leaders proudly reported that their major activity each year is the Annual Leader-to-
36 Leader training which is held in February. This year they were held at Delhi and Saugerties where Pastors,
37 Rev. Betsy Ott and Rev. Tony Mecca offered excellent hospitality! The increased attendance was
38 noticeable, perhaps supported by the workshops offered. The list of workshops offered: Trustees in the
39 21st Center; Finance and Statistical Tables; Staff Parish Relations; Drug Awareness; Thrift Shops; and
40 Church Preparedness.

41 119. Fostering awareness of laity in the local congregations and providing support; the District Lay Leaders are
42 members of the NYAC BOL which is a platform for interaction with other District Lay Leaders, leaders of

1 organized lay committees and boards across the conference. The connectional system is the avenue for
2 updates, sharing and exchange of pertinent information across the denomination.

3 120. All District Lay Leaders have been charged with bringing to the District a training session for Elected Lay
4 Members of Annual Conference and those Elected Reserved Members. This Team also encourages any
5 local church lay Member to attend. This training session explains your role as Elected Lay Member to
6 Annual Conference and Lay Leader. The team calls it “What to Expect at Annual Conference and What is
7 Expected of me?” The session will include expectations from the Board of Laity and a conversation on how
8 to bring information back to the Catskill Hudson churches. As of this writing the dates for these 2020
9 sessions have not been scheduled, they will likely occur via Zoom.

10 121. Catskill Hudson could not escape . . . probably the biggest issues of this year are COVID-19 and Racism.
11 COVID-19 forced church buildings to be closed across the conference and the denomination, however,
12 they quickly learned to worship via ZOOM and Facebook and conference calls. Many churches have added
13 hundreds of weekly worshippers. Using social media platforms, Catskill Hudson has held meetings, Bible
14 Studies, book discussions, Taize worship, early morning worship and hymn-a-longs, morning devotions,
15 mid-week prayer sessions and healing prayer services, evening vespers and weekly check-ins and many
16 other things. Both clergy and laity quickly took on the challenge to learn technology and do upgrades as
17 necessary. As United Methodists, they worked through the hiccups to gain a successful outcome.

18 122. And now, steps and process for re-opening which poses new, but necessary challenges to stay safe and
19 healthy. Continuing to take directions from our Bishop Bickerton and DS Rev. Karen Monk; they pledge to
20 follow guidelines, keep hearts and minds open as they are permitted to open their churches safely.

21 123. The District Lay Leaders have been called to address again, the serious issue of Racism as black brothers
22 and sisters are still being killed/murdered. Bishop Bickerton issued a letter addressing this issue, it is
23 available on the conference website, hope you read it. They close with: “Your 4 District Lay Leaders were
24 involved in a discussion on our white privilege, the book White Fragility by Robin Diangelo is powerful and
25 necessary and leaving us with many questions. What do I do now – I must do something! You are
26 encouraged to read this book. Your District Lay Leader can be available with assistance from some clergy
27 leaders on this important issue. Prayers are necessary and urgent NOW!

28 124. *And as Bishop Bickerton has said so many times in recent weeks, “just breathe,” and may the breath of*
29 *God breathe on all of us.*

30 125. **Connecticut**

31 126. The CT District began its 2019-2020 Conference year with concerns about the future of the United
32 Methodist denomination. Following the Special Session of General Conference, many wondered if the
33 church would ultimately split over the question of human sexuality. Conversations on the issue were held
34 in local churches and with many District committees. Bishop Bickerton was invited to discuss various plans
35 that were under consideration and the implications of each. Scary thought that our beloved United
36 Methodist Church might not be united after all. Then came winter and spring.

37 127. During January and a bit earlier, there was news about a new coronavirus that was infecting mostly people
38 in Asia, which didn’t cause much concern for church finances. Then on January 30, 2020, the World Health
39 Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a “Public Health Emergency of International concern and on
40 March 11, 2020, WHO classified COVID-19 a pandemic. This news lead Government officials to mandatory
41 closing of facilities where large numbers of people would be in close proximity to each other and provide
42 avenues for the virus to pass between people. That list of closure included churches.

