

Laity Session Report for Annual Conference 2013

The Conference Board of Laity offered a workshop “AC101: Navigating Annual Conference,” which is a training for the first-time attendees to Annual Conference and for those who want a refresher course on the organization and operation of the Annual Conference. The trainings were offered on Friday afternoon, June 7, 2013, 1:00-2:15 pm prior to the beginning of opening worship to give opportunity to both clergy and laity to attend and at 4:45-6:00 pm.

Resources were available on each chair for the attendees. The resources comprised: Evaluation of the Laity Session, 2013 Lay Ministry Equipping Resources Catalog, and a two-sided sheet: What to look for at Annual Conference!/What to do after Annual Conference!/Guide to “Methodist Speak” (abbreviations and acronyms)/useful websites and useful contacts.

The Conference Board of Laity gathered in the worship area on Friday evening, June 7, 2013, to welcome all lay members to Annual Conference at the Laity Session. The evening began with an opening performance at 6:45 pm from Heather and the Sugar River Band from Sugar River UMC, Verona. The band led us in new and familiar music that called the spirit of God into our midst by sharing “Your Grace is Enough,” “Mighty to Save,” “I will Rise” and “Trading My Sorrows” as the laity gathered in the worship area.

The Laity was warmly welcomed by Deanna Shimko, the new Conference Lay Leader, who welcomed the laity to the 2013 Annual Conference. Deanna introduced our new Bishop, Hee Soo Jung, who warmly welcomed and invited all to show appreciation to Deanna Shimko for her diligence, commitment and passion for all the work and ministry she has done on behalf of the laity of the conference; she received a standing ovation from the laity. Bishop Jung also thanked the Board of Laity for their work in the conference and for the ministry and opportunities they provide around the conference. Bishop thanked all lay members for “your ministry, and for your life. Thank you for seeing the higher ground. Thank you for being a dreamer for this Conference, this Church, this world.”

Deanna Shimko continued the Laity Session by inviting the members of the Board of Laity to the platform to introduce themselves. Mark Sheets, Metro North District Lay Leader; Denise Retzleff, Dean of Faith Alive! and past Winnebago District lay Leader; Ron Vinger, Nicolet District Lay Leader and leader for the Walk to Emmaus; Lisa Gilbert, Capital-Coulee Regional Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Rex Nelson, Metro North District Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Donna Wilkinson, Nicolet District Director of Lay Servant Ministries; Gail Burgess, Associate Dean of Faith Alive!; Judy Vasby, President of the United Methodist Women; Eric Taylor, Young Adult representative; Summer Frosland, Youth Representative; and Dorthy Radley, Past Conference Lay Leader.

As the session continued Lisa Gilbert, Capital-Coulee Regional Director of Lay Servant Ministries, explained a change to Section 11 of the Book of Discipline, which requires lay speakers to receive additional training. Gilbert stressed the Conference’s ongoing support of lay speakers despite this change, saying, “We want to help you keep up on training, keep up on classes, and provide more trainings. We want you to be able to continue to serve.”

Dorothy Radley, Past Conference Lay Leader and delegate to General Conference 2012, explained Action Item #26, on pages 21-23 of the Conference Workbook and to be voted on Saturday afternoon.

Eight members of the Conference Board of Laity presented a skit on the Wisconsin Annual Conference quadrennial theme “Live the Fruit of the Spirit.” The setting is an evening news broadcast with on-location reporters scattered around the State of Wisconsin reporting on the ways generous people of the United Methodist churches are abundantly living the fruit of the spirit: peace, patience, love, kindness, joy, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. We begin the quadrennium by preparing the soil. Cast: News anchor, Donna Wilkinson; east Wisconsin reporter, Lisa Gilbert; west Wisconsin reporter, Mark Sheets; chief meteorologist, Gail Burgess; Marriott location reporter, Eric Taylor; advertiser, Summer Frosland, and two sign board operators, Ron Vinger and Rex Nelson.

Ray Buckley was our keynote speaker. Buckley is an author and well known international speaker, who gave a passionate speech about the need to focus God’s work on helping indigenous people. Through moving tribal and personal tales of ongoing suffering of family and friends he has come to know over the years, he urged the laity to consider how they are using their gifts to change the world. “When you listen to stories of genocide and pain, you think it’s a thing of the past. It’s not. It’s one of the present,” Buckley said. “I’m a half-native man. When I see someone in front of me, I don’t see color; I see a child of God. The love of God compels me to remember that everyone around me is my brother and sister.”

The Board of Laity offered a set of General Board of Discipleship quadrennial Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation. Those who completed the Laity Session evaluation form and turned it in at the Board of Laity display were eligible for the drawing for the set of Guidelines. This set of Guidelines is comprised of a booklet for each position and program area in the local church and explains the role and responsibilities of each position and program area.

D Retzleff reminded the assembly to complete the Laity Session evaluation form and place it in the basket at the Board of Laity display to enter the drawing for a complete set of Guidelines.

D Shimko thanked the Board of Laity and all laity present for their ministry and sharing of gifts throughout the year. She reminded laity to stop by the Conference Board of Laity Booth for additional support/resources/connection and information and where members of the Board of Laity will be available as they are able to throughout Annual Conference.

D Shimko closed Laity Session with a prayer of blessing, thanks and hope for what we as God’s people will be able to accomplish together in the remainder of Annual Conference.

Heather and the Sugar River Band played and sang “That’s Why We Praise Him” and “He Reigns”

Conference Board of Laity display booth offered the following resources:

- Faith Alive! brochure for 2013-2015 course
- Conference Board of Laity Wisconsin Conference brochure
- Lay Servant Ministries Wisconsin Conference brochure

- 2013 Lay Ministry Equipping Resources Catalog from General Board of Discipleship
- Imagining Wisconsin Anew brochure
- Live the Fruit of the Spirit brochure
- Laity Session evaluations and receiving basket for completed forms
- Walk to Emmaus brochure
- Wisconsin Conference UMW Mission U (July 2013) flyers
- Map of Wisconsin Conference districts
- List of Circuits and Circuit Leaders for all circuits in the Wisconsin Annual Conference
- UMM brochure
- UMW brochure
- Sign up sheet for people to request additional information
- Pens with Conference logo
- Bowls of complementary candy

Submitted by

Deanna Shimko, Conference Lay Leader

Dorothy Radley, Past Conference Lay Leader