

Brewington to Laity: Know Your Mission

BY JENNIFER HARMER

The laity session on Thursday evening started with a welcome, hymn, scripture, prayer, and memorial remembrances written by the lay leaders in each of the districts. Conference Lay Leader Roena Littlejohn then introduced the speaker, Fred Brewington.

Brewington's time started with a video of images set to the song, "Ball of Confusion" by The Temptations. After a brief prayer, he reminded the laity that they have been down this difficult road before. There has been a continuing level of challenges for United Methodists throughout our history with the constant questions like, "Where we going? What's going to happen? What's the decision?" The denomination has been approaching the spot where we are right now for some 40 to 50 years, and like the song says, it's a ball of confusion. But we are now at a fork in the road, and we've been through forks in the road before, too, Brewington noted.

He stressed the importance of laity knowing the purpose of the church, and their mission within it as described in the Book of Discipline.

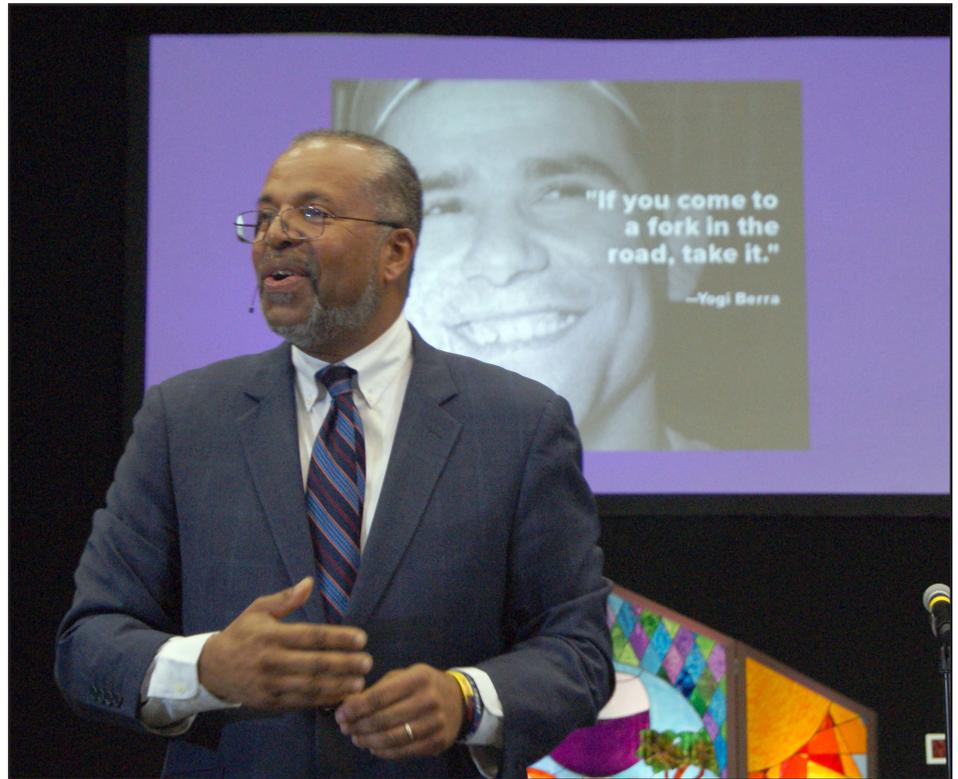
It's important for us to be on the same page (paragraph) when we are talking about our mission, Brewington said. Mission and ministry are important but people are easily pulled off-plumb. Laity need to challenge one another because there is important work to do that can't be left for others.

To emphasize his point, Brewington shared an infamous quote from Yogi Berra, "If you come to a fork in the road, take it." What that simply means is that when you get to the fork in the road, you have to make a decision, Brewington said. One can't remain in the middle of the road where the trucks are coming.

Brewington then asked the gathering to discuss at their tables the following question, "Where do you believe your congregation is in modeling this slogan of "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors?"

After the very enlightening discussion, Brewington suggested that the laity needs to talk to one another a lot more. He then shared a Rethink Church video of children talking about their take on "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors." That was followed by the song "Draw the Circle Wide" by soloist Jeannette Berry.

The laity were reminded that being



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE PARSONS



Fred Brewington, above, invoked the wisdom of Yogi Berra in his laity presentation; at left, Jeanette Berry sings "Draw the Circle Wide."

the people of God in this world is hard work and being a Christian in 2020 is even harder work. But no one said it was going to be easy, Brewington said.

Toward the end of the session, Brewington offered some tips that churches could employ to offer radical and unapologetic hospitality

- Make your church a welcoming place
- Train greeters to be greeters not grouches
- Assign a worship guide to sit and help
- Time in the service to officially

welcome and acknowledge visitors

- Take time after the service to greet the visitor and thank them with true gratefulness
- Make sure visitors are warmly invited to fellowship
- Designate a follow-up team that is trained to make two post-service contacts within two days
- Follow-up again within seven to 10 days and provide contact and reach back information
- Advertise and offer new member classes two to four times a year