

10.07.21 Linda Graham's reflection on the Annual Conference.

Gary Greene has given a nice summary of the annual conference.

I would like to comment on the theme, Jesus Makes a Way, which was apparent not only in the Bible Study sessions but also in the reflections offered by Bishop John Hopkins who is serving as an interim bishop for the Northern Illinois Conference.

The Bible verse for first day was from Luke 17. In this verse, Jesus cures 10 lepers, but only one turns around to thank him and praise God and Jesus responds to this man who thanked him. Do we thank Jesus and praise God often enough when Jesus responds to us?

The Bible Study on day two was the familiar loaves and fish story. Upon this reading, I heard something that I had not paid attention to before. After Jesus had spent the day teaching and curing the sick, the disciples wanted to send the people into the towns to find their own food. However, Jesus told them: "**you** give them something to eat" making it clear that it was the disciples' responsibility to feed the people.

After Jesus had blessed the five loaves and two fish and the disciples distributed all the food, there were baskets of food left over. We can appreciate the story as one of the miracles Jesus performs. But does it not also tell us that it was the disciples' responsibility to tend to the people? By following Jesus, do we not also have the responsibility to tend to others? Doesn't this story tell us that our ability to give is **not** limited?

Bishop Hopkins stressed that we need to serve those in our communities. The Bishop encouraged us to be present in our communities and focus on the needs that we see now. Several sessions, including the Laity Session, gave examples of what member churches in the Northern Illinois Conference are doing to serve others. There is a Bishop's Appeal each Annual Conference, this summer, \$25,000 was raised for Covid Relief efforts.

During Annual Conference, we are reminded that we are part of a larger church family. The funds we provide to the conference through our apportionment empowers churches in disadvantaged areas to provide for the needs that been identified. It is important to share these costs by paying our church's apportionment.

On day two of Bishop Hopkins's remarks, he referenced Pentecost and spoke of the Holy Spirit coming to those who follow Jesus. The followers, when empowered and sharing with others, are able to accomplish things that they are not able to do alone.

We cannot turn back time; Jesus is showing us a way to the future.