

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner
 South Central Jurisdiction
 Episcopal Candidate
 2022



REV. DR. LACEYE CAMMARANO WARNER

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<u>Denominational Affiliation</u>	United Methodist Church (life-long) Texas Annual Conference, Ordained Deacon 1994 Ordained Elder and Full Member 2000		

Education

2000	Ph.D.	Trinity College, University of Bristol, England Department of Church History “Methodist Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodist Deaconess Work in the Late 19 th and Early 20 th Centuries: A Paradigm for Evangelism” Advisors: Drs. Ruth Gouldbourne and Richard Heitzenrater
1995	M.Div.	The Divinity School Duke University, Durham, NC
1992	B.A.	Trinity University, San Antonio, TX

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner
 South Central Jurisdiction
 Episcopal Candidate
 2022

Appointment History/Ministry Roles

2001-present Duke University Divinity School

Administrative Roles

2020-present Associate Dean for Wesleyan Engagement and Hybrid/Digital Learning
 2019-present Associate Dean for Wesleyan Engagement
 2012-2015 Executive Vice Dean
 2006-2012 Associate Dean for Academic Formation and Programs

Faculty Roles

2017-present Royce and Jane Reynolds Associate Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies
 2007-2017 Associate Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies and the Royce and Jane Reynolds Teaching Fellow
 2001-2006 Assistant Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies and the Royce and Jane Reynolds Teaching Fellow
 1999 Adjunct Instructor

1999-2001 Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
 E. Stanley Jones Assistant Professor of Evangelism

Local Church Roles

June 2022-present Interim co-pastor with Rev. Gaston Warner, First UMC, West, TX and Cayote UMC, Central Texas Conference
 Spring 2017 Interim co-pastor with Rev. Gaston Warner, First UMC, West, TX, Central Texas Conference
 1995-1996(8) Minister, Kingswood (and Frome Valley) Circuit, The Methodist Church in Great Britain
 1991-1993 Summer Youth Pastor, The Woodlands UMC

Teaching Areas United Methodist History, Doctrine, Polity
 Mission and Evangelism
 Women in Christian Tradition, including Gender and Race
 Christian Leadership and Administration

Ecclesial Leadership Roles (select)

2019-2024 Delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences from the Texas Annual Conference, United Methodist Church
 2015-2020 Delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences from the Texas Annual Conference, United Methodist Church
 2016-2017 Regional Director (Interim), UM Course of Study School, DDS
 2012-2016 University Senate, UMC
 2015-2016 University Senate Task Force to Revise Guidelines, UMC
 2008-2016 UM Council of Bishops Ministry Study Commission
 2008-2016 Board of Ordained Ministry, Texas Annual Conference, UMC
 2012-2016 Board of Ordained Ministry, Joint Committee on Medical Leave, Texas Annual Conference, UMC

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

2008-2012	UM Council of Bishops Task Force for Theological Education and Leadership Formation
2005-2009	Lay Leadership Committee, Asbury Temple UMC, Durham, NC
2004-2010	Facilitation Team, Episcopal Leadership Forum, DDS
2004-2009	Visioning Committee, Foundation for Evangelism, UMC
2004-2007	Facilitator, United Methodist Professors of Evangelism
2002	Chair, Adult Education Committee, Duke University Chapel

Honors/Recognitions

2021	<i>All the Good: A Wesleyan Advent Devotion</i> , editor and contributor, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2021)*
	*Appears on the Evangelical Christian Publisher's Bestsellers list for December 2021
2017	Exemplary Teacher Award, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, UMC
2008	Duke University Teamwork Award, SACS Reaccreditation Team
2008	Faculty-In Residence of the Year Award, Duke University
2007	<i>Saving Women: Retrieving Evangelistic Theology and Practice</i> (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007) *
	* Rated an "Outstanding book" for 2008 by the University Press Books Committee
1996-2000	John Wesley Fellowship, A Foundation for Theological Education

Family Information

My spouse, Gaston Warner, and I celebrated 29 years of marriage in May 2022. Gaston is an Elder in the Texas Conference. He serves as CEO, Global North for Zoe Empowers, a Christian non-profit empowering orphaned children and vulnerable youth in seven countries including India and throughout Africa. Our daughter, Clare, is 11 years old. She loves all things having to do with nature conservation, running the PowerPoint slides at our local church, and helping with children's ministry. Both Gaston and Clare are excited about this journey, however it may unfold.

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

RESPONSES

1. Why are you willing to be considered for the episcopacy?

I love the United Methodist Church. I love its story, doctrine, theology, the character of our ministries, and the possibility of what God is doing and will do with us. I am passionate about Wesleyan doctrine and theology and the governance structures which seek to enable God's ministry through us. I treasure connections with thousands of ministers whom I have had the privilege of learning with and from in the classroom and as colleagues in ministry. From the local church, throughout the denominational structure, I am awed by how God works in and through the United Methodist Church.

