

Comments on North Georgia Annual Conference (June 2-4, 2022)
by Joe Wesley Kilpatrick, Sr. For Tucker First UMC

Tucker's retired preacher, Rev. Travis Woodward, was remembered in the Memorial Service given to the pastors who had died during the past year. Clergy spouses who had passed were also remembered. I knew six of them, having worked with them in past years. It brought back good memories.

Thirteen people were ordained as full connection elders, including Anne M. Cuming.

Unlike the reporting in previous years, I did not see any statistical reports on 2021 membership in the Conference. A review of the 2020 numbers available on the national UMC.org website indicates that 2020 membership and attendance were down about 21,000 and 36,000, respectively, from 2011.

The Conference receives collections from its local churches, called apportionments. There was a 17.8% drop in these collections in 2021 compared to 2020, a decline of \$2,217,554, down to \$10,222,753 received from apportionments.

Money is coming in from the sale of church buildings, however. In five years, 64 properties have been sold for a value of \$26,492,761. Two more are currently under contract for \$805,000. The Conference holds invested funds of \$124,904,000, of which \$74,111,000 is designated by management (unrestricted by donors) for health and pension benefits programs. The Conference earned 8.4% in 2021 on its invested funds.

We approved a budget for 2023 that included compensation increases of 3.5% for district superintendents and 3% for Conference staff. Even though we budgeted a decrease of \$507,708 for Conference Benevolences, the 2023 budget exceeds 2021 expenditures by 3.3%.

I think you would like to know that the Conference will be spending about \$3.4 million to construct a 5,400-square-foot office building on Main Street in College Park, close to College Park UMC. This will be the new home of our North Georgia UMC headquarters. It's a significant step down from the 15,376 square feet currently leased in Century Center. The site was selected after an intensive study, including co-sharing space with neighbors Decatur First, Avondale Patillo, Embry Hills, and Chamblee First UMCs.

Finally, it was a historic annual conference. Seventy congregations chose to disaffiliate from the UMC due to their concerns over the UMC's directions on sexual ethics. One district superintendent said in a speech that in his district, one of the eight districts, there were 21 congregations in the disaffiliation process for next year's Annual Conference.