



**WE PRESS ON**

2022 North Central Jurisdictional Conference  
of The United Methodist Church



**Episcopal Nominee Information  
2022 North Central Jurisdictional Conference  
for  
Reverend Cara E. Stultz Costello**



**Name:** Cara E. Stultz Costello (she/her/hers)

**Conference:** East Ohio

**Street/PO Box Address:** 816 Hillcrest Ave. NW

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**Current Appointment:** East Ohio Conference Superintendent, Tuscarawas District

**Family:** I am happily married to the Rev. Steve Stultz Costello. We are privileged to co-parent two children – Arthur Elijah “Eli” (20) and Atticus William “Atty” (17).

**Background and Experience:**

**Formal Education (please also include significant Continuing Education):**

- Bachelor of Arts - Albion College (1991 to 1995)

- Double Major, Sociology and Music/Vocal Performance
- Master of Divinity -Wesley Theological Seminary (1997 to 2000)
- Clinical Pastoral Education (5 units of CPE - Levels I/II)
  - Georgetown University Hospital, Washington, D.C. - 4-unit residency (2000 to 2001)
    - Spiritual Care with patients residing on the General Medical and the Pediatrics Units
      - Didactic Seminars:
        - Action/Reflection Model of Education
        - Family Systems and Internal Family Systems
        - Genogram
        - Spiritual Assessment
        - Trauma and Abuse
        - Grief, Loss and End of Life Care
        - Religion and Bioethics
        - Interfaith Spiritual Care
        - Interdisciplinary Healthcare
  - St. Elizabeths Psychiatric Hospital, Washington, D.C. -1-unit summer intensive (1998)
    - Spiritual Care with geriatric patients and persons with a dual diagnosis
      - Didactic Seminars :
        - Orientation to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)
        - Religious Ideation
        - Crisis Intervention
        - Substance Abuse
        - Self Harm
        - PTSD
        - Alternative Therapies
- Certifications:
  - Disciple Bible Study Facilitator (1998)
  - Christian Believer Facilitator(2000)
  - Stephen Ministry Leader (2010)
- Participation in Seminars:
  - Sexual Ethics and Boundaries Trainings (Quadrennially)
    - “Understanding Clergy Sexual Ethics” – The Lewis Center
    - “Maintaining Boundaries in a Digital Age” – The Lewis Center
    - “Keeping Our Sacred Trust”
  - “Theoretical and Psycho-Spiritual Factors in Palliative Care” (1999) by Hank Dunn, Hospice of Northern Virginia
  - “Foundations of Systems Theory” – The Bowen Center (2000)
  - “Conflict Transformation” – Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (2001)
  - Foundations of Appreciative Inquiry (2003)
  - “Theological Worlds” – Dr. Lisa Withrow (2009)
  - “Critical Response Process: Shaping Constructive Feedback” with Liz Lerman (2008)
  - “The Importance of Privacy” FERPA Training (2017)
  - “Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Assault” Title IX Training (2017)
  - “Clergy Resiliency” from the Wellbeing at Work Project of Notre Dame University by Matt Bloom (2019)
  - “Effective Ministry 360” with Richard DeShon from Michigan State University (2019)
  - “Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Development” with Vic Maloy, Ministerial Assessment Specialist, Virginia Annual Conference (2019)

- “Pastoral Supervision” with Jane Leach, of the Methodist Church of Great Britain (2019)
- “God’s Mixed Ecology: The Changing Spiritual Landscape” with Lisa Greenwood, Texas Methodist Foundation (2020)
- Intercultural Competency Assessment and Interpretation/Coaching with Kristina Gonzalez, Pacific Northwest Conference (2020)
- Understanding Implicit Bias (2021) by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center
- Simplified, Accountable Structure (SAS) with Kay Kotan (2022)
- “The Way of Integrity: Living in Right Relationship with Self, Others and God” by GCOSROW (2022)
- “Do No More Harm: Responding to Clergy Sexual Misconduct” with Beckey Posey Williams GCOSROW (2022)
- “Sex and Sexuality” by PFLAG (2022)
- “Thriving Congregations: Ministry Employing the Tools of Community Organizing in East Ohio” – a research project with Dr. Angela Cowser of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary (2022)