We find ourselves in a particularly tumultuous season. It is because of this season, not in spite of it, that I feel God's call to offer my gifts in this work. I perceived this calling first externally through respected colleagues in ministry and then internally through prayer and reflection.

One aspect of my experience pertinent to this season is a capacity to build, reimagine, and sustain systems. For most of the last fifteen years, I have served as a senior administrator at Duke University Divinity School responsible for leading numerous core initiatives. My leadership style gathers a plurality of voices and perspectives to survey information, refine processes, and incorporate ongoing assessments in moving an institutional mission forward. At times I wish it was not part of my personality, but I must confess I am energized by complex administrative challenges. My inner benevolent bureaucrat comes out at the thought of working with teams on intractable problems involving financial constraints, finding fits for seemingly unrelated pieces of an ever-changing puzzle, and resolving issues to empower an organization's participation in God's mission.

While early experiences with youth and parish ministry were formative, for the last almost 25 years I have served in theological education through teaching evangelism, mission, United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity. Though many professors gravitate toward the academic side of their work, my focus in teaching and writing has been the United Methodist Church, particularly developing resources for pastors and local congregations. From youth academies to licensing schools, basic and advanced course of study schools to masters and doctoral degree programs, my ministry is enriched and informed by decades long relationships with clergy and laity from across the connection. It would be a privilege to apply this experience within numerous settings to serving the United Methodist Church in the role of bishop in the South Central Jurisdiction.

Finally, I am overwhelmingly hopeful about the future of the United Methodist Church. This is not a naïve hope, but one grounded in the abundant power of the Holy Spirit. I am humbled to be considered for the episcopacy in order to create spaces for the many voices and gifts God has called to this work in God's world, for God's people.

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

2. How should the United Methodist Church go forward into the future? What are the most critical issues? How would you respond as a bishop of the church to these issues?

The United Methodist Church has an opportunity to move into the future with an active and intentional responsiveness—responsiveness to God’s love, God’s mission, and its role in God’s mission to share God’s love. The potential of being lulled into complacency by our resources and reputation can be, and has been, dangerous. The authenticity of our witness to God’s love suffers when we are not vigilant in our spiritual responsiveness.

Critical issues and how I would collaborate to respond to each:

- (1) Identity and Purpose. Across mainline denominations there is arguably a crisis of identity and purpose. Our Methodist identity is rooted in our origin stories as a revival movement populated largely by women and youth, structured around small groups and field preaching, complemented by robust outreach with those living in poverty. This identity as a Christian movement informs our purpose to participate in God’s mission.
If elected to the episcopacy, I would deepen awareness of the roots of our identity and facilitate discernment of our current identity and purpose while building and sustaining networks as we discern how to share God’s love in authentic and meaningful ways.
- (2) Complicity in Systemic Sin. For generations the United Methodist Church participated, and arguably still participates, in systemic sin against enslaved persons, numerous immigrant communities, and under-represented constituencies.
If elected to the episcopacy, I would grow and lead others to grow in responsiveness to our sin including my own, to lament with the suffering, and to repent of complicity in suffering. I would also create space for the Holy Spirit to sanctify me and our church through participation in Christian practices that seek to deepen faith and extend God’s justice.
- (3) Organization and Use of Resources. The post-pandemic world is discernably different from any we have known. From congregations, districts, and conference offices, to general boards and agencies as well as theological seminaries, our structures represent the wisdom and capacity of a pre-pandemic world.
If elected to the episcopacy, I would actively work toward reimagining our systems, unleashing how to most faithfully participate in God’s mission through cultivating awareness of our identity and purpose.

3. Where do you see God at work on the margins of the world? How would you embrace and encourage new, emerging forms of the church among new people?

While God is at work all around us, US mainline denominations can especially learn from majority world communities, including immigrant communities among and beyond

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

North American and Western dominant cultures. For example, Dr. Philip Jenkins describes the characteristics of *The Next Christendom* in the growth of Christian churches in the majority world. Drawing from Jenkins and Dr. Lamin Sanneh, fruitful practices in Christian majority world include (1) a greater openness to signs and wonders, (2) sustainable relationships with creation, (3) economic empowerment. The following are two examples of efforts from my own experience which embody these characteristics:

