

**Questions for an Episcopal Nominee from the Southeastern
Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy
Robin Scott-North Alabama Conference Nominee**

1. How do you reflect a life and ministry rooted in Wesleyan theology, spirituality and practice?

My goal in life is to be guided by my belief in grace. I have received grace and I try to give grace to others. I know that Prevenient Grace was part of my life before I ever knew God so I try to see people not only for what they are, but also for what they can be in Christ Jesus. Therefore, I consider all persons people that are being touched by grace and loved by God.

I know that Justifying Grace brought forgiveness into my life even though I was guilty of trespassing against God and neighbor. Therefore I try to forgive others as I have been forgiven. I endeavor to be as patient with others as God has been with me.

I also know that God through Sanctifying Grace can give me power through the Holy Spirit to actually live a life worthy of the high calling of Christ Jesus. All believers are on a journey to be more Christ-like. This requires forgiveness of self and others. It also requires patience as God continues to work on each of us through love, grace, and truth.

I practice several spiritual disciplines in my daily walk with Christ. I journal every day and have done so for over ten years now. I have found that journaling encourages me as I read each day what I wrote on that date in years past and understand afresh the faithfulness of God and the love of those traveling this journey with me.

I read and reflect upon scripture. As I do, I receive instruction and inspiration from God's Word that impacts my life. God's Word is indeed alive and relevant to my present journey. I write and post a meditation on Facebook each day. This has been a good discipline for me and many have said it has blessed them. I pray each day and I also find "seasons" of prayer time during the year. I try to set aside several days to pray and seek direction. These times apart have proven to be invaluable.

I have been part of the same accountability group for over thirty years. We meet monthly. Even though it is difficult to get six minister's schedules to coincide, each of us guard this date on our calendars understanding that we need others to help us in our walk with Christ. The Christian life is lived in community. While I must take care of myself physically, mentally, relationally, and spiritually, I accomplish that to some degree by living faithfully in community.

2. Describe your record of pastoral fruitfulness in the local church. (For example, increase in worship attendance, professions of faith, small groups, missional engagement, social justice, etc.)

I started as a twenty year old Student Local Pastor. While attending Junior College I served a two-point charge that grew from a total attendance of sixty to averaging over ninety when I left three years later. I served a six-year appointment as I finished college and completed my Masters of Divinity degree at Candler. This church grew from around thirty in average worship attendance to over sixty. I then served a church on Sand Mountain for three years that grew from 82 to 128. I then moved to Palmerdale UMC where we stayed twelve years. During this time I earned a Doctor of Ministry degree at Asbury Theological Seminary. The attendance grew at Palmerdale from an average of around 120 to over 400. In fact we averaged 448 the first five months of my last year before I was moved to Guntersville UMC where we stayed six years. The average worship attendance grew from 450 to over 800 at Guntersville. It was here that we planted our first satellite campus. This campus was developed to reach persons who were facing economic challenges in their lives. We renovated an empty grocery store in the midst of the poorest neighborhood to accomplish this goal. It was a great blessing as we learned to do ministry with the poor, instead of just doing ministry for the poor. This campus grew to an average attendance of close to three hundred people. I was then moved to Clearbranch to follow the founding pastor of this new church start. This church had averaged near two thousand at its peek but was averaging a little over 1400 for the first five months of the year that I was assigned. I stayed 43 months before being placed on the Cabinet in the middle of a Conference year. We averaged over 1700 our last full year. During these years we started another satellite campus that today is a chartered church. They average near 800 in worship today. We also were asked to "mother" a new church start into existence by

sending 80 seed people to help start the effort. We also supplied office space, resources and funds. Today this is the fastest growing congregation in North Alabama. The senior pastor also happens to be my son Matt. In the last three appointments I have had a high percentage of Lay involvement. When I had the statistical work done during my dissertation while serving at Palmerdale we had over 80 percent of the congregation involved in weekly ministry. I strongly believe in the priesthood of all believers and I preach that every baptized believer is a minister of Jesus Christ. Because of this I have seen numerous people hear and answer the call to ministry both within and beyond the local church in my last three appointments. Many of these persons are serving appointments here in North Alabama today. We led our district each year in the number of professions of faith. Many of the other persons who joined would be considered “de-churched” in that they had not been involved in church in years even though they had been baptized.

I have always met with small groups, usually early in the mornings on weekdays. It was common for me to meet with groups three or four mornings a week in an effort to expand the leadership core of the church. I believe a church cannot grow beyond the size of its leadership core therefore I tried to spend up to fifty percent of my time in leadership development.

3. How have you demonstrated the spiritual gift of leadership? (For example, give examples of ministry context where spiritual leaders were discovered, developed, and deployed for a Kingdom task)

At Palmerdale most of our staff was raised up from within the congregation. Cam Price who became a paid staff member is a senior pastor here in North Alabama today. Scott Thackerson who was our youth director also is senior pastor of a church here in North Alabama. The same was true at Guntersville. Chris Herbert, Vicki Mann, Deborah Moon, Chris Martin, Gary Liederbach, and Andrew Gregg are all UM pastors. All of these were mentored in our small group ministry. Many others became paid staff members in all of these churches. Our staff was accountable to have a list of the “next person up” in their work areas at all times.

