

Daily Christian Advocate

Proceedings of the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference
of The United Methodist Church



THIS I KNOW

VOLUME 20, No. 2

Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Thursday, November 3, 2022

‘We have an election!’



Members of the 2022 SEJ Conference elected two bishops on day one of the session.

The Rev. Thomas M. Berlin, 59, lead pastor of Floris United Methodist Church in Herndon, Virginia, was elected bishop on the fourth ballot. He received 213 votes out of 346 valid ballots cast.

Berlin thanked his wife, Karen, members of his Floris UMC staff who drove to Lake Junaluska to support him, and he thanked the people in the room: the delegates, the bishops, and all those with whom he has served in ministry and collaborative work.

“You all have been such a great blessing to my life, and to be elected as a bishop is a singular honor,” Berlin said.

He ended, “Thank you. It is oddly humbling to stand before you and to accept this special assignment.”

The Rev. Dr. Connie Mitchell Shelton, 58, district superintendent in the Mississippi Conference, was elected on the 12th ballot. She received

213 votes out of 350 valid ballots cast.

Shelton was the endorsed candidate of the Southeastern Jurisdiction Clergywomen’s Caucus, and was supported by the Mississippi delegation to General Conference and the jurisdictional conference.

Raised in the Southern Baptist tradition in her native Mississippi, she later found that Methodist theology resonated in her life. She subsequently joined Oak Grove United Methodist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where she and her husband, Joey, served as volunteer lay youth directors. Eventually, both she and her husband discerned a call to full-time ordained ministry.

The assignments of bishops in the Southeastern Jurisdiction for the next two years will be announced Thursday evening.

Berlin and Shelton’s two-year term of service begins Jan. 1. Delegates will continue balloting on Thursday morning. They have one additional election.

A New Name: Red Bird Now Central Appalachian Missionary Conference

The delegates to the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference formally approved a name change from Red Bird Missionary Conference to the Central Appalachian Missionary Conference.

The new name is designed to reflect the position of the conference to serve beyond the bounds of the Red Bird Valley. The official name change reflects the full transformation of the Central Appalachian Missionary Conference, with conference priorities now focusing on health and wellness initiatives, community outreach,



and leadership transformation.

“We want to thank all those in attendance today at the Southeastern Jurisdictional meeting,” said Bishop Leonard Fairley, Bishop for the Kentucky and Red Bird Missionary Conferences. “Central Appalachian Missionary Conference is undergoing a transformation, and we are embracing growth

of our ministries throughout the Appalachian region. Despite the disaster recovery going on throughout this region, God has given us hope and the ability for transformation.”

Find information about ministries of the rebirthed conference at www.centralappalachianumc.org. The website offers a chance to sign up for the conference’s newsletter and service opportunities, a way to partner with the conference long term, and focuses on Central Appalachian’s renewed commitment to transforming the region and beyond in the name of Jesus Christ.

SEJ Committee on Episcopacy 2022-2024

Alabama-West Florida

Steve Furr – Lay
Larry Bryars – Clergy

Central Appalachian

Marilyn Osborne – Lay
Robert Amundsen – Clergy

Florida

Molly McEntire – Lay
Alex Shanks – Clergy

Holston

Emily Ballard – Lay
Kim Goddard – Clergy

Kentucky

Alan Beuscher – Lay
Bill Arnold – Clergy

Mississippi

David Stotts – Lay
Fred Britton – Clergy

North Alabama

Steve Lyles – Lay
Dedric Cowser – Clergy

North Carolina

Christine Dodson – Lay
Belton Joyner – Clergy

North Georgia

Jane Finley – Lay
Byron Thomas – Clergy

South Carolina

Jackie Jenkins – Lay
Ken Nelson – Clergy

South Georgia

Bill Hatcher – Lay
Robert Beckum – Clergy

Tennessee-Western Kentucky

Josh Shaw – Lay
Harriet Bryan – Clergy

Virginia

Martha Stokes – Lay
Lindsey Freeman – Clergy

Western North Carolina

Jennifer Davis – Lay
Kim Ingram – Clergy

CORRECTION

*from Nominations in the
November 2 DCA*

Committee on Investigation:

Clergy
Laticia Scriven (FLA; AA; female)

Opening Worship Uplifts SEJ Conference

By Matthew Johnson

On Wednesday, November 2, the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference opened with worship and communion. Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. preached and Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett served as celebrant.