- (1) Fresh Expressions. While serving local churches in England and pursuing doctoral work, I benefited from a front row seat to the emergence of Fresh Expressions which was initiated by The Methodist Church in Great Britain, though the Anglican Church often receives credit since Archbishop Rowan Williams wrote a helpful description and rationale of the movement in the late 1990s. Since its origin in the United Kingdom, Fresh Expressions US works across denominations to develop leadership of lay and clergy facilitating new expression of the gospel beyond, and sometimes in collaboration with, existing churches. I have contributed to the Fresh Expressions US material and teaching and would encourage others to draw upon these and/or similar resources and practices.
- (2) Zoe Empowers. Full disclosure, my spouse, Gaston Warner, co-leads this organization with Reegan Kaberia, who is based in Kenya. While not pushing any single approach, I encourage and embrace models of empowerment connected to emerging forms of church. Zoe is an orphan empowerment organization built on the concept of a Rwandan social worker, Epiphany Mujawimana. It is informed by local needs and carefully tracked data to create an empowerment system for orphaned children and vulnerable youth in multiple African countries and India that begins with God's love and acceptance. The children and youth build capacities to join communities, chart paths out of extreme poverty, share the gospel of Jesus Christ, and contribute leadership in their churches and communities. I would like to see the United Methodist Church take inspiration from Zoe and other similar empowerment organizations, which are creatively providing new models of mission and ministry.

I would actively facilitate emerging forms of church among the people called Methodist by enhancing our capacity to name where God is at work in and beyond the United Methodist Church. In addition to enhancing this capacity to name opportunities to participate in God's mission, I would develop networks and resources with emerging ministries.

4. How would you lead the church in reaching its mission field across divisions of age, economics, ethnicity, and culture? Share how you have done this in your current ministry setting?

As a teacher of cross-cultural mission and evangelism for almost twenty-five years, I have also remained a student by following God's call to participate in God's mission. If elected to the episcopacy, I would lead the church in reaching mission fields across differences by teaching, practicing, and learning with fellow set apart ministers

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

and laity. The main objective of my teaching is recovering a biblical and theological understanding of mission and evangelism to overcome misunderstandings and shape faithful practices.

We assume we have something to bring to our neighbors outside churches, which is accurate. However, it is also true that God has something to give us all. That gift is given when we engage all of God's children and creation. Because of God's nature, God invites us to participate in God's mission, but also works in spite of us when necessary. Each of the gospel commissions describes God's presence and role in mission and evangelism, for example John 20.19-23: "As the Father sent me, I am sending you." God sends Jesus, with the church, to the world. We are sent to meet God in our neighbors—and to share the love of God in Jesus Christ through our words and actions (see *UM Hymnal*, "Baptism Covenant I [II-IV]"). To participate in God's mission is to follow the Holy Spirit into the world to receive and participate in God's salvation with all to share and know the gospel of Jesus Christ regardless of age, economics, ethnicity, and culture, as well as gender.

In my current ministry setting I participate in God's formation of pastors and laity through teaching and writing on mission and evangelism particularly across economic, race, and gender differences. I have resourced diverse learners through reading and writing, case studies, immersion projects, and actively seeking to practice what I teach. Additionally, I have taught and practiced mission in a variety of settings beyond degree program courses. The following are three examples:

- (1) Age and Ethnicity. As a teacher and contributor to the Duke Youth Academy, I assisted with the creation of the Texas Youth Academy, which is based in part on the DYA, and regularly teach at the TYA. I have witnessed God's call in the lives of these diverse young people, and the promise and possibilities of that calling transforming God's church into the future. One of the most powerful parts of this ministry is that it takes young peoples' gifts and capacities seriously, and they respond by leading others.
- (2) Economics and Ethnicity. Through my administrative role I set up structures to support a Methodist Course of Study School in Central America founded by Duke Divinity School Dean Edgardo Colon Emeric. In addition to teaching as the first woman core instructor, I implemented a structure through Duke University to enable pass through funding, located funding sources, assisted with enrollment records, and facilitated strategic planning among local leaders to train the trainers, and work with the director in building a sustainable system which is continuing to thrive twelve years later. The COSCA began training financially impoverished pastors in El Salvador with no access to theological education and has grown to include hundreds of pastors from more than five countries.
- (3) Race and Culture. Through a long-time friendship with the then director of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity, I supported her establishing a Durham Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope to learn about and embody racial justice from civil rights leaders in the significant spaces of the civil rights movement in Durham, NC. The pilgrimage was modeled on a similar practice used in South Africa informed by Dr. Peter Storey's witness, Trevor Hudson's book, *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*, and Dr. Willie

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

Jennings strategic leadership and prophetic research. Drs. Jennings and Storey invited me to teach in South Africa and later to participate in the groundbreaking of Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary. I also helped to create the Hispanic and Asian Houses of Studies at Duke Divinity School.