### **Ordination Dates and Conference of Which You Are a Member:**

- Commissioned Provisional Member (Elder) in East Ohio - June 2001
- Ordained Full Member (Elder) in East Ohio - June 2004

### **Previous Work Experiences and Pastoral Appointments:**

- Appointments:
  - Conference Superintendent, Tuscarawas District (2020 to present)
    - Executive Team Member – Secretary (2021 to present)
  - Co-Lead Pastor, North Canton Faith United Methodist Church (2009 to 2020)
  - Lead Pastor, Spencer United Methodist Church (2001 to 2009)
- Previous Work Experiences:
  - Chaplain Resident, Georgetown University Hospital (2000 to 2001)
  - Chaplain, Hospice of Northern Virginia (1998 to 2001)
  - Chaplain Intern, St. Elizabeth’s Hospital (1998)
  - Gallery Assistant, *Dadian Gallery*, Wesley Theological Seminary (1997 to 2000)
  - US-2 Missionary, *The Life Enrichment Center: A Day Center for Adults with Mental and Physical Challenges*, McKenzie, Alabama (1995 to 1997)
  - Youth Director, Greenville UMC, Greenville, Alabama (1995 to 1997)
  - Counselor, East Ohio United Methodist Camps, Camp Wanake (1994)
    - SPC (Special Persons Camp) Counselor
  - Teacher Intern, *STEP: Educational and Living Support for Children with Profound Emotional Challenges*, Chicago, Illinois (1993 to 1994)
  - Facility Manager/Resident Assistant and Student Orientation Coordinator, Albion College (1992 to 1995)
  - Counselor, *Camp Merry Heart: an Easter Seals Camp*, Hackettstown, New Jersey (1992)

### **Connectional and Ecumenical Church Experiences:**

- Current:
  - Methodist Theological School of Ohio – Adjunct Professor (2017 to present)
    - MDiv and MTS Programs – “United Methodist Polity”
    - Licensed Local Pastors Course of Study - “Administration and UM Polity”
  - United Methodist Higher Education Foundation – Board Member (2022 to present)
- Previous:
  - General/Jurisdictional Delegate – Alternate (2016 and 2019)/1st Alternate (2020 to current)
    - Spiritual Direction Team (2016 and 2019)

- Board of Ministry – Member (2014 to 2016)/Chairperson (2016-2020), Board of Ministry, EOCUMC
  - Design Team, “Flourish” Eight Year Assessment
  - Design Team, BOM Administrative Coordinator, EOC Staff Position
  - Design Team, Digital Transition of Ministerial Records
  - Design Team, “I am the vine...” Culture of Call and Connection
  - Member, Bishop’s Taskforce on Equitable Compensation
  - Member, Bishop’s Taskforce on Health and Wellness
  - Preacher/Facilitator, Candidacy Summit
  - Guest Lecturer, “Board of Ministry,” United Methodist Polity, MTSO January Term, 2017/18
  - Retreat Designer/Facilitator, “Culture of Call,” The Association of Christians Engaged in Faith Formation
- United Methodist Licensing School Instructor, “Worship and Liturgy” and “The Critical Response Process” Facilitator and Instructor (2010 to 2015)
- Annual Conference Worship Committee – Member (2006 to 2008)/Chairperson (2008 to 2012)
- District Committee on Ministry, Firelands District – Member (2004 to 2005)/Chairperson (2005 to 2009)
- East Ohio Conference Pastoral Care and Counseling Commission – Member (2002 to 2008)
- Compass Group – Facilitator (2002 to 2009)
- Candidacy Mentor (2002 to 2014)
- FUMWA (Fellowship of United Methodist Worship and the Arts) - Instructor, 2005 and 2007
- WomenVision, Visioning Team Member and Facilitator (1996 to 2003)
- Ministerial Associations:
  - Greater Spencer Ministerial Association (2001 to 2009)
    - Founding Member, *Matthew 25: An Ecumenical Community ‘Helps’ Organization*
  - Greater North Canton Ministerial Association (2009 to 2020)
    - Founder of *An Interfaith Inclusion Initiative*
    - Founding Member, *Welcoming the Stranger: An Interfaith Initiative With Persons Who are Im/migrating, Seeking Asylum, or Refuge*
    - Founding Member, *The Common Table: A Place Where Cultural Curiosity and Hunger are Honored and Fed*

