

2022 BISHOP'S AWARD BIOGRAPHIES



California-Pacific Conference
The United Methodist Church

Ceremony presented at
California-Pacific Annual Conference



At 3:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 18, 2022
Pacific Ballroom
Hilton Orange County / Costa Mesa

Each year during Annual Conference, Bishop Grant J. Hagiya celebrates a list of distinguished clergy and laypersons who have devoted their life of extraordinary service to The California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

2022 Recipients

Rev. Rex Britt	Judy Lewis
Patricia Coots	Lori Meaders
Rev. Sylvester Gillespie	Ellen Peterson
Jacquelynn Hawthorne	Alma Roberts
Doug Lewis	Rev. Brenda Simonds

2021 Recipients

J. André Aldridge
Rev. David O. Beadles
Winifred (Winnie) Ching
Rev. Dr. Roy Lewis Fry, Jr.
Rev. Robert Preston Price, III
Rev. Dr. Sharon Rhodes-Wickett
Jose Rodriguez
Joyce L. Zirkle

2020 Recipients

Rev. James Conn
Connie Freeman
Phil Freeman
Dan Gara
Lorraine Kadooka
Rev. Etuini Kelemen
Tupou Seini Kelemen
Rev. David Richardson
Ana-Haydée Urda

2019 Recipients

Rev. Faith Joanne Conklin
Rev. Kenneth E. McMillan
(posthumously)
Kenneth Ellis
M. Tyler Pottenger
Rev. Edward A. Hoffman
(posthumously)
Tetsu Tanimoto
Rev. Dr. Woong-Min Kim
George Williams

2018 Recipients

Francis Fukumoto
Rev. Dr. Robert Smith
JoAnn Yoon Fukumoto
Rev. Dr. F. Thomas Trotter
Howard Hudson
Rev. J. Irwin Trotter
Rev. Dan Kennedy
Rev. Mark C. Trotter
Rev. Nancy G. Self

2017 Recipients

Rev. Dr. John Cobb, Jr.
Stephen F. Harbison
Gaunnie Hardin Dixon
Byron Hayes, Jr.
Becky Haase
Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr.

Rev. Rex Britt

At the age of 15, my best friend invited me to go with him to the MYF at the Lynwood Methodist Church. When summer came, along with the rest of the group, I attended a week of camp at Camp Radford. I met Tom Farley and other clergy from the conference and by the end of the week I had discovered grace and it felt so good, I wanted to share it, so I have.

Jenell Bedwell and I were married at the end of my Junior Year at the University of Redlands. (June 1954). During my senior year, Frank Butterworth, recommended that I do the Course of Study, so that after graduation from the U. of R., I could enter the Conference On Trial and be appointment as the Minister of Youth at White Temple Methodist Church in Anaheim where he was the Pastor. This meant commuting from Anaheim to the USC Graduate School of Religion before freeways. It was a busy year and life did not slow down for Jenell and me for the next 43 years.

The major event of 1957 was the birth of our daughter Debbie. I finally received my Master of Theology in 1960 at the school now called CST and was appointed to a two point charge of Morro Bay and Los Osos. Neither church had a building but we completed the first unit for each church in the next 23 months. Our son Mike was born in 1963.

In 1964 Bishop Kennedy appointed me to Avondale Arizona. I had been very active in district youth ministry in both California and Arizona, and in 1968 became the Conference Coordinator of Youth and Family Ministry. Tom Farley was my boss at 5250 Santa Monica Blvd. In 6 years I led workshops on various topics in almost half of the churches in California and Arizona.

After 6 years on the conference program staff, it was time to return to the local church. There were good times serving Aldersgate UMC in Tustin (9 years) and First UMC in Redlands (8 years). My longtime friend Don Locker (Santa Barbara DS) asked me to take a large church in his district. It turned out to be an unexpected interim appointment of 3 years. However the church leadership changed enough so that the one who followed me stayed more than 10 years, until retirement.

My final appointment before retirement was as Superintendent of the Hawaii District. It was a rich experience with wonderful people. I was a minority person graciously accepted in congregations that worshiped in 6 different languages.