Swanson called on the Holy Spirit to guide the decisions of the delegates and the business of the conference. Bishop Swanson's inspirational sermon during the worship service reassured delegates and bishops that God is with us and there is nothing to fear.

The scripture lesson at the heart of Bishop Swanson's message came from John 15. In this chapter, Jesus assures the disciples that even though he is about to leave them they should not be afraid.

"Uncertainty about this new moment is expected," Swanson said. He reminded us of the disciples' anxiousness about the upcoming death of their leader. "Jesus sensed the fear in the disciples' hearts."

Swanson encouraged the



conference not to be apprehensive, but to move forward boldly, saying that there can only be progress through the power of God's spirit.

"You can't fulfill the mission Jesus has called you to if you are filled with fear," said Swanson. "A world filled with fear needs a fearless church. In the midst of everything, forget your agenda and say to the Lord, 'let your will be done.'"

Swanson concluded his

sermon by sharing his own faith story. After serving as bishop of the Holston Conference, Swanson and his wife, Mrs. Delphine Swanson, were uncertain about what the next phase of their life would be. At the 2012 SEJ Conference, Swanson was assigned to be bishop of the Mississippi Conference.

Being the first African American to serve in that role, some thought the Swansons would experience resistance and racism. Moving forward with godly confidence, the Swansons moved to Mississippi and received a loving welcome that continued their whole 10 years.

Bishop Swanson's sermon was a call not to let the fear of the unknown rule, but go forward boldly knowing that God is leading the way and will not fail. He reminded us that Jesus still speaks with us as he did in his message to the disciples, and we will never be alone.

Following worship, Swanson called the 2022 SEJ Conference's opening business session to order and the bar was set at 10:54 a.m.

A Message from the SEJ Worship Team

The worship team expresses its gratitude to the following individuals who helped to lead the Opening Worship service for SEJ 2022:

** Donna Strickland Smith, WNC*

** Grace Han, VA*

** Jefferson Furtado, TWK*

** Jim Savage, Central Appalachian*

** LaNella Smith, NC*

** Valerie Brooks-Madden, SC*

** Yvette Massey, NGA*

Several delegates have asked about the sources for our liturgy today. The paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer is from The

New Zealand Book of Prayer. The Invitation, Confession, and Pardon and the Great Thanksgiving were adapted from a service of the Native American Writing Group of the Open Source Liturgy Project (Discipleship Ministries). Find it at www.umcdiscipleship.org.

Daily Minutes - November 2

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sessions | Minutes are Unofficial

Opening Worship

9:00 a.m.

Delegates and guests gathered in Stuart Auditorium on the campus of Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center for opening worship service of Word and Table. Bishop James E. Swanson was the preacher, and Bishop Debbie Wallace-Padgett was the celebrant. Active and retired Bishops served the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Opening Session

10:30 a.m.

Bishop Swanson, Presiding

Gathering Hymn: Willie Kitchens and band led the conference in singing "And Are We Yet Alive" for the opening business session.

Presiding: Bishop James E. Swanson, Mississippi Area, presided.

Call to Order: Bishop Swanson called the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference session to order at 10:39 a.m. Bishop Richard Looney offered the opening prayer.

Statement Regarding Covid: Bishop Swanson gave a reminder of the COVID protocol put in place by the Program and Arrangements committee.

Roll Call, Quorum Certification, Setting Bar of Conference: Bishop Swanson called on Anne Travis, Conference Secretary, to lead the conference through roll call. Bishop Swanson gave thanks to Anne for serving in the absence of Rev. Dr.

Brad Brady due to his unfortunate and unexpected passing.

Anne Travis recognized Bishops as well as delegates who have passed since the 2016 Conference. This was followed by a roll call of Bishops and delegations.

Delegation leaders reported the delegate count from each of their Annual Conferences:

Alabama-West Florida – 17

Florida – 32

Holston – 23

Kentucky – 20

Memphis – 8

Mississippi – 19

North Alabama – 15

North Carolina – 30

North Georgia – 44

Red Bird – 4

South Carolina – 32

South Georgia – 11

Tennessee – 14

Virginia – 44

Western North Carolina – 39

The Conference Secretary certified the presence of a quorum.

Anne moved that the bar of the Conference be set as sections 2, 4, 6, 8, 3 (rows a-i), 5 (a-i), 7 (a-i), 9 (a-i).

