



United Methodists Living Their Faith

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015

INTERPRETER

MAKING DISCIPLES, TRANSFORMING THE WORLD FOR



Together

A VITAL
CONGREGATION
IS ... HOPE

LEADERS
ARE FIRST
DISCIPLES

MOVING TOWARD
A HEALTHIER
WORLD

MAKING 'WORLDWIDE'
MORE THAN GEOGRAPHY

WHEN PRAYER SEEMS
UNANSWERED

A LETTER
TO MARTIN

STATE OF THE CHURCH
REPORT

MAKING DISCIPLES, TRANSFORMING THE WORLD FOR CHRIST – *Together*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We are pleased to introduce to you this special edition of *Interpreter* magazine. As we begin the new year, these stories highlight how the Holy Spirit is moving through United Methodist Christians joined in ministry together across the connection, making world-transforming disciples of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table, in partnership with the General Council on Finance and Administration, renewed a commitment to stay focused on increasing congregational vitality through ministries in the Four Areas of Focus and deepening our worldwide connection toward greater missional alignment and more equitable sharing of our God-given gifts.

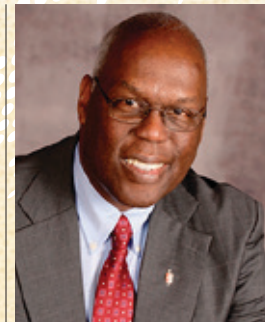
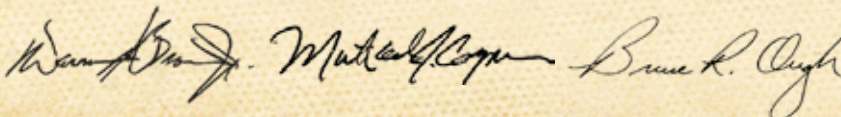
We invite you to pay special attention to the ways in which these stories of local congregations, annual conferences and general church agencies live out our common mission through this unique and powerful United Methodist tradition of connectionalism.

What does it mean to be connectional? “Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in scope, and local in trust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.” [2012 *Book of Discipline*]

In short, to be connectional means *we are stronger together*. We celebrate the growing “vital web of interactive relationships” across the world that allows the Holy Spirit to work through us every day, in new and powerful ways as evidenced in these stories. These relationships enable and empower us to experience and witness to the power of God’s redeeming grace.

May God bless and strengthen you and your vital web of relationships for the sake of the kingdom in the coming year.

Through Christ our Lord,



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Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr.,
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS



UM COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Bishop Michael J. Coyner,
PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION



UM COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Bishop Bruce R. Ough,
CHAIR OF THE CONNECTIONAL TABLE



Watch “Church 2092,” a thought-provoking video from 2012 about what the church of the future might look like.

A VITAL CONGREGATION IS... *Hope*

BY TITA PARHAM

What makes a congregation vital?



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

The Rev. Timothy Bias



BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Bishop John Schol

That question is receiving critical attention across the denomination as United Methodist churches and conferences strive to reverse years of declining membership and fulfill their mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

While the responses may vary, leaders across the connection say what happens outside the church’s walls is an integral part of the answer.

The Rev. Rachel Birkahn-Rommelfanger, senior pastor at Berry United Methodist Church in Chicago and a member of the denomination’s Connectional Table, says engagement in the community through “mission, service and justice” is a clear indicator of health.

“A vital church knows about what is happening at schools, libraries, at businesses, and with folks who live down the street,” she says. The evidence of that is “what people pray about, what is printed in the bulletin or on the bulletin boards.”

Other clues? Children and families regularly involved in the life of the church and people actively participating in worship. Vital churches also have members who want

to stay after church services and visit with each other.

“When everyone runs out the door, it doesn’t feel vital,” Birkahn-Rommelfanger says. “But when folks stay to talk to new people and each other, you can feel the energy.”

Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce Ough says vital churches in his conferences are living out three of Jesus’ greatest commands: to grow in loving God and their neighbors (the Great Commandment), to reach new people (the Great Commission) and to heal a broken world (the Great Call from Luke 4).

Ough is also chair of the Connectional Table. He says churches are using denominational criteria to assess vitality, but they are beginning to pay greater attention to the kinds of qualitative measures Birkahn-Rommelfanger notes — behavioral indicators not related to statistics.

That is key, says the Rev. Marc Brown, director of connectional ministries in the Virginia Annual Conference.

Assessing a church’s vitality based on specific indicators of health and effectiveness is important, he says, but the conversation should begin “with a focus on

the congregational life in which the seeds of vitality are being planted.”