### **Community Service Activity:**

- Current:
  - *Canton For All People*, Board Member (2020 to present)
  - North Canton City Schools
    - 2016-current Children and Youth Emotional Health Coalition (2016 to present)
- Previous:
  - Black River School District
    - ‘Equity and the Ohio Educational Levy’ Conversation Facilitator (2005)
  - Family First Council, Medina County, Ohio - Family Advisory Committee Member (2005 to 2009)
    - Designer of *The Veteran and Family Initiative*
  - Women’s Impact Stark County - Presenter, “Find Your Voice, Raise Your Voice” (2018)

### **Publications, Awards, Honors:**

East Ohio Conference Endorsement of Candidacy for the Episcopacy (2022)

The First Parish Project – Member of Inaugural Class, Hinton Rural Life Center, North Carolina (2002 to 2004)

Young Clergy Initiative/Network – Member of Inaugural Class, Lily Endowment and the Fund for Theological Education (2005 to 2007) facilitated by Revs. Adam Hamilton and Mike Slaughter

### **Special Interests and/or Hobbies:**

I find particular joy in gathering people around a meal, singing at the top of my lungs, and dancing in the kitchen while preparing the aforementioned meal. I delight in deep and wandering conversations just as much as sitting in an Adirondack chair by the lake or walking in the crunchy autumn leaves where time takes on a *Kairos* quality. During a particularly difficult season I handed my grief to God and God handed back to me paints and brushes—and I love the challenge of looking for God's beauty and leaning into the call to co-create with God on canvas.

### **Faith and Leadership**

I offer an observation of the world as it is. The interest of the individual is paramount; loneliness is a parasite stripping living things of real vitality and hunger for connection leaves us with parched emptiness. Each of these circumstances (and more) facilitate the evils of violence, poverty, exclusion, and bodily hunger. It wasn't meant to be like this. God created all things for good purpose. When things had gone awry, God addressed the deathly nature of the world,

*"Don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I am about to do something brand-new." (Isaiah 43)*

Jesus, the New Covenant was born like we are born, lived as we live, and looked all of our brokenness straight in the eye, saying "Fear, greed, misused power, suspicion, betrayal, chaos, hatred, bondage...death, in my name you are overcome by hope, generosity, empowerment, trust, community, peace, love, grace ...abundant and eternal life." Still, the powers that be snatch at our aliveness. There are troubles and conflicts and fightings and fears. Even among the community of Christ decline contributes to exhaustion and malaise. The perception of misconduct deepens the fissures in an already fractured system, and real oppression of persons for their cultural, racial, ethnic, economic, familial, sexual, gender, ability, and age distinctiveness call into question the authenticity of the byline, "Open hearts, open minds, open doors."

Now is the new Day of Pentecost.

*Come, Holy Spirit! The ancient prophetic word slays our conscience. We lift the broken pieces of covenant, commands and community to you for healing. We implore you, "What will God do to us, in us, through us?" The creative Word has become flesh, the kin-dom of God has broken in on us. Will the inward and spiritual grace take a world-transforming outward expression in and through us? Consume us, refine us, make us beacons of the light of Jesus. Fan our flickering embers to a roaring flame. Enliven us to respond.*

We United Methodists invest in the Hope of the World in order that hope will come to fullness. Therefore, we decline to accept the world as it is. As we respond to the Spirit's prompting, the world will be as God intends it to be. May it be so.

### **Describe Your Understanding of the Nature and Mission of the Church:**

God created us in their own image—the image of a Divine Community, the Trinity. We are made for life in covenant community. The nature of the Church brings us home to our created identity, which is not a home for some, but for all. We are called to throw wide the door extending a generous welcome in Jesus' name. To answer this call the disparate community listens to the Holy Spirit for guidance and then responds, becoming united in function and form.

At this gift of community, covenant, and calling our hearts become inflamed with visions and dreams which are infused with the ethos and values of God's kin-dom. We are awed by this divine gift given to our frail frames, and awe moves us to worship. By the sacred Word we are shaped, by the baptismal waters we are affirmed, and by the broken bread and poured out wine we are commissioned for service. Our hands become servants of Jesus' redemption. We join Him in extending to all the invitation to fellowship with Him, to be disciplined in His sacrificial way of living, and to employ what we learn in His presence for the sake of the healing of all creation.

