

# 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes of the Kansas Oklahoma Conference

In a year of the COVID 19 pandemic, the 59th Annual Meeting of the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ convened virtually and was called to order by President Bobbie Henderson on Monday, October 5, 2020, at 7:00 p.m. The theme was *Telling Our Stories*. Each morning, daily prayers were offered. Monday, Rev. Lori Walke started the day with about 40 participants.

Julia Gaughan, Conference Council member and member of the National UCC Board of Directors offered the opening prayer. President Henderson noted meeting virtually made some things possible that could not happen with in person meetings. The Hawaii Conference Annual Meeting overlapped with our meeting and throughout the week members from the Hawaii Conference might join our meeting. Video greetings from the Rev. David Popham, the Hawaii Conference Minister was shown.

President Henderson thanked all who had a part in planning this meeting. She noted that agenda that was posted on the website September 19 was approved without objections.

Rev. Rebecca Anderson, a professional storyteller and a pastor was introduced to offer the first plenary session. She also presented a storytelling workshop on Tuesday at noon.

Rev. Aaron Roberts offered the closing prayer. President, Bobbie Henderson placed the meeting in recess.

Tuesday, October 6, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Bobbie Henderson, President of the Conference reconvened the meeting. Tuesday morning and evening closing prayers were offered by Rev. Richard Mize. Rev. Lori Walke introduced Sarah Adams-Cornell, the second plenary session speaker. Sarah created an inter-tribal, empowerment organization called Matriarch that serves indigenous women in central and NE Oklahoma. She is the President of the Board of Directors for the ACLU of Oklahoma. Sarah serves on the Board of Directors for Live Indigenous OK and worked alongside other Native advocates to see Indigenous Peoples' Day recognized in OKC.

President Henderson announced the Wednesday plenary session will be held at noon led by our German partners. They will also offer the morning prayers at 7:30 a.m. (that is 3:30 p.m. in Germany). Meeting placed in recess.

Wednesday, October 6, 2020, 12:00 noon, Bobbie called the third plenary of the Annual Meeting to order. John Lord, past President of the Conference, introduced Rev. Eleanor McCormick who presented *Black Lives Matter Crosses The Ocean*. Although 4,900 miles apart we were joined together in spirit. Rev. McCormick offered the afternoon/evening prayer and then the meeting was placed in recess.

Thursday, October 7, 2020, 2 morning workshops were held. From 10:00-11:00, *Inclusivity Matters: Open and Affirming Communities Save Lives* led by Brain Bond, Executive Director of PFLAG, Andy Lang, Executive Director of the UCC ONA Coalition and Rev. Michael Vollbrecht, Pastor of Peace UCC in Alma KS. From noon to 1:30, *Sacred Resistance*, led by Rabbi Moti Rieber and co-facilitated by Rev. Rachael Pryor, KIFA Board Chair and UCC pastor in Kansas.

Thursday, October 7, 2020, 7:00 p.m., President Bobbie Henderson called the fourth plenary session to order. We heard from Phillips Theological Seminary who sponsored the evening speaker. Rev. Rachael Pryor was called to introduced Julian DeShazier. Both Rachael and Julian participated in the initial Next Generation Leadership Class in 2012. Rev. DeShazier is an ordained Disciples minister serving as Senior Minister of University Church in Chicago Ill, a United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ congregation. Rev DeShazier brought a powerful message about the cultural languages we all speak, and how we need to become "bilingual" if we're going to connect with others in the church and beyond. Rev. Kayla Bonewell, also a member of the Next Generation Leadership Class of 2012 had offered the morning prayers and closed Thursday night in prayer. The meeting was placed in recess.

Friday, October 8, 2020, noon workshop, *Congregational Connection Resource*, led by Dr. Liz Smith and Rev. David Wheeler. Lessons on how two congregations were keeping their members connected virtually.

Friday, October 8, 2020, 7:00 p.m., Suzanne Nichols, representing Committee on Ministry and Conference Council Representative opened the evening program with prayer. The Friday Night program was not a formal plenary session.

