

Press Release

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**New York Annual Conference Resident Bishop
Thomas J. Bickerton Appoints Rev. Heather A.M.
Sinclair as Incoming Connecticut District
Superintendent**

New York, March 3, 2025: New York Annual Conference **Resident Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton** is pleased to announce the appointment of the **Rev. Heather A.M. Sinclair** as Connecticut District Superintendent, effective July 1, 2025.

“Heather’s deep commitment to her calling and to the church is undeniable,” Bishop Bickerton said, adding, “she brings a depth of experience and enthusiasm to this work. It will be a great joy to not only welcome her to our Cabinet table but to also watch her live into the various aspects of this new work.”

Rev. Sinclair has served at Westport and Weston UMC since 2018. Her previous appointments were at Trumbull: Nichols UMC (2003-2006); Shelton First UMC (2006-2013), and Greenwich First UMC (2013-2018). She has served as the chair of the Connecticut District Committee on Ministry from 2010-2013; served on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry from 2014-2024; co-chaired the Annual Conference Worship Team from 2014-2021; and has been Parish Coordinator of the Southern Fairfield and Fairchester Cooperative Parishes.



For Rev. Sinclair, the appointment, like several other aspects of her journey, was not what she envisioned for her future. When the Bishop's call came, Rev. Sinclair was en route to a vacation in Florida with her husband Edward (who goes by Skip) and their daughters, Grace, 16, and Sophia, 14. Fortunately, going on vacation allowed for a time of deep

discernment.

She recounts how prayer, conversations with her husband, and one of her favorite scriptures (Jeremiah 29:11: *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope*) were a part of her decision making. Rev. Sinclair had an additional phone conversation with Bishop Bickerton when she returned home and accepted the appointment. “It just felt right,” she recalls.

Living Into God’s Plans

Rev. Sinclair’s story begins outside of Boston, where she attended the UMC of Westford as a child. Her parents (Jo Anne and the late Craig McClendon) were “quiet leaders” in the church, and Heather was a leader in the youth group. At no time in those early years did Heather feel a call to enter the ministry, but God was always an integral part of her life, although she dreamed of becoming a marine biologist.

In the early days of her undergraduate degree at Colgate University, Rev. Sinclair remembers how her roommates suggested attending worship at the church on campus. They participated in the service as a group—but Heather was the only one that kept going back. “It was a great community, and I wanted to be there,” she recalls. In her first year as an undergraduate, the plan was to continue working toward a career in science. Until, in sophomore year, an organic chemistry class prompted a change of heart. “God was giving me a little nudge—like, wrong direction,” Rev. Sinclair laughs.

At the same time, Rev. Sinclair was getting more entrenched in campus ministry and taking world religion classes where she could explore spirituality and religions outside of her Methodist context. The chaplain (also her mentor) saw a call for this work, and slowly, the path leading to a life serving God began to unfold. “It was just kind of a step-by-step thing that made sense and felt right,” Rev. Sinclair said. “I met my husband at Colgate too. Between a call to ministry and a husband, it worked out well.”

Rev. Sinclair graduated from Colgate in 1997 with a Bachelor of Arts in Religion and spent a year with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps where she helped with the Hartford area food bank and soup kitchen. This experience opened her eyes to the hunger in Hartford and beyond. As she worked connecting churches and schools and doing food drives, she saw ways the community could support mission and ministry.

She also served as Youth Minister in Avon Memorial UMC from 1998-2002, the church that she fondly says helped solidify her call in the United Methodist Church and voted on her candidacy.

Rev. Sinclair opted to attend Yale Divinity School because the ecumenical environment allowed her, once again, to learn about various denominations and the way that other people practice their faith. She earned her MDiv in 2003.

Cooperative and Collaborative Leadership

Rev. Sinclair describes her leadership style as cooperative and collaborative and extols the virtue of teamwork, embracing a diversity of ideas and thought, and brainstorming ideas to work out what the best path forward is for everyone. As a result, she confides that the recent “Stronger Together” Annual Conference theme and the Annual Conference focus on cooperative parish ministry resonates deeply with how she approaches ministry. “My goal is to continue to find ways to be more collaborative as the body of Christ while recognizing that we're very diverse and yet, we have unity of purpose.”

According to Rev. Sinclair, one challenge facing those in ministry today in the Connecticut District and beyond is making the church and its message relevant for the current time when so many people desperately need a message of hope.

“The world needs the message of Jesus that we have. The world needs hope and needs some direction,” Rev. Sinclair explains. “I think the United Methodist Church has a great gift and a message of justice, hope, and unity that we that we can offer. It's our best-kept secret; one I pray we will do more to bring to those who need to be inspired and strengthened.”