2018 WCA Council Nominee Bios

The following persons have either been nominated by the WCA Council or nominated by members of the WCA to serve as members of the Class of 2021. Those persons with an \* before their name have been nominated by the WCA Council. The Governance Committee of the WCA Council has determined that each person listed below meets the requirements of the WCA Bylaws to serve on the Council.

**Adkinson, Jerry – Lay (Alabama West Florida)**

Too many people today have fallen into the category of “nominal” Christians, Christians in name only. If The United Methodist Church is to take a leadership role in making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then we must boldly take on the orthodox Wesleyan Theology and share it at every opportunity. I pledge to give my time talent and leadership skills to make this happen. I firmly believe that THE TRADITIONALIST PLAN is the right path for our church to follow. I am dedicated to sharing this message.

**Allen, Sterling – Lay (Texas)**

Dr. Sterling Allen has been a passionate advocate for orthodoxy in the United Methodist Church since 2011. He has spoken publicly for mandatory minimum penalties for disciplinary violations, the need to maintain our current language in the Book of Discipline, the Traditional Plan as proposed by The Commission on the Way Forward, and the salient need for the option of a “graceful exit.” Dr. Allen has been a vocal advocate for Biblical orthodoxy in the highly polarized field of United Methodist musicians and worship leaders. Above all, Dr. Allen has stood firm for the realignment and reallocation of church resources to better grow the United Methodist Church by renewing an evangelical tradition.

**\*Arnold, Bill – Clergy (Kentucky)**

Bill T. Arnold is an ordained elder in the Kentucky Conference of The United Methodist Church. He is professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary. Bill has been a delegate to the three General Conferences and is the author of numerous books including Introduction to the Old Testament (Cambridge University Press) and Seeing Black & White in a Gray World (Seedbed). He served as editor of the Old Testament notes for The Wesley Study Bible (Abingdon), and contributed its study notes on Genesis. Bill also served as co-translator of Genesis for the Common English Bible (Abingdon). Bill currently serves as a member of the WCA Council.

**Bynum, Jonathan – Clergy (Texas)**

My father and grandfather were Methodist pastors who made known to me the Wesleyan understanding of grace. When I received my calling to change careers I committed myself wholly to making the grace and truth of Jesus known. I have served in every size and type of churches: rural, urban, small, mid-size, mega- and in extension ministry. I am passionate about solid theology and unwavering hope in sharing Jesus.

**Caulfield, Beth – Clergy (Greater New Jersey)**

Rev. Beth Caulfield serves as a Campus Pastor for the multisite Sharptown United Methodist Church in Pilesgrove, New Jersey. She is President of the Greater New Jersey WCA and also serves actively as a Trustee for Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association. She previously served on the Bishop’s staff of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference as part of the Connectional Ministries Team, as the Staff representative for COSROW and on the Board of the GNJ Evangelical Network. She has served in parachurch ministry internationally and in prisons. Her early career was in Human Resources management for various Fortune 50 companies. Her MDIV is from Drew Theological School and her BA from the University of Pennsylvania. Married to Tom for 27 years, they have three children ages 22, 19 and 8.

**Cooper, Bob – Clergy (Virginia)**

Bob Cooper serves as the Lead Pastor of Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church in Midlothian, VA on the Richmond District of the Virginia Conference. He has served on various District and Conference Committees and Boards, and as a delegate to the 2001 World Methodist Conference, 2016 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, and Reserve Delegate to the 2019 General Conference. Bob is the president of the Virginia Chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Asbury College and Masters of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Wesley Theological Seminary. He’s married to Rev. Frances Cooper.

**Dickerson, Earl – Clergy (Memphis)**

The local church is my tribe. Raised within her walls, I have been loved, saved, supported, held accountable and held in comfort here. Twice, the local church saved my life. At nineteen, I had to commit my mother involuntarily to a mental institute and then be responsible for her mental health the rest of her life. At thirty-two, my wife was paralyzed from the neck down for the next twenty-five and a half years. During both seasons of my life, I only survived because of the ministry of God performed by the local church.

**\*DiPaolo, Joe – Clergy (Eastern Pennsylvania)**

I was raised in the New York City area, came to faith in Christ in college, and served as a pastor in five congregations since 1985. I had the opportunity to lead the erection of a new church in Solebury, Pennsylvania, and in my current appointment, initiated a free breakfast ministry which serves 150 hungry people daily. I have a passion for preaching, teaching, formulating new visions for congregational ministry, and researching and writing about Methodist history. I have been blessed with a supportive and loving family, and desire to contribute faithfully to the future of the global Methodist movement. Joe currently serves as a member of the WCA Council.