The motion was made by Anne and the motion passed. Bishop Swanson expressed that the bar was set.

Secretarial Staff: Conference Secretary Anne Travis nominated the following persons to serve as members of the secretarial staff: Deaconess Celeste Eubanks (Minutes), Meredyth Earnest (Balloting), Susan Arnold (Delegate Relations), Rev. Julie Hager Love (Associate

Secretary), Jasmine Haynes (Media Relations), Jennifer Davis (Monitoring), Rev. Dr. Sam Parkes (Worship), Sybil Davidson (DCA Editor), Becky Hall (Stage Manager), and David Dommissie (Treasurer). The secretarial staff was elected.

Other persons who are serving in assisting positions this week include the Delegation Pages and the Ballot Tellers. Anne Travis made note of replacement tellers. A motion was made to accept, and the motion passed.

Adoption of Agenda: Bishop Swanson called on Anne Travis to present the agenda for adoption. The agenda was adopted by the conference.

Anne Travis reminded delegates to look at the SEJ website each night for updates. The DCA will be posted on the SEJ website daily. A link to the DCA will be emailed to heads of delegation each night and a scannable QR code for the DCA will be posted on the wall in the rear of Stuart Auditorium.

Welcome to Lake Junaluska: Ken Howle, Executive Director of Lake Junaluska, came and brought a welcome to Lake Junaluska.

Committee on Plan of Organization and Rules of Order: Rob Martin presented the written report of the Committee on Plan of Organization and Rules of Order which included recommended changes. One change in particular coming from the committee is

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revising the number of members on the nominations committee and number of tellers. The recommendation is to replace the previous wording of “two persons per annual conference” with “30 persons.” Additional recommended changes were shared.

The conference approved the changes.

Nomination from Bishops for Secretary, Secretary Designate, Journal Committee, and Agenda Committee:

Bishop Sue Hupert-Johnson, President of the College of Bishops, presented the slate of nominations originating from the College of Bishops, in accordance with The Book of Discipline and our Conference Plan of Organization and Rules of Order. These leaders were elected.

Instructions for Balloting and Testing:

Bishop Swanson called on Anne Travis and Laura Poarch to lead the delegates through balloting and testing using their smartphone, tablet, or devices. Anne Travis offered the orientation, including testing on several sample ballots. GNTV facilitated the voting. Committee on Episcopacy: Dr. Steve Furr, chair of the Committee on Episcopacy, presented the report on behalf of the committee. He reported the work of the Committee during the last six years (a quadrennium plus two additional years). Recognition was given to Bishops who were set to retire but served two additional years prior to their retirement – Bishop Paul

Leeland, Bishop Hope Ward, Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor, and Bishop R. Lawson Bryan. Bishop James Swanson was also included in this group as he is set to retire at the end of the year. It was shared that Bishop McAlilly went on medical leave November 1, 2022. The recommendation from the committee is to elect three Bishops. The recommendation was accepted by the Conference.

Video: A video from Gulfside Assembly was shown.

Sample Ballot: Another sample ballot was taken to ensure there were no outstanding issues with the voting system.

Ballot Prayer: Bishop Ken Carder led the conference in prayer prior to the ballot.

Ballot One: Bishop Swanson guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for three persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Swanson closed the ballot.

Reading of Petitions Submitted (while ballot is being tabulated): Bishop Swanson called on Anne Travis to share about petitions received. Anne Travis shared that three petitions were received prior to the deadline. These petitions will be referred to the agenda committee for review per our rules.

Bishop Swanson shared that due to delays caused by write-ins on the first ballot, results would be shared

after lunch.

Prayer Before Meal: Rev. Kim Ingram offered a prayer to close the session and bless the meal.

Lunch Recess: The conference was in recess.

Afternoon Session

2:15 p.m.

Bishop Sharma Lewis, Presiding

Bishop Sharma Lewis called the session to order at 2:15 p.m.

Bishop Pinnel offered prayer for the session.

Bishop Lewis gave an overview of the schedule for the session, sharing there would be a ballot report and an order of the day at 2:30 p.m. Following the order of the day, voting would continue.

Ballot Results: Bishop Lewis read the results for ballot one.

Number of ballots: 352

Number of valid ballots: 350

Needed to elect: 210

There was no election.