Rev. Rachael Pryor, Chair of The Committee on Ministry, Subcommittee D - Preparation and Discernment introduced 2 new KO pastors since the last annual meeting, *Rev. Travis McKee*, who in January began serving Trinity United Christian Church in Cheney, KS and the *Rev. Ron DeVore* who was just called as the settled pastor for Frieden's Church in Bern, KS. Rachael also reintroduced *Reverends Michael Vollbrecht and Kelly Hansen* who both were Members in Discernment at the 2019 Annual Meeting but have been ordained. Rev. Vollbrecht is the settled pastor at Peace in Alma, KS and Rev. Hansen is serving as a Chaplain at the Truman Medical Center in Kansas City.

Suzanne acknowledged the retirement of Rev. Robin Meyers, who after serving 35 years at Mayflower in Oklahoma City retired in January 2020 and Rev. Shannah McAleer, who retired on September 30th from St. Paul's UCC in Eudora. She served just over 6 years as their pastor and ended a total of 16 years in active ministry.

Rev. David Wheeler, Pastor of Federated Church at Weatherford, OK and Rev. Dennis Ureche, Pastor of St. Peter's UCC in Inman, KS are respectively the Oklahoma and Kansas local church liaisons serving on Conference Council. David and Dennis introduced a video recognizing congregations significant milestones in ministry.

Cathedral of Hope in Oklahoma City celebrating 20 years;

Fellowship Congregational UCC in Tulsa celebrating 70 years;

First Congregational Church in Goltry, OK celebrating 125 years of ministry.

First Congregational Church in Manhattan, KS celebrating 165 years

First Congregational Church in Topeka, also celebrating 165 years of ministry.

Suzanne Nichols shared an Ordination Anniversary Video highlighting pastor's ordination years.

Edith introduced a video greeting from United Church Fund, who donated \$2,500 to the KO Medical Debt Relief Campaign.

Rebecca Anderson led a program of storytelling of KO members *Sharing Our Stories*.

Rev. Michael Vollbrecht, who opened the morning with prayers, now closed the evening with prayers and the meeting was placed in recess.

Saturday, October 9, 2020, 9:00 a.m. President Bobbie Henderson called the 5th plenary session to order. She introduced Rev. Andrew Warner who serves as the Generosity Outreach Officer for the National UCC offices. He works with Conferences to strengthen their culture of generosity. Rev. Warner connected by Zoom lead us in worship, with UCC President and General Minister, Rev. John Dorhauer ending the service with a video message.

Business of the KO Conference commenced. Rules of Procedure had been previously posted on the meeting website. They were adopted with one no vote and no objections.

Meeting the requirement 1/3 of the congregations of the Conference constituting a quorum, Bobbie declared a quorum was established with 34 congregations registered with voting delegates.

Process to vote, make a motion or second a motion was explained. Honor system was in place.

Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting had been posted on the Business sections of the Annual Meeting website. After asking for any corrections and hearing none, Bobbie declared the minutes approved by General Consent.

Mark Van Dorn, Conference Treasurer and Chair of the Finance & Stewardship Committee was introduced. He in-turn introduced Mr. Ron Nowak, the Assistant Controller for the national offices of the UCC has been overseeing the day-to-day financial work for KO for the last eight years.

Ron provided the end of the year (December 2019) report. He explains that OCWM giving was down about \$14,000; expenses were on budget. There was a \$150,000 increase in investments and total assets increased \$107,000. Health and dental expenses remain \$20,000 under budget. Basically there are no liabilities, all directed gifts are passed through. For the latest management summary (August 2020), Ron explains OCWM is still behind. Year to date: \$110,000. Budgeted to date, August 2020: \$142,000. Compared to August 2019: \$113,450. We are behind in Special Mission giving, however Medical Debt Relief raised \$38,607 and Friends of the Conference increased \$5,199. Investments have come back and assets are up \$82,000. There is an approximate \$23,000 liability for the Government from COVID relief. There were no questions for Ron.