5. What risks have you taken in ministry? How do you leverage what you learn from failure and success?

We have a family friend in Chennai, India whose church organization lost two Christian ministers to stoning a number of years ago in northern India. In light of their risks, and other servants of Christ who have come before, I acknowledge the category of risks is relative to our context. The following examples represent three types of risks I have taken in ministry and learnings from failure as well as success:

- (1) Ordination as a Woman. Working as a youth ministry intern after leaving an internship with a law firm in downtown Houston was not welcomed by my parents. Then seeking ordination having never seen a female ordained elder was an additional stretch. Without support and encouragement from parents, and the consistent resistance from relatives, friends, and society to the ordination of women there was more than one confrontation to test my discernment and resolve. I learned to trust my internal calling, God's presence, and to seek out trusted mentors.
- (2) Meeting at the Margins. Beginning with my first full-time appointment as an ordained minister in The Methodist Church of Great Britain and dating to the present, I am committed to accepting invitations from individuals, including from some outside the church, to engage ministry opportunities. This sometimes means considering unpopular or challenging possibilities. Over the years this willingness has drawn disapproval and criticism. As recently as this summer I was confronted about the inappropriateness of the venue for a prayer service and fundraiser for the Uvalde shooting victims held in a local bar. This service was suggested and hosted by a community bible study comprised mainly of people who are disaffected and/or wounded by the church in which I participate. They call me the leader of the study, though I feel it is a more organic gathering than that describes.

I am learning to interpret resistance and failure in ministry not merely as criticism, but as feedback, inquiry, and opportunity to learn. In situations of perceived failure, I strive to learn from mistakes, invite feedback—especially when difficult to hear—and consider questions. When my goals and/or others' goals impede ministry, I collaborate to reorient shared ministry to respond to God's calling and imagination for ministry. God can and does use all manner of interactions, relationships, and networks to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in expected as well as surprising ways. While successful and flourishing ministry is more appealing, God also works through failure.

- (3) Failure and Faithfulness. The assumption that if I work hard enough I can obtain all the answers and please all the people is one I have slowly learned to set aside. Clearly, this is

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

a recipe for failure. As Mother Teresa may have said, “We are not called to be successful, but to be faithful.” Following God’s call, rather than the world’s prescription for perceived success, practicing Sabbath and participating in means of grace as a beloved child of God remind me of my baptism and identity in Christ. There is nothing more, or anything less, I can do to cause God to love me any more—or any less.

6. What types of strategies would you emphasize to accomplish the mission of the church in two areas: To strengthen annual conferences? To increase the number of healthy, vital congregations effectively making disciples of Jesus Christ?

Annual conferences and congregations benefit from healthy and overlapping structural systems. If elected to the episcopacy, I would work to strengthen, and where needed reimagine, systems that support annual conferences as well as increase the number of healthy, vital congregations.

Annual Conferences. In recent decades many annual conferences have put effort into building and improving systems of support for vital congregations and the formation of Christian disciples. I would work to build on strengths, remove obstacles, and invest in sustaining healthy practices among set apart ministers and laity. Systems need consistent comprehensive assessment that permit experimentation and failure without blaming participants. Our current structure has not always supported or rewarded such innovative thinking. By establishing feedback loops of lessons learned an annual conference can encourage learning while limiting the fear of trying something new and/or different. Where possible it is important to build trust and provide incentives for innovation. Unresponsive aspects of the system will need encouragement and accountability if these are unable or unwilling to learn and improve.

Local Churches. Building and sustaining systems of leadership development for set apart clergy and lay ministers is one starting point for local churches responding to God’s call. Following a local church’s discernment of how to minister within their community, districts/annual conferences can provide additional strategies such as small grants, coaching/mentoring, and consultation on financial and real property deployment for missional/evangelistic practices. Local churches need room to dream with God as they embrace the Holy Spirit’s guidance to experiment with creative Christian formation, witness, and outreach. Local churches also need access to best practices across Methodism and beyond to help direct these dreams into realities.

One strategic area inviting attention in annual conferences and local churches is creative use of property to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. The United Methodist Church possesses substantial assets, even taking into account challenges such as deferred maintenance. Often local church buildings are significant resources for communities of all sizes. Applying tools from asset-based community development, annual conferences and local congregations can leverage shared resources to reimagine systems of disciple-making.

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

I recently participated on a resource committee for a study sponsored by The Duke Endowment entitled, “The Economic Halo Effect of Rural United Methodist Churches in North Carolina (2021-2022).” The research showed (a) 72% of those benefitting from programs housed in United Methodist churches are not members of the congregations since United Methodist churches are de facto community centers, (b) United Methodist congregations make an average annual contribution of \$735,000 to local economies, (c) congregations generate value because they spend and hire locally, host events, and sacrificially share space at low or no cost providing needed resources and services to small communities. A system for sharing ideas for community engagement could assist us in maximizing assets to which we already have access.

Another example of asset-based discernment is demonstrated by the Wesley Community Development Corporation (<https://wesleycdc.com/>), a non-profit real estate company founded by the son of a United Methodist pastor located in Huntersville, NC. WCDC’s mission is “helping faith-based organizations repurpose their assets to serve the community and missional engagement. Wesley is an innovative non-profit real estate firm uniquely qualified to shepherd clients through this transformational journey.”