I “entered the retired relationship” in 1998 at the age of 64 and then immediately “failed retirement” with Bishop Sano naming me Assistant to the Bishop in Matters of Clergy Sexual misconduct. I found a team of wonderful, caring persons to work with me. It was both a heart breaking and rewarding experience.

I accepted an appointment as interim pastor of Moreno Valley UMC for a few months. It was almost fun to be close to a congregation again preaching to the same people every Sunday. I thought I had finally retired for good but Bishop Swenson had one more surprise for me. She asked me to be interim San Diego DS for four months. It was in the fall, charge conference time. I have accepted no appointments since that time.

From Hawaii, we moved to Redlands enjoying life among longtime friends. Jenell died in January of 2010. Bonnie and I have now been married for 11 years and are living at Pilgrim Place in Claremont. We have a very active life among very active retirees doing our part for justice, peace and saving the planet. It has been a wonderful life.

Patricia Evans Coots

Our Annual Conference has always been a part of my life. I have attended Conference for most of my 92 years. My Dad, Ted Evans was a traveling evangelist for the Conference. He first met my mother, Gladys when she was pianist at one of his meetings in Huntington Park. My Dad served Douglas, AZ, Mission Hills in San Diego, Bakersfield (before boundaries changed), Eagle Rock United and then as Minister to Retired Ministers. In those days, Annual Conference was held at Long Beach First, and we kids went to the Pike and then to the church balcony to hear appointments because that's when pastors and their families would find out whether we would be moving.

I met my husband, Fred when we were both on the Young Peoples Council after he had returned from WWII, and was attending Occidental College and felt the call to ministry. As a prank on Tom Farley, then Conference Youth Director, we pretended to be engaged but it turned into a real romance. I had graduated from the University of Redlands, we married and I went with him for his last year at Union Seminary in New York City where I would teach in the Seminary Nursery School. His part time work was at a church in Nutley, New Jersey.

When we returned, he was appointed Associate Minister at Alhambra First with Fred Trotter and then Dick Dunlap, both of whom we have enjoyed many years and generations of friendship. Fred was then appointed to Bella Vista in Monterey Park, La Jolla, Church of the Good Shepherd in Arcadia, Santa Ana District Superintendent, Conference Program Director, Riverside First and finally St. Matthews in Hacienda Heights. I always sang in the choir and often began a children's choir. We enjoyed every church we served.

I was interested in how our church worked. For 8 years, I was chair of Archives and History. Going beyond our Conference, I was a delegate to several General and Jurisdictional Conferences and then, a member of the University Senate for 8 years: 4 years with the division of Schools and Colleges and 4 with our Theological Seminaries. Along the way, I became involved with the Claremont School of Theology Auxiliary which led to my being hired by CST as an administrator with responsibilities for alumni and church relations. This was the perfect job for me. I particularly enjoyed helping our students find scholarships and am so happy to see the former students find success in churches they are serving. I also greatly enjoyed writing the history of the school, along with Tom Trotter.

When Fred was a District Superintendent, he was a member of GBOD and became interested in a Catholic program called Cursillo. This led to Fred and I working with others to begin Walk to Emmaus. We also worked with others when we retired to begin a program for retired clergy for which Fred came up with the name CHARMS. In early years, I helped begin an organization now called Clergymates, which met to support the work of those married to pastors.

Through those meetings, I became concerned for the women who were divorced clergy wives, and the financial and emotional impact on them. I used that research for my Master's Thesis, that was then published as an Occasional Paper out of Nashville.

Fred and I are blessed with 4 children: Mindy, John, Jenni and Catie and 6 grandsons: Devin, Koji, Bryce, Trevor, Matt and Cory. Special thanks to our grandson's Dads, Aunt/Mom and Uncles: Glenn, Julia, Vince and Boyd. In these later years, I enjoy thinking of the many churches we have been a part of and particularly enjoyed working with the musicians. Music has always been a part of my heart - from leading singing at church youth gatherings to doing the same at Vespers at Regent Point where I now live.