- 1 128. Suddenly, in less than a week, churches had to find ways to bring God’s word to their congregations
2 through electronic means. Transforming an in-person service to an electronic presentation was beyond an
3 inconvenient and time consuming task. Many churches could not participate in the new format for
4 various reasons; lack of equipment or computer access, no internet or computer experience. Church
5 closings coupled with a stay-at-home left many feeling disconnected and alone.
- 6 129. Some congregants found themselves or their families in need of pastoral care at a time hospitals and
7 nursing homes were not allowed visitors. Businesses were told to close, leaving employees with no source
8 of income with which to feed and provide shelter for their family. Schools were closed and children were
9 home all day, forcing some parents to give up their job in order to provide necessary care for their
10 children. District Lay Leaders work with the District Board of Laity to keep them informed and aware.
- 11 130. God often uses bad times to bring out the best in our churches. Most of the CT District Churches were up
12 and running with either live or recorded services within one week of closure, many noted that the online
13 presence had developed a sizable following. Some churches reported 200 – 400 people listening weekly
14 to the online service. There were churches that had only worshipped 50 – 70 in their face-to-face services.
15 Another observation on attendance noticed members who had previously left the church a decade ago are
16 now signing in to the online services.
- 17 131. Clergy and laity took the responsibility of contacting church members on a regular basis to access their
18 need. Many churches set up emergency virtual funds to help with paying rent, buying food or other needs
19 during the pandemic. Then came May 25, 2020.
- 20 132. On that date, George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis by a Minneapolis police officer, his death triggered
21 countless and continuing protests and demonstrations around the world, which demanded an end to
22 racism. Racism pervades so much of our interracial relationships in all aspects of life. Laity and Clergy of
23 the Connecticut District participated in many of those peaceful demonstrations. The Greater Hartford
24 Cooperative Parish held a training program for clergy and laity alike where they discussed social Justice
25 and organizing.
- 26 133. This has been a year with challenges that no one could have imagined, yet clergy and laity of the CT
27 District saw opportunities for ministry and the need to be conduits for God’s love to flow to those in need.
28 They stepped forward to be instruments of God’s love. They did this because this is the Connecticut
29 District of the New York Annual Conference and that is what we do.
- 30 134. **Mitch Underwood and Christine McCalla, Connecticut District Co-Lay Leaders**
- 31 **Long Island East**
- 32 136. **Lorraine Leak, Fred Dymek Co- Lay Leaders**
- 33 137. The Long Island East laity helped set up and host the Board of Laity table at Annual Conference, they
34 distributed literature and shared information about the work of the laity. The District Lay Leaders serve on
35 the District Superintendency Committee along with clergy to support our DS hosting a clergy family picnic,
36 with worship, fun, food, games and sharing which was enjoyed by all.
- 37 138. The District Superintendency Committee resumed weekly prayer on Wednesday mornings to pray for the
38 needs of the UMC and the world.
- 39 139. The Long Island East Co-Lay Leader attended the NEJ-Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders’ fall
40 meeting in Valhalla, NY, from September 27-29th the NYAC served as host.

