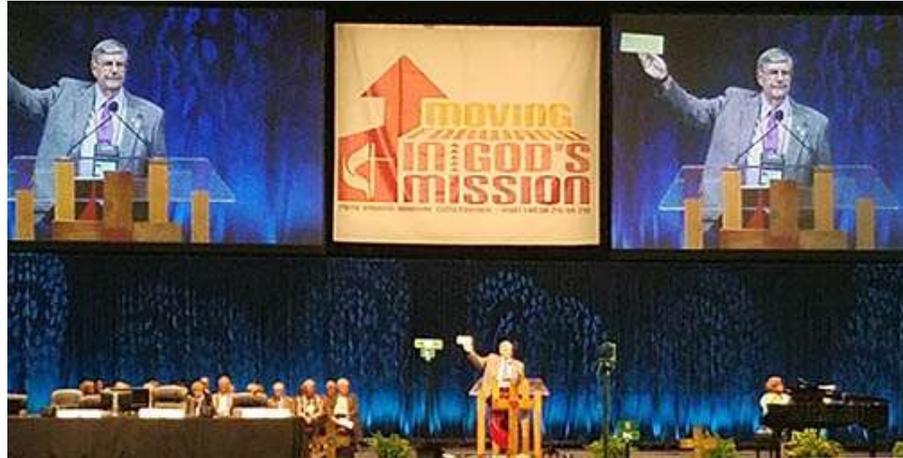


# Thursday Morning and Afternoon

Bishop Peter Weaver convenes 237th session of conference Virginia Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper welcomed the lay members to Roanoke Thursday morning.

Following reports, three youth, Lizzy Lawrence of



Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper leads the Laity Session.

Christ Church, Fairfax; Chris Ganoë of Ivey Memorial, Chesterfield; and Frances Webber of Great Bridge, Chesapeake, delivered a "Red Letters" presentation. Each gave testimony of times they were faced with difficult decisions and decided to "Focus on the Red Letters." "There's so much we cannot agree on but if we focus on what we can agree we wil grow," they said. "The red letters are the foundation of our faith, because our faith is centered in Jesus."



Lizzy Lawrence, Chris Ganoë, and Frances Webber



Following the Laity Session, time was given to have conversation with the nominees for General Conference 2020 in Minneapolis, MN, to be held in May 2020.

Following separate Laity and Clergy sessions, Bishop Peter D. Weaver officially called the 237th session of the Virginia Annual Conference to order at 2 p.m., June 20. The conference began with the historical singing of "Are We Yet Alive," a hymn that has been sung by persons gathering for holy conferencing since the beginning of the Wesleyan movement. Music is being led by Christal Heyward.

Bishop Weaver brought greetings from Bishop Sharma Lewis who is on medical leave, and later led the congregation in prayer for her.

The Rev. Raymond Wrenn brought the opening prayer via Zoom to the conference. He turns 101 later this week. Quaid Jones, representing the youth, brought prayer. Bishop Weaver said he was delighted to see the number of youth in our midst. "The young people are not the future of the church," he said. "They ARE the church."

Bishop Weaver prayed for the retired bishops who were members of the Virginia Conference: Bishop Kern Eutsler, Bishop C.P. Minnick, Bishop Hasbrough Hughes and his wife, Mera; Bishop Tim Whitaker and his wife, Melba. Bishop Young Jin Cho and his wife, Kiok, are in attendance, as well as Bishop Ray Chamberlain.

The Rev. Larry Jent, chair of the Conference Native American Ministries Committee, introduced Chief Emeritus Kenneth Adams. He is a member of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe.



Chief Kenneth Adams

Adams related that in the early 1600s Chief Powhatan asked the early settlers, "Why would you steal from us when we would gladly give it to you," but it was taken anyway, destroying relationships. Adams talked about the alcoholism rates that are high because of small reservations, lack of jobs, and no need for them to hunt. The level of education about Native Americans is the worst in the United States. He said, "They have gone from the most healthy and most wealthy to the least healthy and the least wealthy. God put us

here for a reason. I think part of it was faith. God was here in Virginia prior to any Europeans setting foot on this land. He was here 400 years ago and He is here today." John Smith and Chief Powhatan met at Wero Wiccomoco that means "place of leaders." It was on the York River in Gloucester.

