

November 2020



Connected is a publication of the New England Conference of The United Methodist Church. This monthly insert is designed put Conference news directly into the hands of our local church members.

Find more at [www.neumc.org](http://www.neumc.org).



## 2020 Annual Conference

The 2020 New England Annual Conference addressed eight resolutions that were on the agenda (in addition to the organizing motions and the consent calendar) and one added during the session.

There were 537 voting members participating in the Zoom session on Oct. 17, 2020. Spectators and those without vote were able to follow the session via livestream.

Offerings were received for the Ministerial Call Fund, \$2,404, and the Zarephath Emergency Relief Fund, \$4,188.

**Consent Calendar** Members adopted the consent calendar with RS-20-219 removed. Find the approved items on our website.

**RS-20-104 – 2021 Budget Resolutions** The 2021 Conference Budget was approved as presented by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

**RS-20-105 – Election of Conference Treasurer** Members approved the election of John Cardillo as Conference CFO (Treasurer and Director of Administrative Services). Cardillo will begin his new role on Nov. 9.

**RS-20-210 – Resolution to Amend the Conference Rules of Order to Allow Remote Voting** Members approved an



amended version of this resolution that took out the option to vote via paper ballot and add the following statement: "The New England Conference of the United Methodist Church affirms its rich tradition of in-

person conferencing and continues to recognize that in-person conferencing is always preferable to virtual voting and should be given priority."

**RS-20-211 – Resolution to Amend the Conference Rules of Order by Revising the Membership of the Committee on Leadership/Nominations** Members tabled this resolution. In order for any further action on this resolution, it would have to be brought to a future session of the Annual Conference.

**RS-20-212 – Resolution to Amend the Conference Rules of Order to Restructure the Role of the Connectional Table** Members also tabled this resolution.

**RS-20-217 – Ratification of Disaffiliation Agreement (Brackett Memorial United Methodist Church)** Though several members expressed disappointment at the loss of Brackett Memorial (Peaks Island, ME) the resolution was approved.

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### Memorial Service

This year's guest preacher was the Rev. John L. McCullough, president and CEO of [Church World Service](http://ChurchWorldService.org), the global humanitarian agency with programs in development and humanitarian affairs, refugee assistance, and advocacy for social justice.

In his sermon titled "Balancing Grief and Promise in the Season of Hope," Rev. McCullough reflected on the challenges of 2020:

"... many of us have already concluded that this has been anything other than a great year. As a nation and human race, getting to 2021 can't come soon enough, but it is about more than the passing of time as a human construct. What we continue to witness is the struggle all of us face in navigating crisis, turmoil and sorrow."

But, he said, "As Christ's church we perpetually live in a season of hope. This is not an easy or convenient thing to do. It never amounts to discrediting the realities of the current moment and often is excruciatingly hard and painful."

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FIND VIDEOS AND MORE DETAILS ON OUR WEBSITE  
[www.neumc.org/news](http://www.neumc.org/news)

## 2020 Episcopal Address

# 'You Are Beloved'



The 2020 New England Annual Conference on Oct. 17 opened with worship and Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar's annual Episcopal Address.

This year's address, titled "You Are Beloved," drew on the theme for this year's session: "Vital Con-

versations: Building Beloved Community" and our guiding scripture [Acts 2:42-47](#)

It was unusual for the bishop to deliver his address via video, and he began by acknowledging the process of adaptation that has gone on and is going on across the Conference:

"These past seven months have been enormously stressful for all of us, as we have had to adapt and reinvent our mission and ministry," the bishop said. "I recognize how weary our clergy and lay leaders are and am so very grateful to God for the creativity and resiliency given to do ministry in these anxious times. We are still functioning in crisis management ... and you are working overtime. I pray that God provides you needed rest and relief workers to sustain you."

Bishop Devadhar went on to speak about the need to combat racism, which he also called a "pandemic."

"Until we erase the sin of white supremacy and white privilege, we will not be able to move beyond the systematic injustices that tear away the fabric of our society," the bishop said. "The social

sin of racism has exposed how bereft our country and world are and how far we are from the vision of the early apostles ..."

The passage from Acts, he said, "gives us a picture of the bold solidarity within the early Christian church." The bishop highlighted the three keys to beloved community:

- Agape Love: The Beloved Community starts & ends with love.
- Nonviolence: It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally.
- Beloved Community works toward the remedy of the interrelated three evils of poverty, racism and militarism.

The bishop talked about some of the ministries and initiatives across the Conference to help us become that Beloved Community.

**Zarephath Emergency Relief Fund** This fund, created in March 2020, helped provide immediate emergency relief to congregations with vulnerable members in the face of COVID-19. The fund distributed 50 grants totaling \$73,000.

**Cornerstone: Claiming our past, building a better future** grew out of the discovery of racist materials in the cornerstone of Fairlawn Community Methodist Episcopal Church, a predecessor of Wellspring UMC, which closed this year. Read more about this initiative on our website.

**White Privilege Focus Group** Over the summer, members of the Conference engaged in a forum on White Privilege. Out of that forum emerged four working groups focused on Educational Opportunities, Systemic Racism, Reparations, and Dismantling Racism. Watch the e-news for updates on the work of these groups.

**Recommended reading** As he does each year, the bishop made a book recommendation, suggesting Isabel Wilkerson's [Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents](#)

Find a video and details: <https://www.neumc.org/news>

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"The convergence of remembering and grieving the death of loved ones who have shared their lives with us and who are not only part of our story but have helped shape it; of a global pandemic that swirls about us regardless of acknowledgement or denial, and poses a threat to health and survival; and the wanton acts of discrimination intended to make others feel less than fully human that provoke tangible fear, and that are an abomination to the creative genius of God, these are part of the reality that we as people of faith need willingly confront."

"As people of faith we search for the balance of grief and promise, understanding that both are necessary parts of the human experience ...," said Rev. McCullough. However, he continued, "... our calling is not merely to find convenient ways of holding them in balance. Neither is it to allow grief to overtake us. As God's beloved community our goal is to believe and find fulfillment in the power of the promise to overcome tragedy, outrage, uncertainty, despair, and unspeakable grief."

Find the full sermon, a video and a slideshow honoring clergy and spouses who have passed on our website: <https://www.neumc.org/news>

## Annual Conference Actions Continued from page 1

**RS-20-219 – Pension Liability Proposal** Members voted to refer this resolution back to the Board of Pensions for further work.

**RS-20-221 – Election of United Methodist Foundation Board** – Approved

**Motion regarding anti-racism training and the Conference hiring process**, made by Rev. Virg Fryer, pastor of Bow Mills UMC, in Bow, NH, was approved. Information will be required in the hiring and interview process of the NEAC highlighting what training has been previously completed by applicants with regard to anti-racism and bias training, as well as white privilege training as applicable.

Find details about the actions on our website:

<https://www.neumc.org/news>

## Let's Connect

Do you have a story to share? A feature idea? A question to ask? Contact Beth DiCocco, Conference Director of Communications, at [communicate@neumc.org](mailto:communicate@neumc.org) or (978) 682-8055 ext. 150