

*Inspire*

**2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
JUNE 14-17, BATON ROUGE  
RIVER CENTER**



**Louisiana Conference of the  
United Methodist Church  
The 2022 Annual Conference**

A call for revival, an appeal to inclusiveness within the Louisiana Conference, and a chance for old friends across the state to catch up after three years apart highlighted the first full day of the 2022 Annual Conference.

Louisiana Conference Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, delivering the Episcopal address on Wednesday at the Raising Cane's River Center in Baton Rouge, called on delegates to “reclaim connectionalism” and “our vision of the United Methodist Church.”

Her afternoon remarks followed an emotional sermon from Bishop Tracy Smith Malone of the East Ohio Conference, who exhorted delegates to refrain



from “determining who’s in and who’s out” of the church, a reference to the denomination’s conflict over full LGBTQ inclusion.

But, for most delegates who have been relegated to meeting by Zoom since 2020, the 2022 Annual Conference was a joyful reunion with friends and colleagues as they settled into the first day of church business.

### **Episcopal Address: Bishop Harvey Appeals to Methodist Church’s Higher Purpose**

Shepherding a church expected to lose some Methodist congregations, Louisiana Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey on Wednesday reminded delegates at the 2022 Annual Conference of the church's higher purpose in world besieged with violence, disease, war, and social injustice.

“Continue to be the people of God that boldly and courageously tell the story of a church that is big enough for the left, the right, and the in between,” Bishop Harvey said in her Episcopal address. “Our churches must be more than echo chambers made in our own image, arguing with each other while neglecting our central purpose.”

Bishop Harvey's address capped the first full day of the conference, being held through Friday at the Raising Cane's River Center in Baton Rouge.

Because of the COVID pandemic, this is the first time in three years delegates to the Louisiana Conference have been able to physically gather, a fact not lost on the clearly Zoom-weary bishop.

“I cannot believe my eyes! You are here in person!” she said. “You are not a tiny square in my computer.”

Quoting from The Theological Task in the Book of Discipline, Bishop Harvey talked about the “connected body, bound



together,” spreading the gospel, consistent with “our specific cultural and social context” while maintaining church relationships.

“The thumb cannot say to the foot, I do not need you,” she said. “We are connected at the very core of our DNA.”

Her calls for revival were well received by the delegates, who interrupted her 41-minute address eight times with applause. “It is time to reclaim our vision of the United Methodist Church; it is time to reclaim our Wesleyan theology of grace, of social holiness,” Bishop Harvey said. “It is time for a revival!”

The delegates also applauded her remarks on the mass shootings playing out across the country.

“When does this end? Thoughts and prayers are wonderful, but we have to be more and do more,” she said. “It is time for people of faith to respond in tangible ways. The United Methodist Church has always been a church of social action, of finding intersectionality in the public square to make our voices known and heard. It is beyond time!”

The delegates listened quietly and carefully as Bishop Harvey approached the topic of separation and disaffiliation over the denomination’s conflict over full LGBRQ inclusion in the church, a division she grieves and regrets “more than words can express.

“I am a big-tent church person who believes that every voice is important to the whole, that every part of the body is important to the whole,” she said. “I also realize that it is time to bless and send our sisters and brothers who cannot remain under the big tent.”

## [Watch the Episcopal Address](#)

# **Bishop Tracy Smith Malone Gives Stirring, Hopeful Remarks at Annual Conference**

In a stirring and, sometimes, pointed opening sermon, Bishop Tracy Smith Malone from the East Ohio Conference, told delegates to the Louisiana Conference's 2022 Annual Conference on Wednesday they have no right to decide who should and should not be allowed to fully participate in the United Methodist church.

Malone, bishop of the East Ohio Conference and president-elect to the United Methodist Church Council of Bishops, was making a point that the church is only "an instrument of God's mission" to offer salvation to the world.



"This church is not ours; this church is God's church," Malone said to a crowd of delegates re-gathered for the first time in three years. "And we are invited to be stewards of God's church. How dare we determine who's in and who's out and who's worthy and who's not when it's not even ours."