- 1 140. District Co- Lay Leaders attended the Laity Conversations with Bishop Bickerton at each Cooperative Parish
2 meeting. Laity in our district participated in leading worship on Laity Sunday. As Co-Lay Leader, It was a
3 blessing to support and attend Women's Walk to Emmaus- 48 as a sponsor of a pilgrim.
- 4 141. The LIE District supported, participated and were well represented at the Laity Convocation. The Co-Lay
5 Leaders served on committees and were involved in planning the event. Co - Lay Leaders joined the DS at
6 some Charge Conferences. The Youth Council held a night of fun and games to kick off 2020. Games
7 included bounce equipment, and the jungle gym for younger children and laser tag and video games for
8 older youth. The LIE Co-District Lay Leaders supported the Bayport UMW's Women's Day worship in
9 January.
- 10 142. Long Island East held its Annual Disciple- to- Disciple training for laity and clergy in February. Workshops
11 included Cultural competency and Hispanic Ministry, etc.
- 12 143. District lay servant ministry offered several virtual courses during the quarantine. Food pantries practicing
13 safe distancing, continue to operate in many churches.
- 14 144. The District Spiritual Life Committee postponed our annual prayer walk to visit and pray at each church.
15 We met as a committee via ZOOM for prayer.
- 16 145. District lay leaders have been working with the BOL and Cooperative Parish Clergy coordinators, to assist
17 in the identification of a Cooperative Laity coordinators who will work together with the parish to minister
18 as God leads. Many laity and clergy in the LIE utilized ZOOM, telephone and various internet
19 communications to host Men's and/or Women's Bible Studies on a weekly basis.
- 20 146. The District Mission Walk, which raises funds for church mission, had to be done "Virtually" this year.
21 Instead of meeting in the park and walking, each participant will select a time and place to make the 3.5
22 walk, practicing social distancing. Each church will use the money for their own mission ministry.
- 23 147. Westbury UMC will not host the summer children's program this year, but are preparing to host a grab
24 and go lunch and snack summer program.
- 25 148. **Long Island West**
- 26 149. **Junior Dixon and George Brown, Co --District Lay Leaders**
- 27 150. Accompanied District Superintendent along with other Clergy members to a Pilgrimage trip to South
28 Korea.
- 29 151. Leadership Training Event was held on February 8, 2020, more than 350 lay persons participated in various
30 workshops.
- 31 152. Lay Servant Training was interrupted by the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- 32 153. DCOM met monthly, except for months caused, by Covid19 Pandemic.
- 33 154. DCOM Easter Celebration that was scheduled to be held at First Flushing UMC, was cancelled, due to
34 COVID 19, we were expecting to raise upwards of \$30,000.00 to benefit Mission.
- 35 155. The NYAC BOL Convocation was well supported by LIW District
- 36 156. As a result of dedicated and inspired Clergy and Lay Leadership the LIW District experienced Spiritual
37 Growth and an increase in membership.
- 38 157. More than 95% Paid Apportionment

- 1 158. **Metropolitan**
- 2 159. Hebrew 6:19 NIV Version – “We have this hope as an anchor of the soul, firm and secure. It enters the
3 inner sanctuary behind the curtain.”
- 4 160. In times like these we need a Savior. In times like these we need an anchor. Be sure, be very sure, be very
5 sure, our anchor holds and grips the solid Rock.
- 6 161. Friends, I greet you with great Joy, Hope and Faith in Jesus, who is and will always be my Rock! **Monique**
7 **Blount, District Lay Leader**
- 8 162. These are troubling times in our local churches, district, conference and nation. Sometimes, I ask the
9 question where is God? I too, have to be reminded that God is here, he is present, he is in the midst of it
10 all and he is in control.
- 11 163. As your District Lay Leader, I continue to engage in Christian spiritual disciplines. I encourage you to do the
12 same. On Wednesday, May 17, 2020 I and the District Superintendent met with the Local Lay Leaders via
13 zoom. It was great to see everyone. We shared our feelings about the shut down due to the pandemic.
14 We talked about how to continue to be presence in our church and community using social media, zoom,
15 conference calls, and texting to include more diverse and greater participation in our district and beyond,
16 after all it’s a new and continuing expectation for our church and community.
- 17 164. I invite you and encourage you to reflect critically and at length on these issues that are impacting our
18 society. COVID19 and Racism, please take COVID19 seriously. March on, wash hands and continue to
19 practice social distancing. Please go to the new York Annual Conference Website to obtain further
20 guidelines on coronavirus 19.
- 21 165. As Lay Leaders/Laity we have an important role in helping to eradicate racism in our local churches by
22 educating each other. I call on each of you to be intentional and prayerful in doing so. I would like to
23 recommend some resources: New York Annual Conference Website: Guidelines for Cross Racial and Cross
24 Cultural Appointments in the NYAC; United Methodist Women, Inc Website: Charter for Racial Justice;
25 Advocacy for Racial Justice: Adocacy and Education; How to Be an Antiracist and Stamped From the
26 Beginning; “The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X Kendi and “Birth of a Nation by
27 Jacqueline Battalor.
- 28 166. Please let us be intentional in prayer for our leadership, Bishop Bickerton, District Superintendent Sears,
29 Clergy, Laity and our Denomination The United Methodist Church. To God be the Glory!
- 30 167. This rock is Jesus, yes he’s the one This rock is Jesus, the only one, be sure, be very sure our anchor holds
31 and grips the solid Rock!
- 32 168. **New York Connecticut**
- 33 169. The Year began for the NY/CT District with the appointment of a new District Superintendent. In July, the
34 District Lay Leaders met with D.S. Rev. Tim Riss, to discuss expectations and goals.
- 35 170. During the October to December church conference season the Lay Leaders continued their tradition of
36 travelling with the DS to many of the church conferences throughout the district. The District Lay Leaders
37 used this opportunity to promote district event, Lay Servant courses and Conference events such as the
38 Conference Laity Convocation.
- 39 171. Our District Advent service had to be postponed this year due to weather, so we replaced it with a District
40 12th night service on January 5th. The Mid-Hudson Korean UMC hosted the event and graciously provided