The following balloting results were read:

Berlin, 180; Nelson, 144; Shelton, 130; Alvarez, 102; Gleaves, 102; Thomas, 96; Coles, 90; Austin, 85; Bowers, 58; Beasley, 27; Deese, 16; Martin, 11

Report of Committee on Coordination and Accountability: Bishop Lewis offered a prayer for Bishop Bill McAlilly prior to him giving his report. Bishop McAlilly asked for a

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point of personal privilege in which he gave an update on his recovery and shared some additional medical issues. Bishop McAlilly acknowledged the death of Home Missioner Gary Locklear, Rev. Dr. Brad Brady, and Rev. Roger Hopson. Bishop McAlilly shared updates on the work done by this committee during the quadrennium. The SEJ CCA and SEJ CFA propose that the work of their two committees be merged into one committee to be known as the Committee on Coordination and Accountability effective at the conclusion of the next 2024 Jurisdictional Conference session. Additionally, Bishop McAlilly shared proposed amendments to the relevant sections of the Jurisdiction's Plan of Organization were also presented. Revisions can be found on pages 59-72.

The motion was made to approve these changes. The Conference approved the motion.

Introduction of New Nominees: Bishop Lewis asked Zachary Beasley, Robin Dease, and Rob Martin to approach the podium to each give a 10-minute speech. These individuals were write-ins on the ballot and received at least 10 votes. Each presented in the order previously listed.

Rev. Dr. Zachary "Zach" Beasley is a clergy delegate from the Mississippi Conference serving two churches in Holly Springs, MS.

Rev. Robin Dease is clergy in the South Carolina Conference serving at St. Andrews by the Sea in South

Carolina.

Rev. Robert "Rob" Martin is clergy in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference serving as the Assistant to the Bishop.

Bishop Lewis asked for clarity regarding Rev. Dease's nomination. Rev. Dease shared from the floor that she was in fact withdrawing her nomination.

Ballot Prayer: Bishop Kammerer led the conference in prayer prior to the ballot.

Willie Kitchen and band led the group in a song as adjustments were made to the ballot removing Rev. Robin Dease's name from the ballot.

Ballot Two: Bishop Lewis guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for three persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Lewis closed the ballot.

Video: Hinton Center video was shown while ballots were tallied.

Ballot Results: Bishop Lewis ruled ballot two invalid.

Willie Kitchen and band led the group in a song as the ballot was reset.

Ballot Three: Bishop Lewis guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for three persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Lewis closed the ballot.

SEJ Archives and History Update: Mr. Mike Feely gave an update on the SEJ Archives and History sharing upcoming activities and SEJ Heritage Center here at Lake Junaluska. He shared that Nancy Watkins will be retiring. As a result of this, the decision has been made to move the archives to Emory's Pitts Library.

Video: Lake Junaluska video was shown as ballots were tallied.

Bishop Lewis called for a break until 4:05 p.m.

Evening Session

4:00 p.m.

Bishop Graves Presiding

Bishop David Graves called the session to order at 4:05 p.m.

Bishop Will Willamon offered a prayer for the session.

Ballot Results: Bishop Graves read the results for ballot three.
Number of ballots: 351
Number of valid ballots: 351
Needed to elect: 211
There was no election.

The following balloting results were read:

Berlin, 210; Shelton, 186; Nelson, 166; Gleaves, 106; Alvarez, 96; Thomas, 92; Coles, 63; Austin, 53; Beasley, 32; Bowers, 22; Martin, 20

Ballot Four: Bishop Graves guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for three persons. Upon con-

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clusion, Bishop Graves closed the ballot.

Bishop McCleskey led the Conference in prayer after the close of the ballot.

Committee on Finance and

Administration: Mr. Frank Dunnewind presented the report of the SEJ CFA. He gave thanks to the committee members for serving during this extended period. As a result of the pandemic, CFA provided some benefits to annual conferences to aid in financially difficult times. They also provided COVID grant relief to several agencies and also gave grants to agencies who requested funds to enhance their media presence. A detailed proposed budget can be found on ADCA pp. 83-84. CFA recommends a \$1,500,000 (15% reduction) budget. Thanks were extended to David Dommisee. The death of Rev. Dr. Autura Eason-Williams who was serving as the secretary of SEJ CFA was acknowledged.

The Conference approved this report.

Red Bird Missionary Conference

name change: Rev. Karen Stigall, Superintendent in the Red Bird Missionary Conference, presented a petition (ADCA pg. 85) to request a name change, move the conference center, and change the structure to be more missionally focused. These requests have already been accepted by the Conference but must now come before the jurisdiction. A video was shown

highlighting this work. The Conference approved the motion.