Malone spoke to approximately 1,000 delegates, clergy and guests gathered at the Raising Cane's River Center in Baton Rouge. Wednesday was the second day of the four-day conference.

Bishop Malone based much of her sermon on Romans 5:5-11, in which Paul writes about Christians' being given "a full measure of God's grace." That grace, she said, sustains Christians through "trials and tribulations," including the COVID pandemic, hurricanes, floods, racial tensions, mass shootings, "divisions in the church, separation and disaffiliation," and "the political and culture wars."

"That's why we can rejoice," said Malone, explaining the "paradoxical truth of suffering." It means that "suffering builds endurance; endurance builds character; character builds hope... This kind of hope is a relentless hope. It is this hope that inspires us to work toward justice... That is the hope that inspires us to share the love of Jesus."

While she spoke extensively on the theme of God's grace during her 25-minute sermon, Bishop Malone also made connecting references to the division in the Methodist church over issues concerning full LGBTQ inclusion.

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, to point his finger at the world to tell everyone how bad the world is," she said. "For God sent his Son into the world so that the world might be saved through him."

After her sermon, Bishop Malone said her hope was to stay true to the Annual Conference's *Inspire* theme by "trying to inspire the body of Christ to be who the body of Christ is."

## [Watch Bishop Malone's Sermon](#)

### **Laity Address**

Jennifer Swann, Conference Lay Leader, shared the laity report. In it, Swann shared an inspiring hope for the United Methodist Church. She shared how her witness of her United Methodist Congregation has developed in her, a faith-inspired, not by fear of damnation, but by the Hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

She leaned into this year's theme; Inspiration.



"The inspiration for our behavior is important," she said. "It defines the limits of what we are willing to do for our cause. It determines what obstacles and challenges we can overcome."

Swann explained that in our Methodist tradition, the laity, like the first community of believers, is the primary way the Gospel is spread.

"In fact, according to our United Methodist Book of Discipline, it is the Laity's Christ-like examples of everyday living and sharing of



their own faith experience of the Gospel which is the Primary evangelism tool through which all people will come to know Christ and the church will fulfill its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Swann said inspiration leads to hope. "Our hope is not cheap or weak or easily defeated. It is the kind of Hope that makes us strong," she said. "A cheap hope for a growing church might have led John Wesley down a different path. As a talented preacher, he probably could have had a successful career helping churches survive. But Wesley wasn't inspired by a hope for a growing church."

Swann concluded her address by reminding delegates that Jesus reminds us all that merely living, even living comfortably, even living like a king, is not what we were created to do.

"We were created for a different kingdom," she said. "At our core, we were created to be in perfect relationship with God and with each other. This is the role of the laity and of the whole church: to live together as the community of believers, held together by the inspiration that comes from our hope in Jesus."

[Watch the Laity Address](#)

## **Rev. Jay Augustine Challenges Delegates: “And, Who is Your Neighbor?”**

Employing Biblical and contemporary references, Reverend Dr. Jay Augustine urged delegates at the 2022 Annual Conference in Baton Rouge on Thursday to focus on commonalities among all



Methodists of differing political, cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds and beliefs.

Rev. Augustine, an author and senior pastor at St. Joseph AME Church in Durham, N.C., preached to the delegates on the topic of racial reconciliation, using the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a starting point. “I want to ask you a question,” he said, referencing the question the lawyer asked Jesus in the parable. “And who is your neighbor?”



In the well-known parable found in Luke 10:25-37, the man who is robbed, beaten, and left on the side of the road is presumably a Jewish man. The first two men to pass him without helping were a priest and a Levite. It was a Samaritan who aided and comforted the injured man, even though Samaritans were looked down upon by Jews, Rev. Augustine pointed out.

“There’s no way you would think a Jew and a Samaritan could be neighbors,” he said. “We all ought to be neighbors in the church, in the name of Jesus Christ.”

One problem, he said, is that there are too many “other-isms” across the country today that lead people to see what makes other people different instead of seeing what they have in common. Once we get beyond focusing on differences, “that person who is different becomes your neighbor.”

