

Update from the DSW Annual Conference

Lay Leaders to Annual Conference, Laurie and Scott Campbell

This year's Desert Southwest Annual Conference was held June 13-16th at the Tucson Convention Center. The theme, "Making a Way", was centered on scriptures from Isaiah and Jeremiah.

For those unfamiliar with Annual Conference and what it looks like, it's 3½ days packed full of worship, presentations, discussion and voting on issues reflecting the 'business' of the conference, a memorial service for clergy and other leaders that passed in the last year, a presentation of the 2024 clergy appointments, a mission fair, an ordination service, and more. While open to all who wish to attend, only clergy and elected lay leaders from each congregation have voting privileges.

Bishop Carlo Rapanut kicked things off by encouraging us all to "make a way" toward healing and wholeness and living into the fullness of life now. Our goal for the next 10 years is to create a healthy church for a healthy world. His words were especially meaningful after the decisions reached at General Conference in April.

We were treated to presentations by representatives from TMM Family Services, the Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona Justice For Our Neighbors, and the General Conference, among others. Because General Conference was so recent, we did not have discussions regarding how we implement the three R's of that conference (Regionalization, Revised Social Principles, and Removal of Restrictive Language). However, we did vote to:

- Seek feedback from the laity and clergy of the DSW Conference on changes required to the Book of Discipline, and develop a process and communication channel around the gathering and submission of our feedback.
- Accept with joy the adoption of Worldwide Regionalization and provide and participate in a variety of educational opportunities throughout the conference, over the next twelve months, ensuring that we are fully informed and prepared to engage in the final step of a ratification vote at Annual Conference in 2025.

As a follow-up to last year's Annual Conference, a statement regarding Christian Nationalism was read and made available to sign. You can read the statement [here](#).

We voted on several financial matters, including the approval of the 2025 budget and a 4% increase to the minimum base compensation for clergy, as well as a number of other items. One of the proposals that sparked the most discussion was a proposal that the DSW Conference not knowingly make investments in any company or entity whose core business activity involves the production of coal, petroleum, or natural gas. After thoughtful comments from folks on both sides of the issue, the issue failed to pass by a slim margin.

A representative from the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) reminded us that they have many resources to support churches, such as communications, financial, human resources, and technical support. See their website at <https://www.gcfa.org/> for more information.

For those interested in more details about the conference, you can find videos, pictures, and PDFs on the conference website: <https://dscumc.org/annual-conference/>. If you have the time, we found Dr. Ashley Boggan's Keynote Address to be particularly interesting. She referred to the core of our Methodist identity as Wesleyan "vile"-tality (rather than vitality). You can find both the video and transcript of her talk on the left side of the conference website. And please check out this short [Catalina video](#) that played during the conference!

Thursday's Memorial Service honored Catalina's own Don Brummet, among others. And, as many of you know, the Ordination Service was held at Catalina on Saturday evening. And what an event it was! Our sanctuary was packed with friends and family of those being ordained and commissioned, clergy and laity from the conference, and members of Catalina. Bishop Karen Oliveto preached a rousing sermon, and we collected a great deal of money for the Inn Project. Many thanks to everyone at Catalina who worked hard leading up to and during the event to make it such a success!