Bishop Graves invited Bishop Leonard Fairley to come forward and pray for the vision of this Conference.

Ballot Results: Bishop Graves read the results for ballot four.

Number of ballots: 346

Number of valid ballots: 346

Needed to elect: 208

Election – Tom Berlin was elected with 213 ballots. He was escorted to the stage with members of his family and gave a brief acceptance speech.

The following balloting results were read:

Berlin, 213; Shelton, 201; Nelson,

161; Gleaves, 131; Alvarez, 94;

Thomas, 83; Coles, 58; Austin, 43;

Beasley, 21; Bowers, 18; Martin, 13

Ballot Prayer: Bishop Larry Goodpaster led the conference in prayer prior to the ballot.

Ballot Five: Bishop Graves guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for two persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Graves closed the ballot.

Nominations from College of Bishops for Administrative Committees and Disciplinary Committees

and incoming COE: Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson presented the remaining nominations report found in the ADCA. There were some corrections that were to be made. TWK – Josh Shaw should be the

Lay Delegate. NGA – Byron Thomas is the Clergy Delegate.

Rule of Law: Jim Allen, lay delegate, Tennessee conference, requested a rule of law. Under paragraph 50 in the Book of Discipline, the COE consists of “one clergy and one lay delegate from each annual conference on nomination of the annual conference delegation.” Therefore, the ruling of law is that the merged annual conference may only submit one clergy and one lay delegate and it would be out of order to elect legacy nominees, either as the primary nominee or as an alternative for the Judicial Council to rule upon. The annual conference can only nominate one clergy and one lay delegate. Anything else is contrary to BOD paragraph 50.

Bishop Graves asked clarifying questions prior to submitting the rule of law. Bishop Graves ruled that the merged annual conference may only submit one clergy and one lay delegate. He said it would be out of order to elect legacy nominees. Anything other than this is contrary to BOD paragraph 50.

Bishop Hauptert-Johnson shared that with this ruling the nominations report was properly before the body. The report was approved by the Conference.

Ballot Results: Bishop Graves read the results for ballot five .

Number of ballots: 349

Number of valid ballots: 349

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Needed to elect: 210

There was no election.

The following balloting results were read:

Shelton, 176; Nelson, 150; Gleaves, 132; Isobar, 87; Thomas, 56; Coles, 41; Austin, 34;

Rev. Rob Martin, clergy from Western Kentucky shared his appreciation for being nominated, but withdrew his name for consideration for bishop.

Ballot Six: Bishop Graves guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for two persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Graves closed the ballot.

Committee on Program and Arrangements: Stephanie Hand presented the oral report for this committee. (See ADCA pgs. 42-44 for full report.) Special thanks was given to Bishop Ward, Bishop Swanson, and Anne Travis for their work with this committee.

Recognition of Visitors: Bishop Graves made special introductions

of guests from seminaries, SEJ ministries, and general agencies.

Ballot Results: Bishop Graves read the results for ballot six .

Number of ballots: 349

Number of valid ballots: 349

Needed to elect: 210

There was no election.

The following balloting results were read:

Shelton, 181; Gleaves, 153; Nelson, 152; Alvarez, 90; Thomas, 47; Austin, 36; Coles, 32

Byron Thomas, clergy delegate from North Georgia, gave appreciation for his nomination from North Georgia, but respectfully withdrew his name.

Ballot Seven: Bishop Graves guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for 2 persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Graves closed the ballot.

Bishop Graves declared the ballot invalid and requested that the ballot be reset.

Willie Kitchen and band shared music with the conference while the ballot was being properly reset.

Ballot Prayer: Bishop Mike Watson led the conference in prayer prior to the ballot.

Ballot Eight: Bishop Graves guided the conference through voting and shared that each delegate should vote for two persons. Upon conclusion, Bishop Graves closed the ballot.

Announcements: Anne Travis gave announcements.

Bishop Graves expressed special thanks to Anne Travis and once again acknowledged the untimely passing of Rev. Dr. Brad Brady.

Blessing for Dinner Meal: Rev. Dedric Cowser gave a blessing over the meal.

Official Minutes will be published in the SEJ Journal.



Live Stream

sejumc.org/sej-conference-2022

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