Rev. Augustine, a native of New Orleans, used a gumbo analogy to illustrate how different things can come together to make something wonderful. In a table-top discussion on racism he facilitated immediately after the sermon, he said he likes butternut squash soup sometimes, but it is homogenous and, frankly, not nearly as interesting, or as good, as gumbo.

“We’ve got to be willing to say that okra has a place at the table; we’ve got to be willing to say that sausage has a place at the table; we’ve got to be willing to say that chicken has a place at the table; and we’ve got to be willing to say that shrimp has a place at the table.”

After the table-top exercise, Rev. Augustine said he hoped he had inspired the delegates to be “reflective in looking at where they are.

“If we can move away from the polarity....if we can move toward the commonalities that we share, we can celebrate the diversity that is Louisiana,” he said.

[Watch Rev. Jay Augustine](#)

## **Rossnagel Honored for Communication Ministry**

Rev. Todd Rossnagel, director of communications strategies for the Louisiana Conference, has received the Epikoinonía award from United Methodist Communications in recognition of excellence in communication ministry.

Rossnagel received the national award during the 2022 Louisiana Annual Conference in Baton Rouge. Jennifer Rodia, Chief Communications Officer of The United Methodist Church, presented the award to Rossnagel, saying he “embodies with excellence the spirit of Christian communication.”

The Epikoinonía award, or “Epi,” was established in 2019. The Greek word *Epikoinonía* translates in English to *communication*.



Rodia noted that Rossnagel served Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey in her role as the Louisiana Bishop and during her just-ended tenure as the leader of the Council of Bishops. He did this while navigating the communication challenges presented

by the pandemic and a devastating string of natural disasters in Louisiana, she said.

“Through it all, Todd remains passionate about storytelling and sharing his expertise with conference communicators and local church leaders,” Rodia told the conference. “He uses creative strategies through podcasting, photography and videography and is always on the cutting edge, finding new tools and technology to put to use.”

Rossnagel is a hands-on manager, frequently writing stories; shooting, editing, and posting videos on the Louisiana Conference’s website and social media channels; and hosting the

Louisiana NOW podcast. In accepting the award, Rossnagel said telling the church's stories "is the greatest job in the world, because you are doing the work, you are being the hands and feet of Christ, and I am just privileged" to tell those stories.

Bishop Harvey said, "no one is more deserving of this award than Todd Rossnagel and I'm grateful to have him walk beside us."

Rossnagel serves on the United Methodist Association of Communicators' leadership team and received the Communicator of the Year Award from that group in 2020. Under his guidance, the Louisiana Conference has won numerous awards for writing, videography, photography, social media communications, and podcasts.

Rossnagel serves as a local full-time pastor, serving in extension ministry. Prior to joining the Conference staff, he managed media services for Louisiana's economic development agency. He also was an award-winning television news reporter, anchor, and manager.

## **Harry Denmann Evangelism Awards**

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award program honors United Methodists in each annual conference whose exceptional ministry of evangelism – expressed in Word (what), Sign (why), and Deed (how) – brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Evangelism happens in many contexts and many settings; impacts and engages all generations; and requires relationship among a variety of persons.

Each year Annual Conferences and the Foundation for Evangelism recognize one youth, one clergy, and one lay person in each conference.

Valla Johnson, John Gilmore and Jennifer Swann presented the lay person award to Paul Fontenot, who serves as lay pastor at First United Methodist Church in New Iberia, LA.

Gilmore read comments submitted to the committee about Fontenot. “Paul’s humility, eagerness to seek and learn, sense of grace, love for God and all manner of people is evident to all who meet him.



Everything that Paul has done are infused with a winsome invitation to follow Christ and a broad welcome to find hope, purpose, healing and grace in the body of Christ.”

Jennifer Swann, Conference lay leader, presented the award to Fontenot.

During the Clergy Session of the annual conference, Rev. Karli Pidgeon, District Superintendent of the Alexandria District, presented the Harry Denman Evangelism Award to Rev. Fernie Rivera.

In her remarks, Pidgeon lifted up the remarkable journey for Rivera and his start-up church, Mid City. The church, a campus of First United Methodist Church, Baton Rouge, was set to open its door just prior to the world-wide pandemic.