Rev. Sylvester Gillespie

Rev. Gillespie was called to the ministry and was ordained Deacon in 1963 and Elder in 1965 in the Methodist Episcopal Church – now the United Methodist Church (UMC). Gil, as he is affectionately called, was always considered a forerunner from his days at Rust College, and served as President of his freshmen and junior classes. He was the first African American elected to the United Methodist Jurisdictional Conference of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church (North Carolina Conference) held at Lake Junaluska in 1972. As an extremely popular speaker, teacher and preacher across Eastern and Western Carolina, especially among High School Baccalaureates and Joint Youth Day Gatherings where the sessions were held at the Duke University Divinity Chapel in Durham, North Carolina. Dr. Timothy B. Tyson, Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin writes in his book “Blood Done Signed My Name” that the words of the Reverend Sylvester Gillespie were spoken with the power of eloquence while he mesmerized his audiences.

As documented in Gil's recently published book. “The Lighthouse of Words – My Spiritual Journey from Abandonment to Divine Appointment” he clearly gives credit to his late wife, Barbara, who brought him into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He had a tremendous impact on young people, from babies through young adults. At Grace UMC where he pastored for ten years, the front two rows of the pews were filled each Sunday at the early worship service with junior high and high school students.

His appointments continued even while he served as the United States Army Chaplain where he was in a very different but most rewarding Duty of Service. There were many troops within the military who had immediate needs that required kindness, compassion and a personal element, to enhance their ability to serve. Prior to the 1975 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference, he asked the late Bishop Robert Blackburn to permit him to explore the possibility of entering the United States Army as Chaplain. Reluctantly, Bishop Blackburn granted his request and he was accepted by the United States Army Chaplaincy where he served for eighteen years before retiring from the reserves as Major Gillespie in 1995.

Reverend Sylvester T. Gillespie graduated from Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi earning his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in 1962 and he earned his Masters of Divinity (M. Div.) from Gammon Theological Seminary of the Interdenominational Theological Center located in Atlanta, Georgia in 1965. For more than forty (40) years he ministered, mentored and lectured in churches and United Methodist Colleges and Universities across the Southeastern United States, prior to retiring from Grace United Methodist Church, his last pastoral appointment within the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Rev. Gillespie was blessed to be married to the Love of his Life, Barbara Bonney Gillespie, until her death and to be the father of two (2) wonderful sons, Dekovan T. and Damian.

Jacquelynn Hawthorne

My name is Jacquelynn Yvonne (Coleman) Hawthorne and I also answer to “Jackie.” My parents, Mr. & Mrs. Leon J. Coleman, relocated my four siblings, Patricia, Joy, Ronald, Sharon and me (the oldest) from Houston, Texas to Los Angeles, CA where I attended public schools from 4th grade to graduation, with honors, from Abraham Lincoln High School.

I enjoy my life. I live in my Baldwin Hills home in Los Angeles and because my 3 kids Addison, Valerie and Hilary, think I need not live alone; my daughter, Valerie, lives with me. They’re also considering confiscating the keys to my Cadillac Escalade. I complained to friends who assured me my kids’ actions were love-motivated and not elder abuse. Thank you my darling little Ducklings.

I enjoy my church life. In 1973, I joined Crenshaw United Methodist Church. There I served in almost every lay capacity in my local church, including Adult Sunday School Teacher, Choir Member, Financial Secretary, Trustee Board Member, Administrative Board Chair, Stewardship Task Force organizer & Chair, Lay Member to Annual Conference, and Lay Leader. I was mentored and influenced by a plethora of dedicated and gifted pastors, preachers, and prelates in the UM Church and elsewhere including: Rev. Clayton Hammond, Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry, Rev. Robert Smith, Rev. Hilly Hicks, Rev. Howard Ashford, Rev. Sandy Olewine, Rev. Dr. Derrick Lewis Noble, Rev. Dr. Cedrick Bridgeforth, Rev. Royce Porter, Rev. Mark Nakagawa, Rev. Kathy Wilborn, Bishop Craig Worsham, Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, and Bishop Grant Hagiya. I am also Past President of the United Methodist Ministries L.A. District (UMMLAD), serving along with extraordinary Executive Directors, Gaunnie Dixon and Ana Haydée Urda, and legendary board members Connee & Phil Freeman. Together, we oversaw the development and construction of an affordable housing development project in South LA. Thank you to my local church and LA District.