7. One of the greatest struggles in appointment making is access to sufficient numbers of effective clergy. How would you work to recruit new, effective clergy? How would you address the issue of ineffective clergy?

Recruiting effective pastors is a mission critical focus for the United Methodist Church. While this is not an insurmountable challenge, in a large bureaucratic system such as ours this challenge requires intentional focus through the creation and strengthening of systems to execute a strategy and evaluate the effectiveness of that strategy in ongoing ways. Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean continues to lead in this area based on decades of research funded by the Lilly Endowment. Her research and programs demonstrate the need for meaningful Christian formation beginning at younger ages if denominations hope to enjoy active adult members, which are necessary for recruiting effective clergy. Data supporting proven means to address recruitment of talented clergy include cultivating and sustaining pipelines with seminaries, undergraduate programs, campus ministries, and youth camps (campers and counselors alike). In addition to strengthening our responsiveness to God’s mission with Christian formation at every age, we also need to go to where the effective and called leaders are serving (Stephen’s Ministries, Disciple Bible Study, Emmaus, etc.) and invite them into expanded roles consistent with their callings and gifts.

Organizing systems to support these potential and practicing effective pastors is essential. Research sponsored by the Lilly Endowment demonstrates the effectiveness of cohorts, mentors, and coaching to recruit and maintain effective leadership. Creating and strengthening mentoring opportunities for high school, college, and seminary students as well as those serving while employed in other occupations is an effective way to cultivate and recruit leaders. These leaders can then receive and discern their calling through immersion in ministry with active mentoring. We have the resources to build and sustain these systems within our United Methodist Church. We also have the personnel resources

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

throughout our connection. Recruiting effective clergy is not only possible, but essential to our faithful response to God's mission for the United Methodist Church.

While the language of ineffective clergy is descriptive and accurate, in my experience those populating this group are not all defined by the same circumstances. Some actively undermine promises made as set apart ministers. For these, and all participating in set apart ministry, clear systems of accountability are needed. For others, life events contribute to situations not hospitable for set apart ministry at a particular time. For still others, the vocation to ministry may have shifted.

When serving as academic dean and then executive vice dean at Duke Divinity School, I facilitated the annual enrollment of approximately 700 students, directly supervised dozens of staff members, and oversaw operations including human resources for a department of over 200 full-time faculty and staff. In these and other roles, I do my best to encourage all children of God, including baptized members of the body of Christ, to discern and respond to God's vocation on their lives. When a student or team member was in a space that was not fruitful for them and/or the institution, it was my role to facilitate discernment with them of a refreshed/revised vocation. Sometimes, this was termination of enrollment or employment. But this discernment did not have to be punitive and traumatic (or if punitive, it did not need to be traumatic). In most cases we discerned together better fits for all involved through peaceful, clear, and respectful processes. Giving room, when possible, for persons to redefine their own vocations allows for a respectful exit strategy from set apart ministry.

Often systems spend 90% of their energy on 10% of the participants, usually those struggling to fit in the system. Redistributing the majority of energy in the system to supporting the majority of participants targets those who can benefit most from such support. This important shift is proven to enhance mission outcomes. This redistribution targets pastors with the potential over time to struggle, but with support and feedback can weather and/or overcome challenges. The remaining energy can be split between pastors thriving in the system and those struggling by creating clear systems for support and accountability.

Building and sustaining systems of support and accountability allows individuals and trusted mentors to discern authentic vocations for each season of ministry, whether inside or beyond full-time credentialed ministry roles. Systems, when functioning well, require less energy than individual interventions. Systems also enable clear and pertinent feedback, not just for participants, but for the system itself. When there is ineffectiveness, in what ways are the leadership and systems complicit in that process? Creating and maintaining healthy systems takes time, but is more fruitful and effective in the long term.

8. What is your philosophy of appointment making?

I commend the shift over the past twenty years to more intentional consultation with, and participation of, stakeholders in appointment-making to minister to and with communities as described in our *Book of Discipline*. If elected to the episcopacy, my philosophy and practice of appointment-making would focus on building and sustaining

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

trust in healthy systems to support consultation in the appointment-making process. Sustaining healthy, transparent, agile systems facilitates faithful and fair discernment of appointments to empower ministry by local churches and organizations in their communities. Each clergy and congregation has a unique expression of ministry. My goal in appointment-making, if elected to the episcopacy, would be to facilitate flourishing ministries among United Methodists.

9. Describe how you work in partnership with the laity in the planning and execution of ministry. How would the laity you work with describe your work in this partnership?