Pidgeon shared how Rivera poured his efforts into small groups, which met virtually, and into creating a virtual worship space online. Reading from one of the letters of affirmation, she said, “His presence allowed people intimidated by the virus, or nervous about visiting a new church to be a part of the community,” she said. “Individuals who attended received personal messages from Fernie inviting them to small groups. This meant that when the church met in person, people felt included the first time they walked through the door, or into the space.”



## **Bishop Harvey: “My Heart is Grieving”**

The ideals of reconciliation and connectionalism gave way to the realities of corporate church governance on Thursday afternoon as eight United Methodist churches in Louisiana were approved for disaffiliation and five more were closed at the 2022 Annual Conference.

Louisiana Conference Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey was visibly shaken after presiding over the vote to confirm the disaffiliation of the nine churches.

“Never, ever, ever in a million years...” – the bishop stammered, pausing to regain her composure as the conference hall fell silent

– “did I think I would have to vote for churches to leave the United Methodist Church. My heart is grieving.”

The disaffiliated churches and the communities they are in are:

- Mt. Mariah UMC, Arcadia
- Columbia UMC, Columbia
- Barksdale UMC, Bossier City
- Indian Bayou UMC, Rayne
- Haynesville UMC, Haynesville
- Vacherie UMC, Vacherie
- Lake Vista UMC, New Orleans
- Hurst United UMC, Plaquemine
- Athens UMC, Athens

The votes from the Annual Conference were nearly unanimous on each church.

Although the churches were disaffiliated without outward rancor or disagreements on the floor of the conference, the actions stood in sharp contrast to the lofty and inspiring rhetoric of the Wednesday and Thursday morning sessions.

Disaffiliation has become a path forward for some conservative congregations that have bristled at a more inclusive stance toward LGBTQ rights in the United Methodist Church. But the





separation process has been painful for a majority of Methodists, who have embraced or, at least, tolerated cultural advances in the church.

The church that were officially closed on Thursday and the communities they are in are:

- St. Maurice UMC, Maurice
- Mangum Memorial UMC, Shreveport
- Summer Grove UMC, Shreveport
- Wilson Memorial UMC, Lottie
- Sanders Chapel UMC, Winnfield

## Celebration of Ministry Service

On Thursday evening, delegates gathered at First United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge for the Celebration of Ministry Service. The service featured the commissioning of one deacon and one elder, and the ordination of two deacons and three elders.



### Commissioned Deacon:

- Kaitlin Elizabeth Babington

## **Commissioned Elder:**

- Alice Gautreaux Boutte

## **Ordained Deacons:**

- Rebecca Leigh Clark
- Kimberly Lea McGee

## **Ordained Elders:**

- Allison Kate Glass
- Deirdre Beth Allen
- KennonWayne Pickett

## **[Watch the Service](#)**

## **Anti-Racism Taskforce**

All Methodists in the Louisiana Conference should take specific steps to know and understand “race, racial history, increased equality, education, and advocacy,” according to a report presented Friday at the 2022 Annual Conference in



Baton Rouge.

The Anti-Racism Task Force, chaired by Rev. Tiffanie Postell of Newman United Methodist Church in Alexandria, also proposed that the conference urge the Louisiana Legislature to create [a second majority-Black Congressional District](#). The conference later approved that measure with a near-unanimous vote.

## [Read the Petition](#)

Racism is “a person-made issue,” task force member Jennifer Rossnagel said. “If we made it, we can tear it down. We can change it.”

Rossnagel reminded the conference that Friday was the seventh anniversary of the Charleston, S.C., shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in which nine African-American Bible study participants were murdered. She wanted the conference to recognize that “our black and brown brothers and sisters with us are hurting.”

She concluded her remarks by quoting Henri Nouwen, “We cannot love issues, but we can love people, and the love of people reveals to us the way to deal with issues.”

The task force wants to “create a shift in action, thoughts, and system in the Louisiana Conference,” the report says. The ongoing conversation about racial issues “challenges our Conference and its people as we move toward greater discernment of disparities within our system and the world around us and take steps toward equality and justice for all.”