I enjoy my feminist life belonging to female organizations like the Los Angeles African American Women PAC (LAAAWPAC), the L.A. African American Women’s Public Policy Institute (LAAAWPPI), and the National Women’s Political Caucus/South Bay Caucus. These organizations encourage women to follow our dreams to be the best we can be and have autonomy from the top of our heads to our tippy toes... and everything in between. Women organizations making a difference fighting for the rights of women. Thank you my feminist friends.

I enjoy sitting on special boards, commissions and councils like Mayor Garcetti’s Commission on Community & Family Services, Dr. Gwen Wyatt’s charitable foundation Visions for Voices, Inc., Karen Bass’ Congressional Advisory Council, Mark Ridley-Thomas Empowerment Congress’s Mental Health Committee, Dr. Adel El Sahn & Fareed Fahruki’s charitable foundation Harmony Bites LLC, and City of L.A.’s African American Heritage Month Planning Committee. It’s from seats like these we are able to effect policy.

I enjoy my political life. Through membership in numerous organizations such as New Frontier, Stonewall, East Area Progressive, Heart of LA and Culver City dem clubs, the BevHills/Hollywood NAACP, and local SEIU 721 Retirees, we help keep the drum-majors marching to protect humans rights, animal rights, the environment, and the planet.

How in the world did all this get started? Well, after I spent one year at UCLA as a pre-med major only to drop out and marry USC football star Addison Hawthorne; some years and 3 children later, I learned computer programming started work as an Assistant Programmer at the County. I promoted to manager and then to division chief. From there I was elevated to the status of Data Processing Specialist and given a special assignment as full-time liaison between my department and the County Board of Supervisors. After 28 years of County service, I retired in 1992 with full pension and benefits.

I enjoy learning, listening, laughing, travelling, singing and hugging. I am blessed to be surrounded by loving children, siblings, extended family, besties, colleagues and business associates...many here in person and others live-streaming.

I love the LORD and truly believe my bountifully blessed life requires me to give back. At age 86, I happily continue to serve my Church, my Community, and my God...as required by my favorite scripture, Micah 6:8 "He has told you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Doug and Judy Lewis

From cradle to present, Judy has been immersed in the (United) Methodist church. Started attending regularly at 3 weeks, joined by confirmation at 10, and was active in the District and Conference (U)MYF programs as well as the local church through high school and into Wesley Foundation in College. Some early highlights were being chosen to live in an Intentional Community in Albuquerque summer of 1964 sponsored by the Board of Discipleship. Served on the National Legislative Affairs project in college. Her first Sunday in California after graduating from college, she attended Trinity UMC in Pomona.

During this time on the border of England and Wales, a young lad was taking himself to Sunday School and excelling in sports. His graduating class of 4 did not stop him from getting full scholarship to college, where he pursued his love of mountain climbing (perhaps more than his studies!) After college, he joined Her Majesty's Service as a Royal Engineer, where he was able to lead and participate in climbing expeditions. It was this love of the land that led him to Iceland, where incidentally he met Judy. They were married two years later. Judy's stint as an "army wife" was memorable as we moved to five different duty stations in the ensuing two years. The sixth move was a return (and emigration) to California.

Judy started as an observer at annual conference and went on to be a member of the Annual Conference and on the Media Team for almost 5 decades. Doug was often elected as a member at large from the district and joined the Media team too. Later, while serving as chair of Discipleship for Cal-Pac, Judy was elected to the National Board of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts. With husband Doug, attended and helped facilitate many of the national convocations, starting with "Claremont '89" where the new hymnal was introduced. Judy became a hymnal trainer almost by chance when she was just supposed to plan meals and transportation! Together we worked with Rev. Dr. Phu Ho and the Vietnamese caucus for several years, helping to write proposals in the required formats and formal English and working on the Vietnamese hymnal (thanks to Marji Tuell who was so helpful with us getting copyright permissions!) Doug was honored to serve as the Riverside District Lay Leader and spent many hours visiting district churches with David Tinoco.