**Ely, Ross – Lay (Idaho)**

Ross Ely is a lay member of Eagle UMC in Eagle, Idaho. He has been a member of Eagle UMC for 15 years and serves the church in a number of ways. Ross has been SPRC Chairman since 2012 and a member of the choir since 2015. In addition, he serves as chairman of Eagle UMC’s Way Forward committee, which was created by the church to proactively address the challenges facing the denomination and our situation in the Oregon/Idaho conference. Ross has been married for 28 years and is the proud father of two sons, Andrew (25) and Christopher (21).

**Fisher, Elizabeth Santos – Lay (Eastern Pennsylvania)**

My name is Elizabeth Santos Fisher. I was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. I am a daughter of a United Methodist Pastor, now retired after serving over 37 years. I am a wife of a United Methodist Pastor for 27 years. We have four children ages 22, 19, 15 and 9. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and have served in this capacity for over 10 years. I am a devout Christian and a pursuer of living out the commission to go into the world and share the Gospel of the living God, who sets captives free and who through Jesus Christ joins us in an inheritance of eternal life.

**Ford, David – Clergy (Virginia)**

I served appointments in both the South Georgia and Virginia Annual Conferences of the U.M.C. from 1984 to 2016. I was ordained a deacon in the South Georgia Conference in 1985 and an elder in the Virginia Annual Conference in 1991. I served as the founding pastor of the New Town U.M.C. in Williamsburg, VA from 1999 to 2014. Following God’s leading in 2016, I took retirement status and began the D. Min. degree at Asbury and in May of 2018 surrendered my ordination to begin a new church start known as Mission Charlottesville which is a member congregation of the W.C.A.

**Greene, Robert – Clergy (South Georgia)**

I love Jesus Christ and His church! I’m now in my 18th year of serving as a pastor in the UMC, and it has been a joy and blessing to live out this calling. I was born and raised in this denomination, and I believe our theology is such a gift – it truly is faith expressing itself through love. Due to family and personal situations, I attended and graduated from one of our official UM seminaries. I want to be strongly on the side of upholding the faith once and for all entrusted to the saints. I’m so grateful for the WCA, and would be honored to serve in these trying times.

**Haworth, Glen – Clergy (California-Pacific)**

Glen Howard Haworth was born on March 3, 1956 in Escondido, California, to Thomas Howard and Marie Haworth. The third of three children, Glen was raised to respect authority and honor honorable people. He attended San Diego State University (BA 1979) and Wesley Theological Seminary (M.Div. 1982) and has served his entire ministerial career in the California-Pacific Annual Conference (previously Pacific and Southwest Annual Conference). He married Cynthia Brainerd in 1977, and remains happily married. They adopted Nathan in 1987 in a private domestic adoption, and then adopted Jessica and Sam as teenagers from Russia in 2005. They now have 5 grandchildren.

**\*Jernigan, Jeff – Lay (North Georgia)**

Jeff is a layperson from McEachern UMC in Powder Springs, Georgia; and in his tent making job he is president of Pinkerton & Laws, a top 100 Contractor in the Southeast. Jeff’s passion is to see churches become externally focused. He is the North Georgia Conference advocate for In Mission Together Ministry, and is past chair of the North Georgia Conference Mission/Global Ministries team. He has served as a delegate to the 2008, 2012 and 2016 General Conferences. In addition, Jeff serves on the faculty for the International Leadership Institute in Nigeria and Central Europe, and on the leadership team for the Large Church Mission Connection and Beyond These Walls Mission conference. Jeff currently serves as a member of the WCA Council.

**Jones, Richard – Clergy (Northwest Texas)**

I am the Lead Pastor for Wolfforth UMC, a 2001 graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary and proud to have served in the United States Marine Corps. I am married to Kimberly Jones, an occupational therapist, and we are the proud parents of Eli and Meleah.

I am active in the leadership of the Northwest Texas Conference of the UMC. I have been the clergy first-reserve delegate to the 2012 and 2016 General Conferences and a delegate to the South Central Jurisdictional Conferences. And since 21012, I have served as an orthodox/conservative voice on the General Board of Church and Society.