Besides the petition, the specific actions the task force called upon Louisiana Conference delegates to take include:

- Join an online book study of ***Called to Reconciliation: How the Church Can Model Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion*** by Jonathan C. Augustine. Augustine, a New Orleans native and North Carolina pastor, spoke on the second day of the conference. The study of his book will be led by members of the Task Force and via zoom. Registration information will be forthcoming via Louisiana Now.
- Contribute to the Conference Anti-Racism Resources Page. The Task Force asks that Louisiana Conference delegates contribute books, movies, podcasts, and other resources “you have found helpful, or challenging.”
- Travel with to historic Civil Rights Centers. The Task Force plans to organize small group trips to various Civil Rights destinations, such as the Center for Equal Justice and Whitney Plantation. The purpose of these trips is to cultivate deep relationships among the participants through shared learning experiences followed by personal reflection and group conversation.

## [Watch the Report](#)

### **"It is Not Well with My Soul..."**

On Wednesday, Desmond “Dez” Dunn felt fortunate just to be in attendance at his third Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church after having finished cancer treatment only three weeks earlier.

On Thursday, he started feeling a little uncomfortable, but not because of the cancer he is fighting. Long meetings focusing on

the logistical and financial issues surrounding disaffiliation – the separation of congregations from the UMC – left his soul unsettled.



On Friday, after hearing reports from the Anti-Racism Task Force, the conference overwhelmingly approved a resolution to urge the Louisiana Legislature to create a second majority-black

Congressional district. But, the vote was not unanimous, and the scattered handful of “no” votes inspired Dunn – a black man – to address the conference.

What would follow was more than a five-minute speech. It was an emotional amalgamation of three full days of sermons, addresses, and discussion on inclusion and anti-racism combined with protracted meetings, legislation, and voting about disaffiliation.

Dunn, a 36-year-old high school physical education teacher, sparked an impromptu demonstration of love on the floor of the Raising Cane’s River Center and inspired Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey to characterize Dunn’s remarks as “the most theologically, scripturally-driven, spirit-led comment that maybe we have uttered these entire three days.

“I just saw my brothers and sisters in Christ raise their red cards (vote ‘no’) against me,” Dunn said, his words cracking with emotion. He backed away from the microphone to find his voice. One black man, Rev. K.C. Roberson of Camphor Memorial in Baton Rouge, stood with Dunn, patting his shoulder for support.

“It is not well with my soul,” Dunn continued.

Then, another person, a white woman, rose and stood next to Dunn.

Then another. And another. And another. Then three more. Then five more.

Dunn soon was surrounded by more than a dozen delegates – all but two were white – as he spoke his mind.

“I’m not a theologian. I’m not knowledgeable on all things...but what I do know is I’m a Christian. And what I do know is that Jesus did what our church has always done,” he said, his voice rising. “The underground railroad...wouldn’t have been as effective as it was had it not been for United Methodists!”

As more people approached Dunn, he wrapped up his impromptu remarks:

“Our church is not dead. We are not dying. It is alive. God is alive. We are alive.”

In an interview after his speech, Dunn said something began stirring inside him on Thursday, during discussions of financial settlements of churches that plan to leave the UMC.

“We weren’t talking about the people, what makes the church,” Dunn said. “They kept talking around the issue. I felt bullied.”

When the vote to recommend the second black Congressional district drew a handful of red cards, “that made me lift out of my chair,” he said. “It was definitely triggering.”

The result was a clear voice that articulated what many at the 2022 Annual Conference were feeling – sorrow over the divisions within the church, pride in the church’s history of social activism, and hope that Christ’s love will inspire greater accomplishments in the future.