Mark resumed speaking. He explained the role Erin Fraiser, the Development Specialist will play in telling the story of how our dollars are changing lives in Kansas-Oklahoma and beyond. Mark thanked the conference for OCWM support to provide what we see, hear and read through the website, the annual meeting, Keeping Your Church Connected During COVID-19 Grants, Be the Church Grants and Committee on Ministry Work. He reminded the delegation of the concern that we have been under budget because of Edith's decision to not take advantage of the full amount for family health insurance coverage. Additionally he reminds us OCWM is under budget.

Mark then moved on behalf of the Conference Council to adopt the 2021 budget in the amount of \$276,317 as published on the website. The motion comes from the Conference Council, thus no second is required. Opportunity for questions and comments. After no further questions or comments, the motion to approve the 2021 budget passed with no opposition or abstention.

Elections of officers were held. Names and biographical information had been posted on the website. Those nominated were:

Mandy Cook, Secretary of the Conference Council, Class of 2022.

Sheridan Irick, Ecumenical and Interfaith Partnership Liaison, Class of 2023.

Suzanne Nichols, Chair of COM A and Member of Conference Council, 2nd term, Class of 2023

Ellen Neufeld Subcommittee A, Committee on Ministry, 2nd term, Class of 2023.  
Mauri Peaco, Subcommittee A, Committee on Ministry, 1st term, Class of 2023  
Cody Rine, Subcommittee D, Committee on Ministry, 2nd term, Class of 2023.

Hearing no nominations from the floor, the slate as presented was approved with no objections and no abstentions.

Bobbie announces that her President report and the report of our Conference Minister, Edith Guffey could be found on the Annual Meeting website in the Resources Section.

Bobbie announces the 8-member Search Committee that will begin their work in earnest early 2021 to search for Edith's successor in light of her retirement December 31, 2021.

Chair, Rev. Rachael Pryor, Rolling Hills UCC, Salina, KS  
Susan Baker Anderson, Plymouth Congregational UCC, Lawrence, KS  
Rev. Gage Church, Central Congregational, Topeka, KS  
Mandy Cook, Evangelical UCC, Marysville, KS  
Jim French, Community UCC, Partridge, KS  
Meagan Hunt, Mayflower Congregational Church, Oklahoma City, OK  
Dewan Keese, Fellowship Congregational UCC, Tulsa, OK  
Rev. Caela Simmons Wood, First Congregational UCC, Manhattan, KS

Bobbie turns the meeting over to Edith Guffey who briefly spoke and then introduces the Kay Holladay, who introduced Brian Bond, Executive Director of PFLAG, the first and largest organization for LGBTQ+ people, their parents and families, and allies, as our Keynote Speaker.

Bobbie concludes the 59th Kansas-Oklahoma Conference Meeting by thanking the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, those who produced and directed the meetings, the worship planners and our outstanding speakers. Before calling on Debbie Rice for the motion to adjourn, President Bobbie Henderson noted that Debbie has served as Secretary of the Conference for eight years and this is her last meeting as she ends her years of service. She noted that Debbie has been a grace filled and committed member of the Conference Council diligently recording the work of the Council and the Conference She will be greatly missed.

Debbie was called upon the move the adjournment of the 59th Kansas-Oklahoma Conference Annual Meeting following the close of the worship service October 10, 2020. A second was made by Mark Van Dorn. Motion passed.

The 60th Annual meeting is scheduled to be held in Tulsa, OK in observance of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. As time draws near, Conference Council will carefully consider all of the factors in making a decision about the feasibility of an in-person gathering.

Additional announcements: <https://pflay.org/gibertbaker.com>  
October 11 is National Coming Out Day.

Rev. Caela Simmons Wood, Vice President of the Conference Council offered our closing prayer, placing us in recess until Sunday's Worship Service.

Sunday, October 11, 2020. The Annual Meeting Worship was on the Conference YouTube Channel provided to each local pastor for use on Sunday morning. The Search Committee was commissioned during the service. The preacher for worship was the Reverend Julian DeShazier.

Respectfully submitted.  
Debbie Rice,  
2020 Conference Council Secretary