**\*Kulah, Jerry – Clergy (Liberia)**

The Reverend Dr. Jerry P. Kulah hails from Liberia. He is a Disciple of Jesus Christ and an Elder in the Liberia Annual Conference of the UMC. He is an Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher and Administrator. He is a former District Superintendent, and a 2012 and 2016 delegate to General Conference. Kulah currently serves as Dean of the Gbarnga School of Theology, United Methodist University, and General Coordinator of the Africa Initiative. He holds a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree in Leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary Kentucky. Dr. Kulah is married to Ruth Kulah and they are blessed with four children. Jerry currently serves as a member of the WCA Council.

**\*Lambrecht, Tom – Clergy (Wisconsin)**

Tom attended seminary and entered ordained ministry in the Wisconsin Conference in 1982. For 29 years he served small, medium and large-size churches. His involvement with Good News began at the 1992 General Conference. He served as a member of the Good News board for 19 years, including stints as secretary and board chair. In 2011, he left pastoral ministry and was appointed to Good News full-time as vice president and general manager. Tom has served as leader of the Renewal and Reform Coalition legislative team at General Conference since 2008. He was one of the founders of the WCA and currently serves on the WCA Council.

**\*LaGrone, Jessica – Clergy (Texas)**

Jessica LaGrone is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and a member of the Texas Annual Conference, where she pastored churches for thirteen years. She holds degrees from Southwestern University and Asbury Theological Seminary, and serves as the Dean of Chapel at Asbury Theological Seminary, where she is committed to raising up the next generation of orthodox, Wesleyan leaders. She is an author and preacher, and is passionate about communicating the Truth of the Gospel in forms that are both deeply rooted in Christian tradition and utilizing creativity to reach new generations. She and her husband Jim have two young children, Drew and Kate. Jessica currently serves on the WCA Council.

**Mafunda, Simon – Lay (Zimbabwe)**

My life is grace driven. I grew from one level to the other as a circuit lay leader, lay speaker, district lay leader up to conference lay leader, a position I have held for ten years now. I am a two-time General Conference delegate and currently serving as a member of the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters. I have been actively involved in building partnerships with other conferences that include The Great Plains, Western Pennsylvania etc. I am also an executive member of Africa Initiative Association, the only UMC unofficial caucus in Africa. I believe I have a key role to play in the furtherance of God’s ministry through WCA as we try to re-direct the church back to Biblical and true Wesleyan principles.

**Massie, Ned – Lay (Virginia)**

Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1949, at the age of 69 I can look back and see how My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has walked with me from conception. I have served as the Chair of the Administrative Council, Chair of the Finance Committee, Chair of the Trustees, Lay Leader, Sunday School Teacher, and Prayer Class Leader for Bethel United Methodist Church, a small membership church. Over three years I led a team that turned around the National Realtors Land Institute which was on the brink of financial disaster. I believe the WCA can be the source of Revival for Methodists.

**\*Moore, Carolyn – Clergy (North Georgia)**

Carolyn Moore serves as the founding and lead pastor of Mosaic Church in Evans, Ga. For 20 years she has served as an ordained elder in the UMC. She holds degrees from the University of Georgia and Asbury Theological Seminary. She is married to Steve Moore, a high school history teacher. Carolyn currently serves as a member of the WCA Council as its Vice-Chairperson.

**Neufeld, Jeff – Lay (Northern Illinois)**

Dr. Jeffrey R. Neufeld is a lay member in the Northern Illinois Conference with twenty-five years of experience as a church musician, worship director, and nonprofit leader along with over twenty years of experience in finance, information technology, and management consultant. He holds bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees in music, an MBA in finance, and the Associate and Choir Master diplomas from the American Guild of Organists and the Certified Nonprofit Professional designation. Dr. Neufeld is pursuing ordination as a Deacon in the UMC, and he and his wife Barbara, their three children and dog Sammy reside in Elgin, Illinois.

**O’Reilly, Matt – Clergy (Alabama West Florida)**

Rev. Dr. Matt O’Reilly is pastor of Hope Hull UMC near Montgomery, Alabama, and an adjunct professor at Wesley Biblical Seminary in Jackson, MS. A graduate of Asbury Seminary (M.Div.) and the University of Gloucestershire (Ph.D., New Testament), Matt is the author of numerous articles and book chapters. He is deeply committed to a vital future for the Wesleyan movement and has worked toward that vision during his 13 years of pastoral ministry, seminary teaching, and through opportunities to speak in North America, Central America, and Europe. He is married to Naomi, and they have three children.