All Christians are called to ministry by our baptisms. Our baptismal promises remind us of this calling to share the gospel in our words and in our lives. Baptism is our most widely shared identity. To undermine this shared identity and the contributions of laity to ministry undermines our witness. My understanding and practices rely on the biblical image of God sending Jesus, and with the Holy Spirit, Jesus sending the church to the world to share the message of salvation. If elected to the episcopacy, I would continue to work with all those fulfilling their baptismal promises. I hope the laity with whom I work describe me as actively creating spaces for their contributions, and describe me as a partner, collaborator, and sibling in Christ.

As we work together to adjust our organizational structure to new realities and needs, I will actively seek United Methodist laity who can offer their skills and experience to chart a way forward. The United Methodist Church has a treasure of experience in our laity, who I have found exceptionally willing and even eager to assist when invited and valued.

10. Describe your understanding of the inclusive nature of the church. In what ways have you lived up to and fallen short of that understanding?

For United Methodists, the inclusive nature of the church is essential to our identity and purpose. A paragraph describing the “Inclusiveness of the Church” appears in our Constitution at the opening of the *Book of Discipline*. To be specific, paragraph 4, Article IV, following the first three Articles: I. Declaration of Union (of the Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren), II. Name (The United Methodist Church), and III. Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith (our formal doctrine).

Article IV of our Constitution describes the “Inclusiveness of the Church” with reference to the United Methodist Church’s participation in the church universal and Body of Christ. This inclusiveness of the United Methodist Church also “acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth...without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition.” The paragraph continues by describing inclusiveness as full participation in the life of the church, and not allowing any organizational unit of the church to exclude members or any constituent body of the Church on these same grounds.

This is a critical aspect to me, and I seek to live up to this understanding by acknowledging to the best of my abilities all persons as children of God, created in God’s image, and for whom God’s love in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is given. As

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

God's Holy Spirit continues to renew the image of God in me through sanctification, my vision is increased to see my blindness to the church's neglect for God's children and creation. While there are times I have spoken out and taken action when witnessing a lack of inclusion, there are also times when I have remained silent and thus complicit through sins of omission.

I am immensely grateful to friends and colleagues from under-represented communities willing to share their concerns with me—and even more amazing, help me to understand how to be a better ally and advocate. When teaching at Garrett-Evangelical, Dr. Linda Thomas invited me to present a paper at an event honoring Dr. James Cone. It was a risk for her that I have never forgotten. I cannot express how much I learned from that early experience and the relationships made that continue to inform my faith and ministry. Most recently I assisted colleagues Drs. Jung Choi and Sangwoo Kim to establish an Asian House of Studies at Duke Divinity School. This was also a significant experience of learning how to help—and in the best possible ways, not to help too much. Through engagement with under-represented community members, I am learning to see the world more fully.

I am also struck by how the current cultural conflicts in the U.S. and beyond illumine the need to see and include those with whom I disagree and with whom engagement may create discomfort. I give thanks for God's continued work in me and the gift of repentance and renewed sight to participate in God's love for all.

11. What do you feel has been the most significant contribution or difference you have made toward fulfilling our mission as a church in the local churches you have served? In your annual conference? At the general church level?

Local Churches. My most significant contribution to local churches with whom I have served and attended is to create spaces for new voices and perspectives to feel a part of the church. So often I find there is a core group of overworked volunteers in the church wishing others would step up, and there are a number of people outside of this core group willing to help but feeling as if they are outsiders. I enjoy inviting others in and smoothing the way to mutual benefit as current leaders adjust to new people and ideas.

I also emphasize such thinking with local church pastors with whom I share the classroom. I assign a major project in my evangelism and mission class where class members immerse in contexts across race, class, ethnicity and social/economic differences. Students then reflect on how the gospel is embodied and work with the church/organization on plans to strengthen ministry from the perspective of the community—not merely the student. Class participants reflect on how this experience changes them. In this exercise I consistently experience the Holy Spirit opening new vistas for ministry and cooperation across boundaries.

Annual Conference(s). I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to speak at numerous annual conferences over the last twenty years as well as to serve on the Texas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Perhaps the greatest privilege of my current ministry setting is teaching and encouraging students in set-apart ministries about our shared mission. Teaching in multiple licensing schools, course of study schools, and

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

seminaries has gifted me with so many wonderful connections through which I continue to learn how to participate in God's mission for the United Methodist Church.

General Church. Though I have served on a number of general church bodies such as the University Senate and Council of Bishops' Ministry Study, the most rewarding contribution I have made to our church's mission is through publications.

