



The newest commissioner and ordinands in the UNY Conference

Congratulations to the 2022 commissioner and ordinands! The Annual Conference ended with the Service of Commissioning and Ordination; Upper New York Area Resident Bishop, Mark J. Webb was the preacher.

Se Gye Shin was commissioned for the work of an elder. Natalie Bowerman, Bryant Clark, Christine Depestre, Linda Haight, Melissa Killenberger McCarthy, Hector Rivera, and Lisa Taylor were ordained for the work of an elder.

In his sermon, Bishop Webb explained what the Church needs from the ordinands and commissioner:

“As you lead the people of God in fulfilling God’s mission, the Church does not need you to be CEOs;

community organizers; brilliant strategists shaped by degrees, certificates, robes, or positional power. We need you to be spiritual leaders shaped first by being radical followers of Jesus Christ who empty themselves so that God can fill you with the things of the Spirit and the way of Jesus!”

Visit <https://bit.ly/AC2022ordination> or scan the QR code to read more about the Service of Commissioning and Ordination.



Visit <https://bit.ly/UNYordination2022> or scan the QR code to watch the Commissioning and Ordination Service.



The Bridge is a Conference Communications Ministry tool that delivers to local churches news and stories of ministry from around the Upper New York Conference and the world. For more news and stories visit:

www.unyumc.org



We’re celebrating the Upper New York Annual Conference of 2022.

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The Upper New York Conference’s vision is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God’s love with our neighbors in all places.



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Celebrating the Upper New York Annual Conference 2022

The 2022 Upper New York (UNY) Annual Conference was held virtually from Oct. 6 to Oct. 8. A huge thank you is owed to GNTV, who helped the conference run smoothly and effectively.

This issue will share the study session led by the Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman, Executive Director of World

Methodist Evangelism and will also introduce the newest commissioner and ordinands of the UNY Conference.

To view everything Annual Conference (videos, reports, bulleted daily notes, etc.), scan the QR code with your mobile device.



Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman unravels the metaphor of embrace



By Shannon Hodson

The Rev. Dr. Kim Reisman knows the life of wanderers—she grew up in Southern California with parents who frequently picked up hitchhikers and welcomed people from a nearby military base to stay at their home when they were on leave.

Fast-forward many decades later and Rev. Dr. Reisman is now the Executive Director of World Methodist Evangelism. She educates people on how to walk alongside wanderers and embrace them the way Jesus would. In fact, her latest book, intended for a small-group Bible Study, is entitled *Embrace: Showing and Sharing the love of Jesus* and this was also the title of Rev. Dr. Reisman's study session at the 2022 Upper New York (UNY) Annual Conference.

Rev. Dr. Reisman condensed what is normally taught over six weeks into

a powerful 45-minute session with questions for attendees to reflect upon.

Rev. Dr. Reisman said she uses “embrace” as a metaphor of evangelism and God’s way of reaching out to us with the steps of “opening your arms and waiting, sometimes for a very long time, then closing your arms around the person and then we open our arms again.”

She added, “This allows us to see how God reaches out to us and how we can reach out to others.”

The whole process is a way to mirror God’s grace and love to others.

Opening our arms

Diving into the metaphor, Rev. Dr. Reisman explained:

“Before we’re even aware of it, God is already loving us through the grace of Jesus and inviting us to respond in faith and love.

We model this space-making with humble openness. Even though we recognize boundaries, we would rather cross them than maintain them.

We open our arms to others just as God has opened his arms to us.”

After this description, Rev. Dr. Reisman offered three reflection questions:

- How have you experienced God’s open arms in your spiritual life?”
- How are you sharing that experience with your congregation?
- How are you empowering them to share their own experience of God’s open arms to those in your community?

Waiting

Rev. Dr. Reisman said, “This is the second stage of the embrace and it’s hard...God is infinitely patient, and God will never force us or manipulate us. God opens his arms and waits. When we are able to open our arms in repentance, that’s when we experience God’s divine embrace and that’s what we’re reflecting to others.”

Rev. Dr. Reisman further explains that waiting is an act of self-control that creates space for the Holy Spirit to do its work and provides time for discernment.

Rev. Dr. Reisman said, “Prayerful waiting enhances our awareness of what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives.”

After the description of the waiting stage, Rev. Dr. Reisman provided the following reflection questions:

- How have you experienced praying for someone who does not yet have a relationship with Jesus Christ?
- Who is in your circle who needs to be prayed for because they do not have a relationship with Jesus?

Closing our arms

Rev. Dr. Reisman said, “Closing our arms helps us to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit...When the Spirit awakens us to our need for God and we recognize the unmerited love and grace that God offers, the space between us and God becomes secure enough to trust God and open our arms to God and God embraces us.”

Rev. Dr. Reisman described this process—when a person allows us to close our arms around them, it means that “they trust that we believe that we are no better than them and that we really do love them the way we say we do. The space between us and them becomes secure enough for them to welcome an embrace.”

She adds, “Closing our arms requires reciprocity...It takes two pairs of arms to embrace. As we create secure space and as we close our arms in the embrace, people realize that through Christ, God’s grace is acceptable.”

The question that Rev. Dr. Reisman provides to reflect upon for this stage of the embrace is: How have you experienced the reciprocal movement of the Holy Spirit?

Opening our arms again

The final stage of the embrace is opening our arms again. Rev. Dr. Reisman used the analogy of embraces with her grandmother when she was a child. He grandmother wore gardenia perfume. And whenever her grandma ended the embrace, the gardenia scent remained on Rev. Dr. Reisman’s shirt.

Rev. Dr. Reisman said, “God’s grace is like the perfume—it leaves an imprint on us.”

She added that the final stage of this embrace is simultaneously the beginning of another embrace.

Rev. Dr. Reisman’s final reflection question was “What is your response to the metaphor of embrace?”

Visit <https://vimeo.com/752944630> or scan the QR code to watch the video of this study session.