1 a wonderful spread of food following the service. The event was filled with wonderful music and message
2 and continues to be well loved by those who participated.

3 172. The District Lay Leaders continued working with the District Lay Servant Committee in planning Lay
4 Servant

5 173. Courses throughout the district. This year, our usual Lenten school, held at Grace UMC in Newburgh and
6 Rowayton UMC was interrupted by the Coronavirus outbreak and we moved it into online learning. We
7 are pleased to say that all classes were completed successfully in this format! Inspired by this new
8 approach to providing classes and recognizing that the quarantine was resulting in a drought of laity
9 contact opportunities; Marie instituted continuing Zoom based on-line Lay Servant courses, starting with
10 the Basic Class and continuing with advanced courses. These courses were well-received and continue on
11 into the summer months.

12 174. Based on the direction of the Bishop and the Board of Laity, the Lay Leaders began contacting Cooperative
13 Parishes in the District to begin the process of identifying individuals to fill the roles of Cooperative Parish
14 Lay Coordinator in May. As of this date all but two Parishes have identified candidates and in late June we
15 met with the majority of these individuals via Zoom for an initial meeting. This was a great time of
16 learning from each other how our individual Parishes have been dealing with worship and mission during
17 this time of quarantine.

18 175. The District has a preliminary date for District Conference late August although the means of delivering
19 this conference (strictly on-line or combination of in-person and on-line) has not yet been decided.

20 176. As we end this year with the effects of the quarantine still hanging over us we know the laity of the NY/CT
21 district look forward to a time when we may all meet together again face to face but that we will continue
22 to find ways to stay in mission and worship to our Lord savior together inside this new reality.

23 177. **Marie Bell and Gary Gomes - District Co-Lay Leaders**

24 **CONFERENCE LAY LEADER**

25 ***Roena Littlejohn, Conference Lay Leader***

26 101. Giving honor to God, I am delighted to serve as your Conference Lay Leader. What are your thoughts
27 about change today? *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Hebrews 13:3

28 102. The 2019-2020 Conference year began with high expectations for an uplifting, hopeful and exciting year
29 going forward. As Conference Lay Leader, my responsibility takes me in various directions. Admittedly,
30 there was a bit of apprehension around planning a new event which would require additional work since
31 no one could remember the last time it took place in NY. However, Bishop Bickerton encouraged everyone
32 who attended the Annual Conference to, "just breathe!"

33 103. Immediately following the benediction at Conference, the 2020 General Conference Delegation was in a
34 Called Meeting. It was important to gather contact information and get some dates on the calendar ahead
35 of other committees and boards. It was imperative that study material be read and preparation for the
36 upcoming General Conference begin ASAP, so the planning began.