The mission of the Church is to glorify God by facilitating the kin-dom of God on earth as it is in heaven; investing Jesus' gifts of grace in gritty ways right where we are. When we do, public life begins to pivot toward equity,

*...justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24),*

people are restored to physical and relational wholeness by the resurrecting power of love, and each of us has what we need for abundant life. Then, the world will become increasingly as God intends.

### **Share Your Vision for The United Methodist Church:**

We are the body of Christ, the *ekklesia*, the 'called-out assembly.' We are the people of The United Methodist movement, the people of the Spirit-warmed heart claim with our unwitting founder, John Wesley, who stated,

*there is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness.*

It is important to recognize the chasm between who we are called to be and how we are living into that call. We have reason to be ashamed of squandering the gifts of God and culpable for not loving our neighbors or hearing the cry of the needy. Confession is called for so that we may receive forgiveness to be set free for joyful obedience once again, empowering us to glimpse a future story.

The future story of the United Methodist movement is not a fact. It is a decision. To claim our participation in the story of God's redemption for our time and place we will do well to release ourselves to the custody of the Spirit. The Spirit will undoubtedly invite us to review our belief and action in both constructive and critical ways. The Spirit will speak the story of our future through those with hearts turned to prayer. With minds attuned to the wisdom of Scripture. With tradition, reason, and experience. With voices employed in holy dialogue. And with hands at the ready to do the work of love.

The Divine imagination is redemptive. With God, the United Methodist covenant community can move into the future guided by the following values:

**Unity and integrity.** Jesus' love transcends heaven and earth, life and death, and every other polarity. The community of United Methodists may not have uniformity of belief and practice but serving under the banner of Christ Jesus grants us unity with integrity.

**Connectionalism and vitality.** Integrity is the strength of our connectional nature. It holds together seemingly paradoxical gifts in our theology and praxis for the sake of the fullness of the revelation of God's created intentions: ancient and new, direct service (Matthew 25) and organizing power (Leviticus 19), inner work (discipleship) and its outer expression (membership), renewal and revival, comfort and challenge, spirit and form, tradition and adaptation, institution and movement, accountability and freedom. Christ stands at the intersection of all these things.

**Creativity and sustainability.** When we sharpen our senses and increase our capacity for openness to consider a matter we may not have before; when we

*Lift [our] eyes to the hills (Psalm 121:1) and see glimpses of truth that God has for us (Open my Eyes, hymn)*

a way is provided. Thoughtful and creative use of patterns, pathways, procedures, and polity will help us to lift as we climb.

Specifically, I envision the United Methodist Church:

- Sharing the good news of God's redeeming love with all the people of God.
- Offering mercy to those captured by chaos—*the least of these*. (Matthew 25: 31-46)
- Doing justice with those under the oppression of system-wide trauma from racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and colonialism.
- Nurturing seekers and believers from discipleship to apostleship.
- Making room for ALL of God's beloved to discern their own spiritual gifts and calls to ministry.

Our hopes for the United Methodist Church are not for the sake of the Church but for the sake of the world. We will, by grace, make our way to the alley and the prairie, the far shores and rowdy bars, the dark corners and church altars. This future will take shape messily and in imperfect measure. But Christ does not wait until we do things right to call us to take action. We are called to go in His name to offer the stuff of heaven to transform the world even when we are yet sinners. In doing so, we each will also be transformed. May it be so.

### **Describe Your Concept and Style of Leadership:**

I trust God to order my steps and the steps of the Beloved Community. Even as we tread unknown and uneven ground, Jesus leads us into places of life-giving encounter. We travel with Jesus as sojourners together. I am grateful for those who have walked in front of me. I am humbled to be called to tread a path for those who come behind me. And I eagerly await each new step that we, as disciples, have yet to take.

As a leader of the community of God I delight in facilitating how the community organizes itself for ministry. My call involves nurturing a network of leadership. This organic community grows up around an assumption of, and value for, a diversity of gifts offered for the common purpose of sharing the life-transforming love of Jesus. Jesus freely moves from the center to the margins of this network calling and empowering all within it. Here, authority, power and resources are shared. Our actions express our priorities as we focus on the core means of ministry: presence and conversation.