- (1) *Method of Our Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2014, rev. 2017) which is often used as a United Methodist polity textbook in licensing and course of study schools as well as degree program courses. Thanks to Kathy Armistead and Abingdon Press for the opportunity to compose an accessible guidebook to our *Book of Discipline*, particularly for those seeking credentials for set apart ministry. I am continuously struck by the many responses to this book and the conversations it invites with set apart ministers as well as laity.
- (2) I am grateful to Bishop Will Willimon and Dr. Joel Green, for the invitation to contribute to the *Wesley Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009) by co-authoring with Sarah Lancaster the Wesleyan Terms throughout. The generous responses to this project from so many United Methodists are humbling. Through reading Scripture with resources from the Wesleyan tradition, the Wesley Study Bible contributes to the fulfillment of our mission to "spread scriptural holiness." The WSB, among other publications and relationships with students, has led to many occasions to speak in local churches—and to speak about the mission of our church to encourage local churches in their ministries.

12. John Wesley is often quoted as saying "in essentials, unity, in non-essentials, diversity, in all things charity." What constitutes the essentials for you?"

For me the essentials consist of United Methodist formal doctrine and particularly those described in the Articles of Religion and EUB Confession of Faith located in the initial pages of the *Book of Discipline*. While the language used to compose these documents draws from different eras, the essence of the material describes doctrinal beliefs, many of which are rooted in the early church. The essentials for me constitute the original Nicene Creed: the nature of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity, Incarnation, Resurrection, inspiration of Scripture, the Church, as well as Sin and the need for and role of Grace.

I also value a Wesleyan understanding of Grace as Prevenient, Justifying, and Sanctifying, which relies upon universal atonement and free will. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as instituted by Jesus Christ, are our Sacraments. United Methodists believe good works follow Justification to avoid works righteousness and are means of grace to facilitate the work of Sanctification by the Holy Spirit. However, if asked to be more succinct the following classic song is instructive, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so." Each of these doctrinal components shape our identity and practices as United Methodists.

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

13. How would being elected and assigned impact your family? What challenges might it present and how will these be addressed? Are there health, financial, or other issues that could possibly affect your ability to serve as a bishop?

If elected to the episcopacy, the impact on my family would be a welcome vocation. They are tremendously supportive of this possibility, as they have been of my current ministry role that requires frequent and sometimes lengthy travel. I am humbled and moved by how my family sees and names one another's gifts—as well as growing edges—discerns individual and shared vocations, and enjoys the adventurous journey of following Jesus Christ together and as individuals.

I have no health, financial, or other impediments to serving as Bishop.

14. Under the current rules, how many quadrennial terms would you be eligible to serve?

I am eligible to serve four full quadrennial terms.

15. How do you understand your obligation as a bishop to uphold the *Book of Discipline*?

My obligation as an ordained elder, and if elected a bishop, is to uphold the *Book of Discipline*. Each iterative *Book of Discipline* is the embodiment of the General Conference, which is the authoritative voice of the denomination. Beyond our formal doctrine, which is protected by the Restrictive Rules and Constitution, the *Book of Discipline* is a living document. As an elder, and if elected as a bishop, I will continue to participate in the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification in the United Methodist Church and subsequent revision of the *Book of Discipline* as we go on to perfection.

16. If you could change any section or provision in the *Book of Discipline*, what would you change?

I have thought about this specific question many times while teaching UM History, Doctrine, and Polity over the last 25 years and especially when requested by Abingdon Press to write a textbook on polity. The following is a selection of the most pressing changes I would like to work toward.

- (1) A minor but significant change would be to eliminate contradictions and edit for consistency and clarity. This seems a simple task, but is more challenging and complex considering the *Book of Discipline* is the embodiment of the General Conference. Offering a clear and concise description of our governance would be more functional and inviting to those considering membership and credentials.
- (2) Move forward with the Global Discipline previously approved and begun in the 2016 *Book of Discipline*. The international nature of the United Methodist Church would be embodied in space provided for shared material, including formal doctrines, followed by distinctive materials to describe local church organization, ordination/credentialing processes, and property management specific to regions.

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner
South Central Jurisdiction
Episcopal Candidate
2022

- (3) Revise the current jurisdictional and central conference structure to create parity across by using the same designation for all jurisdictions and all central conferences, further eliminating vestiges of colonialism.
- (4) Processes for credentialing set apart ministers are long and complex. To encourage the recruitment and retention of effective clergy I would revise these to distill the substance and provide clear guidelines and requirements.
- (5) The purpose of the *Book of Discipline* is to facilitate the United Methodist Church's participation in God's mission. I would welcome any revisions that support and/or enhance this purpose.

17. When is the last time you led an individual to a profession of faith? Tell us about it.

Since December 2021, I have led a bible study in my local community, which I briefly mentioned in question five. This group of eight regular participants, along with frequent visitors, formed organically one evening at a coffee shop that also serves wine and beer. I was visiting a neighbor, and we were talking about God. My neighbor had been unable to find a church home where she felt comfortable and wondered about God questions. As she noticed others listening in from surrounding tables, she invited them to join in. It seems the Holy Spirit gathered a group of people who were all disaffected and/or wounded by the church, but who were also hungry to learn about God. As the Holy Spirit guided our conversation, we stayed well after closing on this December evening. The topic that drew us and kept us gathered was God and the many embodiments of church.