37 104. Mission u consumed the next block of time, this annual event sponsored by the New York Conference
38 United Methodist Women (UMW) and the New York Conference Board of Laity (BOL). Using the theme,
39 **"Radical Discipleship Then and Now,"** the three day study was held at the Stamford Hilton Hotel,
40 Stamford, CT The study titles were: *"Women United for Change: 150 years in Mission," "What About Our*
41 *Money?"* The youth and children studied the *Gospel of Mark.*

- 1 105. My role as Conference Lay Leader includes membership in the NYC-UMW where I serve as the
2 Representative of the United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network (UMAMN). Following Mission u,
3 UMAMN had agreed to a joint meeting with several organizations that provide service to low income
4 families and people with poverty issues. The groups: *Native Grace Intertribal Fellowship; Rural Chaplains*
5 *Association; United Methodist Rural Advocates*. The theme, “**Building a Future of Hope,**” the rationale for
6 the combined meeting was to explore the possibility of having further combined meetings to determine,
7 what’s missing or is there a better way to address the situation? What are the challenges and needs for
8 hope in rural communities?
- 9 106. We toured some major sites, attended forums and discussions on the topics related to: *Children’s Service* -
10 the challenges and needed education for parents and others; the *impact of Marijuana* on rural
11 communities; and a program that serves *900 Immigrant and low income families* (formerly immigrant
12 seasonal farmers). Any one of these topics can be problematic, however, another issue is having a
13 sufficient water supply for their farms. Farmers must be very careful to avoid purchasing land that has no
14 water rights, it is their responsibility to investigate before the purchase to determine if there are water
15 rights on the property. We left with much food for thought. UMAMN's grants seem to be in a lower price
16 range than the purchase of property, therefore at present, we continue to award grants to programs that
17 address hunger and poverty.
- 18 107. In prayerful expectation of desired successful outcomes; our Board of Laity, District Lay Leaders and Co-
19 Lay Leaders came together to begin plans for the Northeastern Jurisdiction Association of Annual
20 Conference Lay Leaders’ (NEJ- AACLL) Fall Meeting and the New York Annual Conference – Laity
21 Convocation. Such responsibility required creating safe places where all who attended these events were
22 accepted and welcomed. In doing so, we were connecting the needs of people to the presence of
23 God. There is an African Proverb that says, “*If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go*
24 *together.*” Considering the tasks before us I prayed for all hands on deck and without exception, together
25 everyone played their role to the fullest extent.
- 26 108. The Rev. Kevan Hitch and the Valhalla UMC, Valhalla, NY were our gracious hosts for the **Fall Meeting of**
27 **the NEJ-AACLL**, which met September 27-29, 2019. The Theme: “*Through Hope and Purpose . . . We*
28 *Go!*” In addition to the 27 members of the Association, we were joined by committee members and other
29 participants who rendered services necessary to make the weekend a success.
- 30 109. The weekend included: Taize – Margaret Howe and Lee Pritchard, The Shepherd Singers and Fred
31 Brewington, Evan Alparone – Valhalla UMC, Welcome, Opening Worship and Communion – Pastor Kevan
32 Hitch, text “**Birth of a Church, Death of a Church**”
- 33 110. Workshop: Abundant Health/Hulapalooza; God’s Mission has a Church; and Laity Excellence Group LEGs
- 34 111. Closing Worship featured Bishop Bickerton, his text “**Taking Aim.**” Pastor Hitch and Valhalla served a
35 delicious brunch. The NEJ-AACLL extended heartfelt thanks for their warmth and hospitality.
- 36 112. I applaud all committees for their excellent work and great team spirit: Site; Program; Hospitality;
37 Worship; Music; Registration; Welcome, and Food/meals for your dedication, commitment and the hard
38 work. You made me proud to be your Conference Lay Leader and member of the NEJ-AACLL. It is my
39 understanding that NY Conference had not served as host for more than ten years.
- 40 113. In the midst of travel, the Board of Laity (BOL) made time to convened face to face meetings and,
41 conference call meetings with the BOL, District Lay Leaders, Co-Lay Leaders and various Committees to
42 insure that all were apprised of the progress being made for our two upcoming events.