"I want to tell you how grateful I am that you are here today," Adams said. "Many of the Indians have received Christ through the missions of the United Methodist Church. I am a sinner saved by grace and so are many of my friends and family. The hope is in my all heart for ALL of us."

Bishop Weaver thanked Chief Adams for "welcoming us to this land," as most of us are immigrants. "Thank you for your witness. It's good to be your brother."

Host Roanoke District Superintendent Kathleen Overby Webster established the Bar of the Conference.

Floyd Boone and Brooke Tolley led a musical selection, "The Prayer," for a time of spiritual centering.

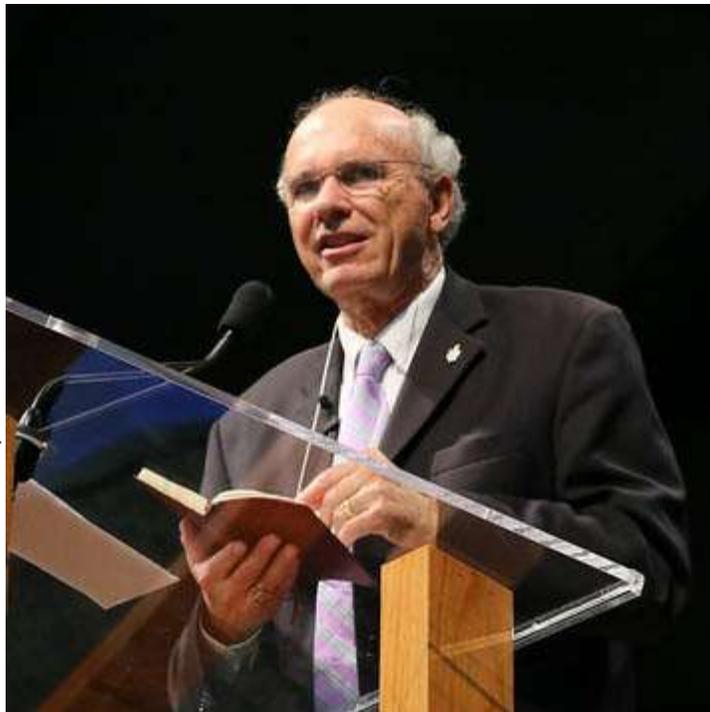
Bishop Weaver reminded those gathered of Bishop Lewis' 2017 vision to to be, "Disciples of Jesus Christ who are lifelong learners who influence others to serve." Bishop Weaver wants to keep a passage from Matthew, the Great Commission, "in front of us" this week to honor Bishop Lewis. (Matthew 28) This happens "when we are immersed in the presence of Christ," Weaver said.

The bishop talked about the district meetings he took with Conference Lay Leader Warren Harper. "It is a journey. On that road we have seen that poverty that Chief Adams talked about it. We have seen wonderful United Methodist churches all over the place. We have seen children who are hungry. We have heard how the road has been rough and some are hurt and confused."

He continued, "Jesus is on the road with us in the journey." He related that an older man approached him following a meeting and said, "You're the in between guy and I'll be praying for you. And I'll be praying for us." The bishop said, "He was right. We need to pray for each other."

Jesus and his disciples "went together. Jesus says, 'Go forward! Go! Become a part of the journey.' And it's brought us here to Roanoke."

"We're all in between folk," he said. "And yet, they walked on. Between General Conference. Jesus invites us to move forward, forward forward. It is not about maintaining an institution. It is about missional transformation." Bishop Weaver delved into some history of the United Methodist Church and some of the "sins" it committed. "And then through it all, Brother Raymond Wrenn continued to walk and to serve and go forward. Some 35 new congregations were formed under him, children were baptized, people



Bishop Pete Weaver

heard the call, seeds planted, a journey continued. In spite of the troubles we've seen, we start this annual conference with the end in site that God in Jesus Christ will be wiht us always. Every moment of every day of this conference Jesus will be sitting in our midst saying, 'move forward.'"

Bishop Weaver talked about visiting Virginia Beach following the mass shooting. He introduced clergy and laity that were present to assist those affected by the tragedy.



Bishop Ray Chamberlain presides over the laity voting.

The Rev. Joshua King, chair of the Rules Committee, brought recommendations to the gathering.

After nominations from the floor for General Conference nominees, a time of voting was held.

Voting results can be found at [www.vaumc.org/AC2019](http://www.vaumc.org/AC2019)