As a leader I feel energized by fostering environments where people's lived experiences, perspectives, and values are dignified. And where hospitality, grace, and truth provide room to articulate and live out our convictions with humility. In an environment such as this we are set free to engage in courageous conversation to evaluate our assumptions. We hear diverse experiences and reflect upon our 'normative' perspectives with a critical eye. We invite the Holy Spirit to broaden our life-limiting practices integrate different perspectives into our own body of understanding.

It was Jesus who practiced this model of leadership perfectly. Yet we are imperfect. Thus, we can rightly ask if our own leadership practices are workable in this wilderness of the United Methodist Church. We honor the spirit of this challenge by remembering that the commissioning of the disciples by Jesus came amid doubt.

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted... (Matthew 28:16-17)*

Jesus showed us how to lead with an ability to navigate contradiction—to remain in the tension between two seeming opposites long enough that the way of God is revealed. For instance, can the United Methodist Church

in this in-between season celebrate what was, invest in what is, and be open to what will be? We long for a way forward in the face of ongoing analysis, variable results, and shifting conditions.

*...And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age." (Matthew 28: 18-20)*

I will, by grace, help lead the Church with this God-sized vision and be a prayerful and trustworthy presence.

### **Describe Your Gifts and Graces:**

*I praise you, God, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know them full well.  
(Psalm 139:14)*

The gifts of God are being revealed in and through me. I delight to use what God has given me for the sake of love, transforming the world in light of God's kin-dom. My strength is in the service of others.

**I have been given the gift of presence.** Because I have a willing and open spirit and relate with vulnerability and courageous compassion, I am told that I invite trust and confidence. I facilitate deep listening to God and to one another, making space for all to speak and for all to hear. In this environment, a course toward equity is progressed with empathy, inspiration, and moxie.

**I have been given the gift of discernment.** Revelation of wisdom for the common good is informed by conversation with the God whom I love and who loves me. I carry the intimacy and clarity of conversation with God into how I converse with others—I ask probing questions and nurture dialogue. Into the hearts of those who are listening God grants vision and a pathway. I have been privileged to serve in places of authority because I cultivate a process of perceiving and navigating a way forward together.

**I have been given the gift of creativity.** This gift is intimately encountered at the intersection of chaos and order. Chaos provides the raw materials for when God is *about to do something brand-new.*" (Isaiah 43). We could rightly be afraid in the face of all the commotion and disarray of chaos. But taking the risk to tend our theological imagination and wonder can summon the tumult to become ordered toward life-giving purpose. I trust the Creator to suspend my preconceptions in this space between what is and what will be. Inviting others into this process of renewal and new birth in the name of Jesus is a joy.

My highest value is to live a life with integrity. The gifts I have been given I hold gently to share them in service to God. I engage worship leadership, preaching, the celebration of the sacraments, mission strategizing, evangelism, and administration as a catalyst for solution-minded and resource-driven redemption in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **Describe How You Have Experienced the Call to the Episcopacy and How God Has Prepared You for the Episcopacy:**

I long for the new thing that God is bringing about in the world and the Church. God is calling me to lead the people of God into a future with hope.

The Holy Spirit has been preparing me to serve as a servant leader in the United Methodist Church for just such a time as this. First as a layperson and then as a camp counselor, a missionary, a local church pastor, and now as a District Superintendent. God has called me to offer myself to the church as a General Superintendent, a Bishop. I wish that the level of angst and wrangling with which we are now contending was unparalleled. Sadly,



it is well rehearsed. In these times God steps right into the midst of the bad trouble and the good trouble. God has always lifted and equipped leaders to inspire guard and, guide the wandering pilgrims. God has been preparing me to move toward the brokenness of the people of God and the community of God.

I hear God calling me to lead as a Bishop in the United Methodist Church. Family, friends, colleagues, parishioners, and ministry partners have called out the evidence of my gifting for service in this manner. I now invite the full body of Christ into the discernment.

**Episcopal Election Covenant** has been signed and received by NCJ Secretary, Rev. Paul R. White.

**Episcopal Candidate Forum:**

The Rev. Stultz Cosetllo will be participating in the North Central Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy (NCJCOE) video forum. This forum will consist of a fifteen-minute interview with each episcopal candidate who elects to participate. All interviews will be posted on to the North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) website on or around September 1, 2022.