- 1 114. The Laity Convocation Committees decided on the following: **Laity Convocation** Saturday, November 16,
2 2019, Mary Duke Ballroom-Tarrytown House, Tarrytown, NY
- 3 115. Rev. Dr. Jacqui King, Presenter; Theme: **“Be Strong and Encouraged”** Joshua 1:9 Study book: **SOUL RESET**
4 by Rev. Junius Dotson, Gen. Bd. Discipleship Ministries.
- 5 116. Music: Mr. Raymond Trapp, Dir. And Convocation Ensemble; Message: Mrs. Monique Blount, title: **“Tell**
6 **Somebody”** District Lay Leader, MET
- 7 117. There were 170 participants registered for the Laity Convocation which was an inspirational day of Music,
8 Worship, Study, Praise and fellowship. Dr. King kept the group engaged and involved as we shared the
9 core learning objectives:
- 10 • Focusing on Resetting our relationships . . . with God, self, and community
 - 11 • Developing awareness. . . Healing and wholeness
 - 12 • Reviewing Daily Spiritual Practices for a Soul Reset
 - 13 • Taking it Home . . . 90 days and beyond
- 14 118. The presentation was inspiring and well received, some participants promised to begin a small group study
15 at their local church. Joyful music and deep discussions filled the Mary Duke Ballroom on November 16
16 and all were glad for the fellowship.
- 17 119. Bishop Bickerton offered words of encouragement to the laity for their service and on behalf of the
18 Conference Lay Leader, he presented framed certificates of appreciation to the District Lay Leaders and
19 District Co-Lay Leaders.
- 20 120. Active participation and support in the following continue on a regular basis: UMW, Church and Society,
21 CMVT Committee and Executive Committee met in September, December and February as scheduled,
22 Episcopacy met in October and January as scheduled, Conference Sessions met September, October,
23 January and February. The discussions addressed the cost of Annual Conference for the Laity and
24 youth. Also the need to identify a proper location that is "age" appropriate for senior members.
25 Nominations Committee continued to meet through June in order to complete its work, however
26 meetings scheduled after March 14 when Zoom meetings. Participated in Bishop Bickerton's small group
27 meetings beginning in July and then attended his Cooperative Parish Laity Meeting. The 2020 General
28 Conference Delegation meetings were suspended due to postponement of the Conference until August
29 27-September 7, 2021.
- 30 121. Thanks to the Board of Laity for underwriting my trip to England March 8 – 14. I had the opportunity to
31 travel with Bishop Bickerton’s Wesleyan Heritage Tour. Having Bishop as our leader was an added
32 blessing. Being United Methodist brought alive the significance of John Wesley’s life and work. It was a
33 privilege to visit the home of his childhood, walk through the streets and buildings where he studied,
34 worked and preached. I was to see his father’s grave where he stood and preached after being banned
35 from the church. It was a very rich experience cut short by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Life for me and us
36 has never been the same.
- 37 122. In our new normal, like others I’ve become somewhat adjusted to Zoom, Facebook and Webinar worship,
38 meetings and studies. In this new time as we wait on the Lord for guidance through this phase of our
39 lives, I would like to offer this Scripture from 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18. “Rejoice always, pray without
40 ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us.”

1 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES

2 *Mary Brevigleiri, Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries*

3 101. This is a challenging time for Lay Servant Ministry in our New York Annual Conference, with new ways of
4 doing ministry in our congregations and communities. Lay Servants have stepped up to the challenge with
5 the support of their Bishop, pastors, and other church leaders.

6 102. Our NYAC Lay Servant Ministry Directors have been very busy this year and are already planning new ways
7 to offer ongoing education and support for lay servants needing certifications, while also reaching out to
8 laity feeling called to be more active in their church roles.

9 103. Many of our planned classes did not come to fruition because of the Covid-19 epidemic and the
10 precautionary restrictions placed on our states. However, the Lay Servants of our districts have found
11 creative ways to bring their gifts in Leading, Caring, and Communicating to help their pastors, churches,
12 and communities in so many new ways.

- 13 • Offering of worship and devotionals online and via Youtube videos
- 14 • Person-to-person prayers via phone or text
- 15 • Recording of hymns and instrumental music via videos to be shared online
- 16 • Visiting those restricted by quarantine via telephone, emails, safe distancing
- 17 • Notes and letters, Zoom meetings, conference calls
- 18 • Coordinating and participating in food and clothing deliveries to people in need
- 19 • Coordinating and participating in sewing face masks – thousands of them!