For 11 years they had the privilege of serving as co-deans of the Lay Ministry Academy—shepherding an awesome group of committed lay persons in their Christian growth journey. They also received nurturing from the church community with such activities as adult camp with Lloyd Saatjian and Frank Whitman, Walk to Emmaus, many mission trips and culminating with a 10 year stint as Conference UMVIM/Disaster Response coordinators. That led to serving as Children's Disaster Service (shelter workers) and then on to the trauma level of training. The local church has always been at the core of all their church connections, both serving on committees, doing weekly re-cycling, teaching, "fixing" and serving hundreds of homeless dinners, study groups, and ringing handbells.

In 1980, their marriage was enriched when they applied to adopt a child and God in his usual humor and generousness gave them three wonderful children: James, John, and Cyndi—at one time! That has given them 3 more “children” as in-laws, and a total of 8 grandchildren. The church was central to our time together as a family, from reading the Upper Room daily to visiting the Wesley Chapel in England. Much blessed.

It has always been our privilege and delight to serve where needed and be connected.

Lori Meaders

Lori Meaders is a Senior Attorney with Southern California Edison Company where she is responsible for employee benefits matters, particularly healthcare benefits, for SCE, its parent company Edison International, and the Edison subsidiaries. Lori has practiced in the employee benefits field for 40 years. Prior to Edison, she was senior counsel at The Walt Disney Company, and previously practiced benefits law at major California law firms.

Fifteen years ago, she advocated for the establishment of the Native American Alliance, an employee resource group at Edison. Today, the Native American Alliance is a vibrant partner at Edison. NAA promotes awareness of Native American culture and serves as a link to the Native community and SCE through educational opportunities, cultural events, and community outreach. Lori is the longest serving member of the Native American Alliance and remains a very active Advisor to NAA.

Professionally, Lori was formerly President of the Los Angeles chapters of the International Society of Certified Employee Benefit Specialists and of the Western Pension and Benefits Conference, and served as co-chair of the ERISA Committee of the Association of Corporate Counsel for four years.

But her passion is service to the Church. She is thankful to (or perhaps she blames) Rev. Dave Richardson, her pastor many years ago at First Pasadena UMC, who asked her to participate on the Annual Conference's Health Care Committee. This Committee is long gone, but this led to becoming a member of the Conference Board of Pensions (later appropriately renamed Board of Pension and Health Benefits), the Resource Essential Ministries Team, the Senior Staff Relations Committee, and many other opportunities to serve.

In 2015, Lori stepped down from her role as Vice-Chair of the Board of Pensions and Health, and from her role as Chair of the Board of Trustees at First Pasadena UMC, when she was honored with the Annual Conference's election of her as Chancellor. Little did she know what she was walking into!

Lori enjoys the challenges presented in her role as Chancellor, the breadth of issues that the Conference and churches face, and she welcomes the opportunity to further serve.

Ellen Peterson

My early years were spent in rural southwestern Michigan where I attended the Pearl School and the little Pearl Methodist Church. Next came a move to Allegan with a bigger school and bigger church. It was here that I felt my school and church education really began.

In 1956, I enrolled in Albion College which is related to the UMC. My primary reason for choosing that college was that my future husband, David Peterson, was already there. By 2nd semester, we were engaged; I left Albion for the Rural Education Department at Western Michigan University to earn limited certification allowing me to teach in a rural school outside of Albion. We married in 1959, as I was completing my bachelor's degree. We both taught in junior high outside of Kalamazoo. David's education plan took us to Ann Arbor where his experience working in the University of Michigan's gerontology department had led to a PhD in Adult Education and a call to develop a gerontology department for the University of Nebraska's Omaha campus. With two children, I began my master's degree in Omaha. After 6 years, my husband was called to USC to fill the position of Director of the existing School of Gerontology. I finished my master's at CSLA. Through all these moves, our family always found a welcoming UMC. Our children made close church friends leading to our daughter marrying a United Methodist young man. Now their family is all deeply involved in the Shepherd of the Hills UMC in Mission Viejo. Our son and his family live in South Pasadena where his work led to an Emmy in animated programming for children, and his wife is a school psychologist. I continue to be blessed by four grandchildren.