**\*Ritter, Chris – Clergy (Illinois Great Rivers)**

Dr. Chris Ritter leads a multi-site church in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and is a founding member of the WCA Council. He writes frequently about issues affecting the Wesleyan movement at peopleneedjesus.net. Chris coordinates the North Central Jurisdiction for WCA and is the author of Seven Things John Wesley Expected Us to Do for Kids (Abingdon, 2016). His articles have appeared in Circuit Rider, UM News, Good News Magazine, and Ministry Matters. He and his wife, Becky, have been married for thirty years and they have four young adult children.

**Sheets, Branson – Clergy (North Carolina)**

Branson is the Lead Pastor of Covenant Church in Greenville, North Carolina, the largest church in the North Carolina Annual Conference. He is a 32-year veteran UM pastor and currently serves as the president of the North Carolina Conference Evangelical Fellowship. Branson also serves on the board of Good News and has been an active member of the WCA since its initial meeting in October 2016.

Branson’s passions are discipling young men and teaching. He and his wife Stephanie have served at Covenant since 2005. They have four children ranging in age from 27-19.

**Smith III, Theodore – Lay (California-Pacific)**

First, I am an unapologetic Christian and believer in the Wesleyan discipline for the practice of my faith. I came to truly believe through personal pain-back surgery and the fear of not walking again. I found salvation for my soul instead. I am a husband to my wife Faalaniga (Nina), a father to two daughters, Natasha and Delicia and have six grandchildren, whom are my heart! I am a lawyer by trade; a prosecutor who is now the second in command at the Pasadena City Attorney’s Office. I feel “called” to reflect Wesley’s guidance and to help in word and deed, hence, the seeking of this nomination.

**\*Sparks, Stephen – Clergy (Mississippi)**

Born 1971, Stephen was adopted by Pattie and Lawrence Sparks of Baldwyn, Mississippi. He is married to the former Holly Howard of Harlan, KY and has 3 children Andrew (11), AnnaClaire (9) and Amelia (7). In 1989, he entered The University of Mississippi, graduating in 1993 with a BS in General Engineering and a JD in 1995. He received a Masters of Divinity in 2005 from Asbury Theological Seminary. Stephen has served the Mississippi Annual Conference in many leadership roles and has been elected to two General Conferences, being chosen the Mississippi Episcopal Candidate in 2016. In 2018, Stephen moved to Maples Memorial UMC in Olive Branch, Mississippi. Stephen currently serves on the WCA Council.

**Stanford, Shane – Clergy (Memphis)**

Dr. Shane Stanford is the Senior Teaching and Lead Pastor of Christ Church, Memphis. A former church planter, Rev. Stanford is the author of 15 books- including the acclaimed *A Positive Live (Zondervan), What the Prayers of Jesus Tell Us About the Heart of God (Abingdon),* and *When God Disappears (Baker Books)*. An advocate for people living with HIV/AIDS, Rev. Stanford often travels sharing his own story as an HIV+ hemophiliac, as well as his deep personal faith in the saving life, work and healing of Jesus Christ.

**Weber, Larry – Lay (Illinois Great Rivers)**

I am a theologically conservative senior staff member of the largest UMC in Illinois. Prior to coming on staff at Christ Church I served nearly 40 years as a public-school principal and superintendent. I also managed and owned private, business schools in the mid-90s prior to returning to public school administration. I am married to my high school sweetheart and we have been blessed with seven children and thirteen grandchildren. I believe the WCA may be the best hope for our churches to align as our United Methodist denomination implodes over the human sexuality debate. As a General Conference delegate, my first priority will be the approval of a “Gracious Exit” plan followed by an affirmation of the current Book of Discipline language (Traditionalist Plan) in hopes that our Council of Bishops will have the fortitude necessary to uphold those positions included in the Book of Discipline.

**Westlake, Jamie – Clergy (Florida)**

I am a sinner saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone! I believe that the UMC we all love is at great risk. I serve in a very diverse AC (Florida). I am a member of the Florida WCA board which is quite diverse as well. We strongly support the Traditional Plan as the way forward for the UMC.