20 104. District Directors are reporting more online courses being completed. Already lay servants and pastors are
21 asking when in-person courses will resume. We look forward to resuming our training – within safe
22 guidelines and in exciting new ways. For now, we are planning Zoom classes and getting the word out
23 about the array of approved online classes via BeADisciple.com.

24 105. Within the past year our Conference Lay Servant Ministry Committee voted on the following:

- 25 • **New Certified Lay Ministers** Lori Janson – LIE; Gail Erdie – CH, Virginia Bossley – CH, Bud LeConey,
26 CH, Linda Simmons – CH; Michael Butler – CT
- 27 • **Renewed Certified Lay Ministers** Alan Gross – LIE Deborah Judisky – CH Judy Lang – CT,
28 Fern Blair-Hart – CT Mary Brevigleiri - CT
- 29 • **New Certified Lay Speakers** Marie Bell – NYCT Linda Smith – NYCT

30 106. Our Conference LSM Committee convened a Task Force headed by Margaret Howe and composed of
31 Board of Laity members, including some District Directors, Lay Leaders, and Conference staff. This task
32 force will be looking at ways all six NYAC districts might best put together their course offerings that would
33 benefit the entire Conference, the facilitation of better communication with lay servants, and annual
34 reporting clarification, among other topics.

35 107. Our Lay Servants have learned how to maneuver through Zoom calls, do bible study via teleconferencing,
36 find creative ways to stay in touch with people, initiate inventive methods of making sure our more
37 vulnerable brothers and sisters are safe and well taken care of during our quarantine time. THIS IS THE
38 TIME FOR US TO FOCUS ON NEW WAYS OF MINISTRY. Lay Servants want to be proactive in this unfolding
39 new world. Our NYAC is blessed that God has placed our Bishop with us “for such a time as this.” Along
40 with Bishop Bickerton, our District Superintendents, our pastors, and other church leaders, we have the
41 Holy Spirit guiding us, and God’s Word inside us. May we all walk together enveloped in God’s Grace and
42 Peace.

1 **BOARD OF ORDAINED MINISTRY**

2 ***Rev. Lydia E. Lebrón-Rivera, Chair***

- 3 101. The 2016-2020 quadrennial brought new changes to the work of Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) across
4 our connection. District Committees on Ordained Ministry (dCom's) along with Executive Committees and
5 other committees and organizations under the leadership of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry
6 were required by the Discipline to make changes to language, policies of inclusion and the way Boards of
7 Ordained Ministry manages processes such as Candidacy, Fellowships, membership of local pastors,
8 responsibilities of deacons, ordination, mentoring, conference relations, and a new plan for professional
9 assessment. All these changes were made for the purpose of providing support and facilitating transitions
10 of those in professional ministry, including ordained, licensed, certified and assigned leadership.
11 Thoughtfully and consistently the New York Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOM) began
12 to adhere to the new Disciplinary requirements, adapting the way it applied new policies.
- 13 102. Needless to say, it was also a quadrennial that began and ended with new challenges, including several
14 petitions on the issue of Human Sexuality adopted by the Special Session of the General Conference held
15 in February 2019. And then a year later, we faced the beginning of what has become the most devastating
16 and disruptive pandemic in our lifetime, as well as an unprecedented movement for societal change in the
17 aftermath of the brutal murder of African Americans at the hands of the police. In this context, it is clear
18 that BOM must come to terms with the new realities we are facing in order to facilitate the work of
19 pastoral leadership within church and society. I often find myself worrying about adequately addressing
20 the many moving pieces that are critical to guiding people and sustaining people in ministry, but at the
21 same time I am thankful for the opportunity to also see that there is something bigger that God is doing
22 that helps us come to important decisions about what we can do to fit into the larger picture of what God
23 is doing in the world.
- 24 103. During the 2019-2020 Conference year, BOM engaged in the revision of the way in which we organize and
25 execute our ordination and commissioning events. In March our commissioning event transitioned from
26 what was a three-day event for the candidates to a two-day event held in one of our local churches
27 instead of a retreat center. Many hours were spent familiarizing ourselves with the work of other annual
28 conferences in order to evaluate the content and organization of the event in order to produce a more
29 supportive, focused, meaningful, and efficient interview experience and develop effective metrics for
30 evaluation. A sub-committee of the Executive Committee, the Design Team, was charged with conducting
31 a similar review of the ordination event for 2020-2021, and their proposal was adopted in June of this year
32 by the plenary.
- 33 104. Throughout this past year the issue of intercultural competence has been at the forefront of our
34 discussions. Under the leadership of the Conference Director for Leadership, Multicultural Competency,
35 we have engaged in an examination of cultural awareness among members of BOM and in our work
36 supporting and examining candidates.
- 37 105. During this quadrennium, including candidates recommended this year for Full and Provisional
38 Membership, 33 candidates have been recommended for ordination, 31 for Elders Orders and 2 for
39 Deacons Orders. There were 32 candidates recommended for commissioning, 29 for Elders Orders and 3
40 for Deacons Orders.
- 41 106. The Board recommends for approval at the 2020 Clergy Session of the Annual Conference Session: 11
42 candidates for Full Membership, 1 for Deacons Orders and 10 for Elders Orders. The Board also
43 recommends 3 candidates for Provisional Membership, all for Elders Orders.