This group, though relatively unfamiliar with each other, was so eager to discuss God, faith, and church that they made a plan to continue meeting weekly. I cannot emphasize how unlikely that decision and ongoing commitment is in this context. The main rule for our gathering agreed upon almost instantly is “no judgement”—since this group has experienced significant and damaging judgement. “Our role is to love God and love each other well.” Each participant has suffered physical/sexual abuse and trauma. All, except for me, have been pushed out of local churches, even one from a United Methodist church. Some have very limited resources and opportunities. We are from different ethnicities, orientations, and backgrounds. One person survived human trafficking and forced drug use leading to addiction, and incarceration. Most are from this small rural town, with the exception of a few including my neighbor and myself. Each participant from the town moved away and then back with some sacrifice, to follow what sounds like God's call to care for family and community. All feel like outsiders for circumstances in their lives stemming from a complicated mixture of events beyond their control and choices made. All are desperately hungry for God's love in Jesus Christ, to read and absorb Scripture, to find acceptance and a meaningful purpose, and to participate in God's sanctification.

We began talking about forgiveness, repentance, and salvation. We have studied biblical texts related to the liturgical year and parables. We begin each gathering with a lit

Rev. Dr. Lacey Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

candle and prayer from the Iona community, then we share God sightings and prayer requests including confession of sins and struggles. We also share refreshments.

On April 26th we talked about baptism as a continuation of Easter. On May 3rd one of the participants made a confession of faith and asked to be baptized and several asked to reaffirm their baptisms.

The energy in the room was palpable. It took me some time to realize what was happening. After confessing their faith in Jesus Christ, one immediately asked, “can I be baptized? Will you baptize me, Lacey?” “What? You want to be baptized? You want me to baptize you? YES, Yes, of course!” There were hugs and tears all around.

I am intentionally not offering further details related to these persons situations and identities. Those are their details and their stories to tell. They were not related or even close friends upon coming together. But let me say, their separate stories remind me of those Paul encounters in the Acts of the Apostles. They have experienced more of life than I ever will because of gender, economic, cultural, and ideological challenges. They made the most beautiful confessions of faith in direct response to the Easter message that I could imagine.

The baptisms and reaffirmations occurred Sunday, August 7th with one receiving baptism by immersion. While I am moved by the sheer miracle of God’s children accepting God’s love in Christ through the Holy Spirit, I am deeply saddened by the reasons this did not occur in a local church. (At the time of writing, most participants have visited the local United Methodist congregation where my spouse and I are currently serving as interim co-pastors.)

We shared in the Lord’s Supper in early June, although those seeking baptism happened to be absent/late. Those present were eager for the Communion liturgy, the Scriptures, the elements, and prayer together. We wept at the weight and fullness of every word and its meaning for our lives of faith. Some fell to their knees—others stood and prayed. The room was alive with the power of the Holy Spirit. Most had not received Communion in years, some in decades, not because they did not want it—or did not want to attend a local church—but because they felt they were actively not welcomed in local church settings.

This group prays for each other, loved ones, and the community. These are a few select examples.

- 1) We led a prayer vigil and fund-raiser for the Uvalde shooting victims in my neighbor’s bar, which I mentioned earlier. One bar patron posted a video of the gathering on social media that received over 800 views within a week, in a town with a 2,700 population. A person from the next town lost a young relative in the tragedy. An unlikely, yet respectful and solemn crowd gathered at the bar grateful for space to share their pain and ‘do’ something. The fundraiser resulted in thousands of dollars raised. We are continuing to gather in the bar each month for “Bibles and Beers” to pray and discuss a gospel parable.
- 2) In the span of six hours this bible study, who are surprised to describe themselves as a bible study, provided boxes full of necessities for a woman

Rev. Dr. Laceye Cammarano Warner

South Central Jurisdiction

Episcopal Candidate

2022

completing drug rehabilitation and beginning her life with only the clothes she was wearing.

- 3) We have not only prayed for victims of violence, but also for those who wield violence. Over approximately two days we prayed fervently for a young woman from the town charged with the murder of two teenagers. We prayed for her safety and that she would turn herself in to authorities. At the time, it seemed this person was abandoned by all and likely to take her own life.

These were not just situations we heard about, but acquaintances of participants of the bible study. The depth of the salvation narrative that is embraced, challenged, and shared in and beyond this group is staggering. My understanding of God's love for all creation in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit has grown exponentially in depth and texture thanks to this community of believers.

Participating in God's mission is at the heart of our Methodist identity. If elected bishop, I would embrace the opportunity to equip and enlarge the imagination for United Methodist clergy and laity to find spaces where the Holy Spirit is at work witnessing to God's love in Jesus Christ to participate in God's mission.