## [Watch the Moment](#)

## **Recovery in Louisiana**

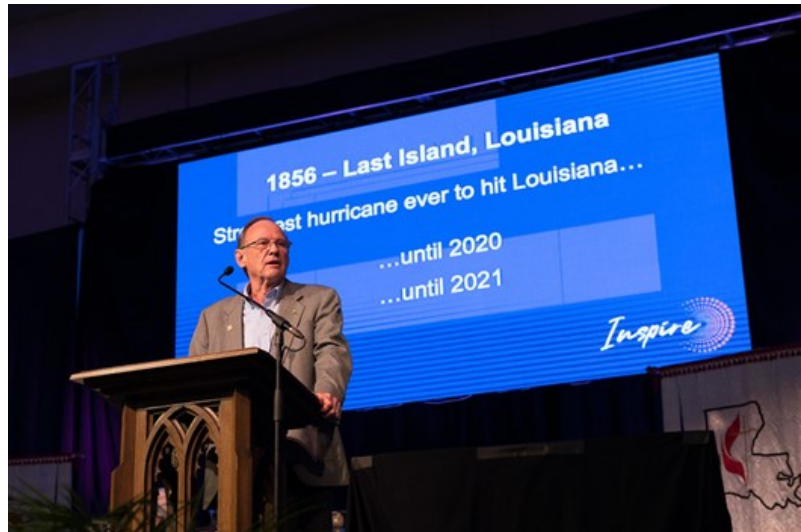
While most of the world has been focused on recovering from a world-wide pandemic, many residents in Louisiana have been focused on recovering from some of the strongest hurricanes to ever strike the Bayou state.

Whether it was Hurricane Laura in 2020 or Hurricane Ida in 2021, nearly every zip code in Louisiana has been affected by a hurricane. Through it all, the Louisiana Conference Office of Missional Engagement and Outreach has responded.

The report was given by Bill Howell, the new Director of Missional Engagement and Outreach, taking over for Rev. Elaine Burleigh who announced her retirement last year.



Bill's second day on the job was just hours after Hurricane Ida made landfall in southeast Louisiana. And as much as that storm was drawing a lot of attention, Howell remembers his first few meetings with Bishop Harvey.



"I remember reading all of the reports about Ida and thinking this was certainly going to be my focus. But Bishop Harvey quickly told me, 'do what you can to re-engage with Lake Charles,'" Howell said. "Due to COVID restrictions, recovery in the Lake Charles District had slowed to a crawl. So, we got to work!"

Howell showed delegates how the Louisiana Conference, together with Mennonite Disaster Services, the Fuller Center, and the Methodist Foundation of Louisiana formed a unique coalition of support and recovery for southwest Louisiana.

"We started by hoping we could do 25-30 homes. Here's what we did: 66 homes rebuilt, 24,00 volunteer hours logged, \$600,000 in materials purchased, \$1.2 million in value contributed to rebuilding homes in Lake Charles," Howell reported. "And we're not through in southwest Louisiana. The goal is 30 new homes and 50 home repairs from November 2022 to March 2023."

"Climate disasters do not discriminate, but recovery for the poor and powerless is a very different path than the one we, in this room, must travel," Howell said. "If it were not for the work we do

– the work all of you support with your prayers, volunteerism, and generosity – these people would not make it. Time and time and time and time and time and time again you have responded. You have shared our stories on social media, preached sermons of hope and shown up with brooms, chainsaws, and bottles of water — tangibly being the hands and feet of Christ."

Flanked to Howell's right was Rev. Bob Deich who spearheads the Conference Early Response Teams. Deich spoke about the need to stand ready for the next disaster and, at the same time, credited the number of disaster response teams who stepped up to help in the past year.

"We often are the only thing that stands between them and their complete marginalization from society," Deich said, "So, I want to thank you for helping to bring a little climate justice into our world."

## [Watch the Report](#)

## **Church Transformation**

The sub-theme for Friday's Inspiration was 'hope' and no other report gave the delegates more hope than that of the Office of Congregational Development and Transformation, led by Rev. Gloria Fowler and Rev. Sam Hubbard.

Fowler reported that in the past five years, the office has assisted over 100 churches in the areas of mission and vision, hospitality, community engagement, discipleship pathways, leadership development, simplified governance structure, and more. She said that more than 50 churches have gone through the full

Church Transformation Process and that the office has assisted in the birthing of six new faith communities: The Table, Bridge, Legacy, Mid City, Comunidad Cristiana, and Southern Wesley, and at least a dozen new fresh expressions.



The office has also created the African-American Church Vitality Task Force to help the unique challenges of our African-American churches and leaders.

Fowler said that this past year, the office has begun to partner with Strengthening the Black Church (SBC 21) to equip African-American churches.