- 1 107. The upcoming months will be a period of transition until the General Conference is held and BOM is able
 2 to re-organize for the next quadrennium. With the expiration of terms of most members of the Executive
 3 Committee, the Rev. Samuel Arhin, who has been the Vice Chair during the last quadrennium, will provide
 4 leadership during this period of transition.
- 5 108. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to lead BOM as Chair during this past quadrennium. I am most
 6 thankful to all the members of BOM for their gracious support, counsel, wisdom, and spirit of collegiality
 7 towards me, their fellow members and to the candidates, as well as for their many hours of volunteer
 8 service they have dedicated to this important work of the Annual Conference, and for their partnership in
 9 advancing the vision for leadership that responds to the unique needs and opportunities for ministry. I
 10 want to thank the members of the Executive Committee who are ending their service: Stephen Allen, Rev.
 11 Eileen Daunt, Rev. Hugh Hamilton, Rev. Randolph Nugent and Rev. Lynda Bates-Stepe, and my special
 12 appreciation to Gail Douglas-Boykin, Coordinator for Ministerial Services, who has been an invaluable
 13 resource to BOM and a supportive partner to me.

14 **CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ON NOMINATION**

15 **Rev. Dr. David D. Henry, Chairperson**

- 16 101. *Everything changes continually. What is history, indeed but a record of change? And if there had been very*
 17 *few changes in the past, there would have been little of history to write. "Jawaharlal Nehru"*
- 18 102. It is a fact that we are certainly living in a time of unprecedented changes. Due to the deadly disease of
 19 COVID 19 Pandemic many lives have been lost and we are experiencing changes in all spectrums of
 20 society.
- 21 103. The events of the past six months have completely changed much of our lives and the way we function.
 22 We have been placed in positions of having to find new ways of functioning, such as having to meet
 23 virtually for meetings as well as for church services. Over the last several months the nomination
 24 committee has met on several occasions with the focus to be in compliance with conference rules 58
 25 through 69 of the New York Annual Conference Rules. - Section X of the 2019 Journal.
- 26 104. We were on our way to completing a task which was long overdue. We were enthusiastic to get this work
 27 done so we assigned each member of the committee to liaison with every commission, boards,
 28 committees, and agencies of the conference. They were able to inform the committee with up to date
 29 information from those entities of the conference. In addition we invited Bishop Thomas Bickerton and
 30 members of the Cabinet to join us at our regular meetings. We found their input to be most valuable.
- 31 105. With the inception of COVID 19 all of our plans have been changed due to the postponement of general
 32 Conference until the fall of 2021. To be in compliance, the nomination committee will only be filling those
 33 positions that cannot be delayed such as vacancies in the Board of Trustees, CFA, and some BOOM
 34 Leadership.
- 35 106. This year the annual conference will be electing two trustees and a new Conference Chancellor. The
 36 Conference Secretary, Lay Leader and all chairpersons will continue in their current position until the next
 37 annual conference.
- 38 107. Many thanks to the members of the committee, the Conference Secretary and the Vice –Chairperson for
 39 their invaluable help during this very difficult year.