

Report from the 2026 Annual Conference of the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church

The 2026 Annual Conference of the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church convened in Athens at the Classic Center on June 18th through 20th. Duluth First United Methodist Church was represented by 5 clergy and 5 lay delegates. Bishop Robin Dease opened the conference by preaching on the scripture theme, Matthew 25:40 – Unto the Least of These. She recounted an experience in Washington when she had been pickpocketed on her way into town. When she realized she had no money to get home, she began to ask strangers for help – just a dollar. Most all passed her by, until a homeless man came forward and gave her a dollar, telling her to get herself home. She urged members to remember those who are overlooked in society – the least of these. This powerful message set the stage for several more messages from a variety of clergy reminding us that we have a mission to help “the least of these”.

Day 1 included a welcome to Athens by the Southeast District Superintendent, the President of the University of Georgia, and the mayor of Athens-Clark County.

This year marks the 70th year since women were given full clergy rights in our denomination.

The Housing & Homeless Council has awarded approximately \$6 million in grants to churches in 72 counties in the conference.

We learned of the disparity in clergy salaries and were urged to dig deep to address this problem.

Murphy-Harpst Children’s Center lost a beloved member, Gary MacDonald, this year. They have implemented a new therapy called MindVox to help its clients with great success.

The One Georgia Report was presented for a vote to approve the unification of the North and South Georgia UMC Conferences into one Georgia Conference. A vote approved this motion by 96%. A combined committee will continue working to merge our 2 conferences into one.

New Licensed Local Pastors, Provisional Member and Full Connection Elders were introduced and challenged serve faithfully, saying, “the church puts a stole around your shoulders, but Jesus puts a towel in your hands”, referring to Jesus washing his disciples’ feet.

An offering of over \$3,000.00 for the Ministerial Education Fund was collected.

Day 2 – After a morning devotion by Rev. Sharon White, the Conference heard reports from Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) presenting a budget which will be amended as a result of unification and a modest increase in the apportionment budget.

The Barnes Evaluation & Administration Team (BEAT) approved 12 applications for church projects this year, totaling \$636,697.00.

The Disaster Response reported on the work done in the Augusta area after the hurricane which is still ongoing.

United Methodist Men & Scouting Ministry is sponsoring a retreat in August at Dauset Trails Nature center in Jackson.

United Women in Faith (UWF) reported a season of unstoppable growth. UWF is helping women by connecting, serving and leading.

Clergy and Lay retirees were recognized and thanked, including our former district Superintendent, Dana Everhart.

A service of remembrance honored those who have passed away this past year.

The Annual Conference special offering of over \$12,700.00 goes to the Center for Clergy Excellence's International Fund to help those serving in far-away places.

It was the business of the conference to elect lay & clergy delegates and alternates to both Jurisdictional and General Conferences. Much voting was required to complete this task.

A number of Boards and Committees gave reports on their progress this year. Members of the Conference approved the Resolution on Voting Rights and Encouraging Civic Engagement.

Eleven churches were presented for closure, including The Fountain, formerly housed in the Sugarloaf facility in Duluth.

Day 3 - More reports including the Episcopacy Comm., North GA Camp & Retreat Ministries, a survey conducted by COSROW of women clergy in the conference, the Georgia United Methodist Foundation, the Frances Asbury Award given to Rev. Dr. Adam Daniels and the Marian Wilder award given to Oak Grove UMC, Wesley UMC Evans, and Madison 1st UMC were presented.

The 160th and last North Georgia Annual Conference concluded with a wonderful presentation by the Korean Church of Atlanta orchestra, a moving message by Rev. Max Vincent, Communion Service of Word and Table and the announcement of the New Appointments list. Duluth First UMC is keeping all our current clergy staff.

A full report on all 3 days of the Conference – with pictures - can be found on the North GA UMC Conference's website - ngumc.org.

Next year's 2027 Georgia Annual Conference will be held in Athens at the Classic center on June 16 – 18, 2027.

Your Lay Delegates:

Jim & Terrie Adkins

Amy Burk

Bryan Johnson

Elizabeth Marcus

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