"We attended an event called Shift Happens and have started the African-American Pastors Leadership Cohort where we get to share life and learn and grow together around best practices," Fowler said, "In the fall, we'll continue to work with the SBC21 on the Black Church Matters Initiative, strategic work around the conference, and cohorts to train our leaders."

Hubbard shared a series of wins for the delegates.

"Starting new faith communities is a complex, risky, and intimidating practice," Hubbard said, "So we have attempted to simplify, de-mystify, and de-riskify the process by creating a

straight-forward guide. This template has helped us and our innovators to build on our offices “why” which is to develop diverse disciple-multiplying communities that experience a transforming new life in Christ. So, to do that, we focus on three key "new's" areas which are New Places, New People, and New Ways."

Hubbard proceeded to list a series of new church expressions. Everything from 'Brew and Bites' in Mid-City a church in bars and beer gardens to 'Pray and Play' in Lake Charles, a church on a playground.



He even shared how St. Matthew's UMC in Metairie started 'Puppy Church', a ministry to connect with the pet owners and nearby animal shelters.

"Just so you get a full idea of the impact of these new communities of faith," Hubbard said. "We have dozens of new places explored, thousands of new people reached, dozens of new ways tried. And this was all during a global pandemic, with denominational turmoil, and a divided country. Y'all, Jesus said it best, nothing can stop the church...nothing. Not even us...no matter how hard we try."

Fowler took a moment at the end of the presentation to say goodbye to the Louisiana Conference as she heads to South

Korea in July. After five years in the Louisiana Conference, leading and managing the Office of Congregational Development and Transformation, Rev. Dr. Gloria Fowler is transitioning to an extension ministry starting July 1, 2022.

Fowler has accepted a position in an ecumenical para-church ministry in South Korea at the Chinju Prayer Retreat Center.

"I am so grateful to the Louisiana Annual Conference for the opportunity to serve this amazing conference," Fowler said. "It's been such an honor and privilege to be part of the transformation and the development of churches in Louisiana. I came with a missionary's heart to serve those who are hungry for renewal and transformation. It has been such a joy to come alongside so many churches and pastors and to see them energized to live out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I pray that my ministry here has helped move the needle forward for the expansion of God's Kingdom."

Rev. Karli Pidgeon, currently serving as the District Superintendent of the Alexandria District, will also serve as the interim director.

Pidgeon previously served as Associate Director of the Office of Congregational Development and Church Transformation for nearly two years.

"I have learned so much and have been able to soak up much of Gloria's wisdom and knowledge to carry forward the amazing work she has begun," Pidgeon says. "I celebrate her having this unique opportunity to continue to utilize her gifts alongside her family in South Korea. In this season of transition and discernment, I look forward to continuing the work of Congregational Development and Transformation. There are

many exciting expressions of transformation and God's spirit moving throughout the Annual Conference and I'm excited to be a part of it.

Rev. Sam Hubbard, Associate Director of the Office of Congregational Development and Church Transformation, will continue to work on fresh expressions to reach new people for Jesus Christ in the Louisiana Annual Conference.

"We will be taking the time to discern our next steps in the area of Congregational Development and Church Transformation," Bishop Harvey shared. "In this season of the Conference's life, it will be important for us to carefully examine how we faithfully lead this important work in the future. I am grateful to Rev. Karli Pidgeon and her willingness to help lead this work in the interim as we work toward defining our vision for the future of Congregational Development and Church Transformation."

## [Watch the Report](#)

## **Statistical Information**

Number of people ordained, commissioned or received into associate membership, and average age:

- 1 Deacon Commissioned
- 1 Elder Commissioned
- 2 Deacons Ordained
- 3 Elders Ordained

Number of clergy retired:

- 11 Elders

- 2 Deacons
- 3 License Local Pastors
- 2 Associate Members

Membership stands at 104439 down -1833 from the previous year.

Worship attendance stands at 19928 up +91.

Church school attendance stands at 7421 down -767.

Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2021 713 down from 2021 -396.

Adults and young adults in small groups for 2021 13502 down from 2021 -2968.

Worshippers engaged in mission for 2021 12798 down from 2021 -1811