Through these years church membership grew to mean much more than a piece of paper. As a young married woman, I was elected president of the WSCS and went on to serve United Methodist Women in local, district and conference offices in Michigan, Nebraska, and California. It seems there has always been a place for me if I would say yes. I served as lay leader, teacher, and on various boards and committees. With such opportunities came district and conference officer training, the School of Christian Mission and attendance at Assembly.

Some of the most fulfilling opportunities were participating in work teams in rural Kenya and Antofagasta, Chile. Although not specifically church-related, teaching one semester in Taiwan and moving within that country provided insights into a culture that had been completely foreign to my husband and me. We came to know faculty, students and community members. We took home an appreciation for cultural and language differences which would guide us in the years ahead with a sensitivity to persons who didn't look or sound like us. It also set us on a path of extensive traveling to foreign places; I hope to resume that passion soon.

In the 1980's I thought I was settled in my work as a learning specialist directing the USC Student Athlete Tutoring Program when I received a call from Rev. Richard Kendall, my district superintendent. The bishop needed a new secretary; would I consider it? Really? I was not trained for secretarial work. I didn't want to leave the young men and women athletes. They were important to me, and I felt like I was making a difference in their lives. My academic preparation fit me for that responsibility, but my parallel church experience had been preparing me to work for the UMC. After a talk with Bishop Tuell, I said yes. His last question was, "Can you type?" I fudged a little and said yes.

During my tenure with Bishop Tuell, I attended Annual Conferences and General Conferences. I finally earned my honorary PhD when he presented me with the Bishop Kennedy Lay Person of the Year Award in 1994. This time it was my PhD in United Methodism which was more important to me than any academic degree.

I continued as his and Bishop Sano's administrative assistant until my husband's advancing Parkinson's Disease forced me to resign. However, the Board of Ordained Ministry saw an opportunity to hire me as their first part time staff working from my home office. I agreed to that too; it was such a joy to work with this dedicated group as my UMC education continued. I stayed with them until I needed to be fulltime with my husband; David passed away in 2012. Through it all my appreciation for and loyalty to the United Methodist Church continues.

Alma Roberts

Other than memories of having rabbits and guinnie pigs, and being the one selected to pick the tomato worms off the beef steak tomato plants in our Victory garden, my earliest memories involve the Church. We attended Vermont Square Methodist Church in Los Angeles. One of our pastors, Dave McKibbin thought 3rd and 4th graders could have an after-school group at the Church. We called it “Jeep Club” and I was Membership Chairman. We moved from Los Angeles to Whittier when I was 10 so Sunday School, and, shortly, MYF filled my interest and time. In high school I was a part of the Conference Youth Council as Institute (Camps) Chairman. Here Tom Farley and Dick Edgar had a profound effect. At Whittier, Russell Clay, George Mann, and Vince Nubling were my pastors and a major influence in my life, from middle school through college. What a trio!

During College days at Whittier College I was part of the Conference Work Team to Japan with Hugh and Ruby Lormor, the Summer of 1956. As well as meeting with college groups throughout Honshu, we were part of a World Council of Churches work camp outside of Kumamoto on Kyushu, where we built a road between two feuding villages and leveled ground for new construction in the nearby city. The day after my college graduation I was married to Ronnie Roberts. Following his ordination we went to his first appointment in Flagstaff, Arizona. While in Arizona we were blessed to lead several backpack camps in the White Mountains, and work teams into Mexico for the Conference and our local church in Safford. I accompanied Ron to Baltimore, Maryland, representing our Conference at the Christmas Conference at which the uniting of our Methodist Church with the Evangelical United Brethren was the focus.

In 1968, the appointment system brought us back to California. Being an educator made it natural for me to participate with the education of children and youth in the churches we served. During that time, I represented Children’s Ministries for the Santa Barbara District, and for a short time worked in the Conference Office for Children’s Ministries with Gaynl Trotter.