4. How have you demonstrated a willingness to be held accountable for results and an ability to hold others accountable, with grace, for their results (staff or volunteers)?

Accountability was always part of who we were as a church staff. We had goals and we measured those goals with regularity. I confess I am a numbers person but only because each number represents a potential follower of Jesus. We put systems in place to help us keep up with a person's spiritual journey. How often did they attend worship, were they involved in some type of Christian education, were they involved in a weekly ministry of the church or in the community, what new thing was God doing in their life? These were some of the questions we asked. The head of each department understood that delegation and leadership development were their primary responsibilities.

5. Describe your track record of doing the "right thing" in difficult situations.

I believe consistency is absolutely the key in leadership. One cannot make decisions based on mood or personalities. I think one of the best compliments I have ever had was a situation handled by my staff while I was away. In describing what happened they said they did not need to disturb my vacation because they all knew what I would do and how I would deal with the situation. Being directed by principles and vision helps one avoid bad decisions.

6. What has been your exposure to the Annual, Jurisdictional and General Conference? (For example, cabinet experience, service on a committee, board or agency, etc)

I am presently a District Superintendent in my fifth year. I served on the BOOM for twelve years, many of those as Local Pastor Chair. I was elected as an alternate to Jurisdictional Conference in 2004. I was elected as a delegate to Jurisdictional Conference in 2008. I was elected as a delegate to General Conference in 2012. I will be leading the delegation on the clergy side in 2016. I am also presently over our Church Health Team. I served on our conference New Church Team for years. I have been DCOM Chair and on various task forces.

- 7. Based upon your experience, how do you relate to the global United Methodist Church communion? (For example, boards and agencies, publishing, short-term mission teams, UMVIM, UMCOR, etc.)**

I have worked with many of these agencies during my ministry especially during my time as District Superintendent. I worked closely with UMCOR during the tornado outbreak of 2011. I have worked with General Board of Discipleship as I have participated in revitalizing a camp in our conference. I have benefited from others attending SCD for the last four years.

- 8. What is your response to these “hot topics” in the United Methodist Church? Please limit your responses to two paragraphs for each topic.**

a. Human sexuality

I truly believe we have grace-filled theology and a theology that has integrity at this present time. We believe that all persons are persons of sacred worth regardless of what we struggle with, but we also affirm that certain sexual expressions are incompatible with the teaching of scripture regardless if those involve heterosexual activity outside the covenant of marriage or homosexuality. Difference of opinion will not lead to a split or irreconcilable differences, but failure to keep covenant does damage relationships which are built on our common trust through shared covenant.

b. Local church closures and establishing new faith communities

I served on our New Church team for years. As I have already stated I have been part of three new church/satellite efforts. I have only closed one church in four plus years as a DS. We have seen one church go from just three members to averaging over twenty today. My first effort is to help every church be all they have been called to be. That could mean a merger or closing to make the way for something new. I am convinced that one of the ways to grow is by starting new communities of faith in the various forms that may take.

c. Next generations leaders

To reach the next generation of women and men in order that they may be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ and to “raise up” a new generation of spiritual leaders is our greatest call and challenge here in America. There is a great need to mobilize and equip the laity for service. I will do this by proclaiming the truth of our roots as Wesleyan Christians. We tend to get what we ask for and what we emphasize. We are an aging church, and the present generation doesn’t desire to simply support the clergy and paid staff, they desire to be involved in hands-on ministry. I would make it a priority to increase lay involvement in disciple making.

d. Impending death tsunami (Dr. Lovett Weems)

We are without question an aged denomination. We must make reaching those in the millennial generation a top priority. This will mean the acceptance of new worship styles and new worship venues. It also means emphasis upon new church starts and new worship services within existing congregations.

e. Guaranteed appointment for clergy

While I believe effectiveness should be the goal of every Annual Conference, I am unsure if doing away with the guaranteed appointment is the way to achieve this goal. The guaranteed appointment does provide protection against personality conflicts, etc. but it also makes it difficult to transition someone out of ministry if ineffectiveness is a pattern.

f. Term episcopacy

I have two thoughts. First of all, I believe those elected to the Episcopacy should return to being an elder after their service is complete. In other words retired Bishops simply become former Bishops just like District Superintendents and others. Secondly I think after eight years of service a Bishop should have to be re-elected to continue to serve unless they stay in the Annual Conference where they are serving, which would require the AC to request a third term.

g. The World-Wide Nature of the Church: Global Book of Discipline/ Global Structure

I am not in favor of having different Disciplines for churches in different parts of the world. I believe in a connectional global church. I think it adds richness to the whole by bringing global diversity. We can learn from our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. God appears to be moving in powerful ways in a variety of places across the globe, and growth is taking place as new believers are baptized and become members. We should be willing to learn from them as we also share with them. The goal is to reach persons of every tribe, nation, and tongue with the grace of God through Christ Jesus.