



Buffalo United Methodist Church

August 2020

1000 30th Street NE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402



Quiet Courage: Bishop Laurie's Comments on 2020 Iowa Annual Conference

Following the online meeting of the Iowa Annual Conference on July 18, Bishop Laurie distributed a letter in which she expressed her appreciation for the participation of the clergy and laity in the conference, described the conference's major financial challenges, and identified steps the conference is taking to address these challenges. The concluding paragraphs of her letter focus on the guidance that conference administrators are gaining from the book Quietly Courageous by Gil Rendle.

Rendle reminds us that we still have many congregations and clergy who just want to go back to the way things were in the 1950s when churches were growing rapidly and believed that if only they followed the program exactly, their congregation would grow exponentially. It worked for many churches, but that day is long gone, and it is not coming back.

Today, most of our churches are trying to live off the increased giving of a smaller number of people who are getting older. Unfortunately, this plan is unsustainable.

Our buildings were constructed to be located for easy access to certain distances and travel patterns that are no longer convenient to current demographic shifts.

The current average worship attendance in US churches is 75, which is not enough to sustain full-time ministry.

We lament and at times deny the loss of the prosperity and waning influence of the church in our society.

There's a lot of nostalgia going on right now. You and I long for leaders to take us back to the good old days. "Why can't the church be like it was when I was a kid?"

According to Rendle, "Quiet courage in this instance is not to be found in the bold clergy leader who claims to have the answers for others. Quiet courage is with the one who is deeply disciplined in the faith but then stands with the people, helping to name the next questions that they will need to address together in order to be faithful."

Bishop Laurie Identifies Signs of Hope

- I see hope in how you have responded to COVID-19, in our commitment to address systemic racism, and in our conversations around human sexuality.
- I see hope in the increasing numbers of people who are live-streaming our worship services because they are yearning for meaning and spiritual connection.
- I see hope in our conference transition to circuit ministry and deepening connections among our local churches.
- I see hope in a renewed commitment to shared ministry through the apportionment system that has been a hallmark of our United Methodist connection for a very long time.
- I see hope in a commitment to reorganize our conference boards and agencies and district committees so that they can function more effectively in making disciples of Jesus Christ.

- I see hope in our insistence upon viewing each human being as a beloved child of God who has a place waiting for them at the table of the Lord.

The Bishop's Plan for the Future

- First, in this time, we will need to continue to strategically shrink, for we cannot do everything anymore. We must determine priorities and direct our resources in that direction in a prayerful and purposeful manner.
- Second, we will need an intentional missional focus on equipping clergy and laity to lead the church toward its identified outcomes, address adaptive challenges, and increase the number of healthy congregations and fruitful leaders.
- Third, we will need to demonstrate mercy, justice, courage, and hope. At the same time, we must not be deterred in our call to be missional and courageous leaders. Who are we now? Who is our neighbor now? And what is God calling us to make different now?

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Concerns About Worship Service?

If you have specific suggestions or concerns about our plans for worship services during this COVID-19 pandemic, please feel free to contact Pastor Kathryn, Barb Crawford, or Chris Gochenouer.

Church Finances

In August we will not be collecting money for any special offering; however, the church still has many financial obligations. Among your options for submitting tithes and offerings are the following:

- Mail your check to the church address (Buffalo United Methodist Church, 1000 30th Street NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402).
- Put your contribution in an envelope and place in the locked church mail box by the meeting room door.
- Attend a worship service and place your contribution in the offering plate located at the back of the sanctuary.

Oodles of Noodles

Homemade noodles for sale, \$2.00 per bag. The noodles are inside the doorway of the Fellowship Hall on the table. Place your money in the envelope by the box. Thanks.

Lay Delegate's Observations on Iowa UMC Annual Conference, 2020

For over eight hours on Saturday, July 18, I sat in front of my computer screen and participated in this year's legislative session of the annual conference. In August I will post to the Bison Blog a more complete set of my personal observations on this experience. Here is a sample of random notes I jotted down during the all-day proceedings.

- When the session began, I had not yet received an email with the password enabling me to vote, but once that oversight was rectified, I had no problems with the remote voting. All things considered, the digital, Zoom, and voting technology worked as well as could be expected. The conference certainly saved a ton of money with this arrangement enabling everyone to stay at home.
- One conference highlight was a video presentation by the Iowa Black Ministers Caucus that featured an older black woman singing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." The unaccompanied spiritual was followed by a college student who told us "The church is talking but ain't saying anything." After the video, the Bishop's concluding prayer included the words, "Oh God, we offer up to you who we are . . . and the determination to make a difference."
- In 2014, the average attendance at Methodist worship services in Iowa was 51,848; in 2019, the average attendance had dropped to 42,131. If that trend continues, there will be no Methodists attending worship services in Iowa by the year 2045.
- The 2021 Iowa conference budget is 26% smaller than the 2020 budget (a reduction from 13 million to 9 million dollars).
- Only 60% of churches in the conference pay their full apportionments; last year 140 congregations paid less than 20% of their apportionments.
- In addition to approving the 2021 budget, we voted approval for the number of districts to be reduced from eight to five. There were no objections to this proposal. That water was already under the bridge.
- One benefit of the online conference is that we could see delegates in their homes and offices. My favorite was one pastor speaking from her home, and we could see the curtains of an open window blowing behind her (and a large fan sitting next to the window).

~Bob Marrs, Lay Delegate

Congregational Kudos

- To Becky Durand and Marlene Himes for sanitizing the church on Saturday, before the service on Sunday.
- To Hep Hentricks for fixing the sound system in the Sanctuary so we could hear every word on Sunday morning—even though Pastor Kathryn was speaking through a cloth mask.
- To everyone who has donated baked goods and monetary funds to support the First Nations Church food baskets. We will continue to make donations on the third rd Wednesday of the month. Cookies should be packaged six in a package, and delivered inside the Fellowship Hall door by noon on Wednesday August 19 and September 16.
- To Pastor Kathryn for her Sunday morning sermons and music. Keep up the good work!
- To all members of the congregation for their prayers and patience.

Veggies and Herbs

Assuming the weather cooperates and our garden produce is not consumed by white tail deer, a variety of vegetables should be available on each Sunday morning for anyone seeking fresh produce. Everything is grown in an organic garden that uses no herbicides or pesticides. Free vegetables during the next eight weeks should include the following:

- Green, yellow, and purple bush and pole beans.
- Cucumbers, for slicing and pickling
- Zucchini: 5 different varieties
- Potatoes, onions, and garlic
- Sweet peppers, eggplants, and tomatoes (in August)
- Winter squash (beginning at the end of August)

Please contact Bob Marrs if you would like to request any of these herbs from the herb garden: basil, chives, dill, fennel, lavender, lemon balm, parsley, rosemary, sage, or thyme.

People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions.

Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless.

There is too much work to do. - Dorothy Day

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