In the 70’s I was asked to be on the national Early Adolescent Youth Task Force with the Board of Discipleship in Nashville. This led to writing curriculum for the Middle School curriculum source Fellowship Times; and, participation in the National Youth Convocation in Norman, Oklahoma. Picasso had his blue period and I had my poetic period, writing prayer poems, several of which were published in editions of *Alive Now*, a contemporary devotional published by Upper Room. and several included in *Images: Women in Transition*, also published by Upper Room.

When I returned to public school education, participation beyond the local church was put on hold. My retirement in 2010 allowed for increased participation once again. As part of the East District Superintendency Committee I chaired nine District Holiday dinners for the District clergy and leaders.

Currently I serve as chair-person for the CHARMS Board (California Hawaii Association for Retired Ministers and Spouses), and I also chair the Kimball Boyd Coburn Ministries' Board.

In my local church they graciously allow me to teach a Sunday morning Bible Study and seasonal book studies. I enjoy singing in the choir (my aging voice has moved from alto to soprano). Having never met a weed that didn't require pulling, I enjoy gardening throughout our expansive church campus.

Why a lifelong active participation in the church? I have no grand answer other than it seems right, it seems what I am called to do. And the blessings from such participation are boundless. Also I have been blessed with wonderful mentors, pastors, and teachers who have guided my faith journey and shaped the person I am.

Rev. Brenda Simonds

The Rev. Brenda Simonds' call to ministry was a process and began at the age of 14 when in High School she began accompanying a Chaplain who held worship services in Skilled Nursing Facilities. She found listening to patients gave her a sense of meaning and purpose. She attended Azusa Pacific University, completing a BA and a MA in Religion. She went on to receive her Master of Divinity degree from the School of Theology at Claremont. Brenda was ordained as an Elder in The United Methodist Church in 1984. She became a Board Certified Chaplain through the College of Chaplains (Association of Professional Chaplains) in 1985.

Brenda started at Methodist Hospital of Southern California in 1980 and was promoted to the Director of the Department of one in 1984. It was her dream and the dream of Howard Clinebell to begin a Clinical Pastoral Educator program at Methodist Hospital. Brenda ran a CPE program at Methodist for several years as a satellite of another program until she was fully certified as a Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor in 1993. The following year the program was fully accredited on its own merit.

In 1994, Azusa Pacific University's Council for Women in Leadership presented Brenda with the first Suzanna Wesley award that was established to acknowledge the work of exceptional women who exemplify leadership skills in professional ministry and pursue intellectual exploration. The United Methodist Association for Health and Welfare Ministries presented the 1996 Chaplain of the Year Award to Brenda. She is the first female Chaplain to receive this award.

The program at Methodist thrived and has had the privilege of training hundreds of pastors in the art of spiritual care and pastoral identity. Chaplains trained at Methodist have gone on to be military chaplains and chaplains in numerous diverse settings. In the last 25 years the program at Methodist helped several hospitals start Chaplaincy programs when they had never had a chaplain before. The Methodist program has also trained Educators and helped many other CPE centers get started in the Southern California area.

Brenda is active in the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE) and has served in leadership roles both regionally and nationally. Brenda has served on the Board of Ordained Ministry for the California-Pacific Conference and the East District Board of Ordained Ministry. Since 2007, Brenda has been an adjunct professor teaching Bioethics and Spiritual Care for the Graduate School of Nursing at Azusa Pacific University.

At Methodist Hospital Brenda has been the Administrative Representative on the Bioethics Committee since its inception in 1984. Methodist Hospital has responded to changing ethnic and religion demographics in its service area over the past 40 years. She has participated in assessing the spiritual and cultural needs of patients as well as the interpretation of ethical decisions in a variety of cultures and faith traditions. This has led to policy changes, adapting of service practices, and education opportunities.

Brenda has found deep satisfaction and joy in serving in this ministry. She found a spiritual home in the United Methodist Church where she has been allowed and encouraged to stretch and grow her spiritual awareness, growth, and application as a person and as a minister. She is grateful for the vision of the United Methodist Women who founded the Methodist Hospital of Southern California and gave it a mission where spirituality was and is seen as a crucial part of healing.