That means considering several core questions.

- » Is the congregation rich in faith, hope and love?
- » Is that faith rooted in the past or “future resurrection possibilities”?
- » Is the church’s ministry meeting the needs of the community?
- » Is the congregation drawing people to God through its love for Christ?

“There is a richer conversation to be had — a conversation about Christian vitality that leads to a deeper understanding of congregational vitality,” Brown says. “When this vital conversation is faithfully held, the numbers take care of themselves.”

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

That richer conversation began to take place across the denomination in late 2009 when the Council of Bishops called for an in-depth study of the church’s health and future ability to fulfill its mission. The Vital Congregations Initiative launched in 2011 as a result.

“We’ve put a focus on congregational vitality that helps us see that there is some vitality,” says the Rev. Tim Bias, general secretary of the denomination’s Discipleship Ministries (General Board of Discipleship). “When we were just recording the statistics, we weren’t looking for it. Now we’re actually looking for it.”

Discipleship Ministries, the Connectional Table and other denominational bodies are leading the initiative, which provides resources and tools that help churches and conferences become more

vital in their mission to make disciples. It is based on an idea of vitality that goes beyond offering-plate giving and membership numbers. Instead, it asks faith communities to increase their vitality by setting goals in five areas: average worship attendance, professions of faith, small-group participation, missional engagement and giving.

For the first time, vital congregations are defined. They are Spirit-filled communities of believers that welcome all people, make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ, and serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries. They also have inviting and inspiring worship; engaged disciples in mission and outreach; gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership; effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership; small-group ministries; and strong children’s and youth ministries.

“In essence, these are congregations with a clear purpose that grows their disciples’ faith and leadership and connects with the community through ministry that is important and meaningful to the people in the community,” says New Jersey Area Bishop John R. Schol, one of the initiative’s leaders.

The emphasis on vitality was needed, he says, because declining membership meant fewer disciples engaged in the church and community, weakening the mission to make disciples.

“We are committed to a God-sized vision for the church and our mission,” Schol says. “We want to be able to respond to all that God is calling us to be for the world. We recognized our diminishing capacity would ultimately impact how God could use us in the world.”

ALL ABOUT THE PROCESS

The key to fulfilling that God-sized mission, Bias says, is Paragraph 122 of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*, “The Process for Carrying Out Our Mission.”

It is a how-to guide for vitality and the basis for the Vital Congregations Initiative, with four imperatives at its core: hospitality, opportunity, purpose and engagement.

“If you go through Paragraph 122, the first part is that you proclaim that you’re welcoming, receiving people. That’s hospitality,” Bias says. “The opportunity is that you are, as Wesley would say, offering Christ. It says that you’re inviting people into the community through baptism.”

The third element is purpose — achieved by engaging people in small groups so they can grow and live as Christians. The paragraph then instructs churches to “send persons into the world to live lovingly and justly as Christ” and offers a list of things people can do — feed the hungry and care for the stranger. That is engagement in the community.

Those components form an acronym for HOPE, Bias says. “Where churches are offering hope or engaging in hope, they are places of vitality because they are using the process of making disciples in a Wesleyan way.”

Bias says another piece of the vitality puzzle is the denomination’s four areas of focus: developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world, creating new places for people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones, engaging in ministry with the poor and combating diseases of poverty by improving global health.

Vital congregations produce one or all of those areas of focus, Bias says. The Vital Congregations metrics measure those outcomes, and Paragraph 122 is the process by which they are achieved.

“Vital congregations helps us make disciples for the transformation of the world,”

The Rev. Stephen Handy (right) prays with the staff of the YouthWorks mission camp at McKendree United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tenn.





Children in grades 1-5 enjoy age-appropriate worship and activities on Sundays in the (e)Kids program at Embrace Church in Sioux Falls, S.D. Ministries for children and youth are among the indicators of vital congregations.

he says. “How do we know we’re transforming the world? Through the results that come from those four areas.”

Underpinning it all is the mission to make disciples.

“If we want principled leaders in the church, we have to make disciples who become leaders,” Bias says. “If we want new places for new people, we have to make disciples who will help those churches be the new places for people or revitalized so people can find their way in. If we actually want to make a difference in the world around global health, we have to make disciples who are willing to make the sacrifices to make that happen.”

HOPE FOR THE CHURCH

Schol is optimistic about the church’s future disciple-making ability.

“God has blessed us with strong progress in the last three years,” Schol says. “We have doubled the number of highly vital congregations, which is a sign of the commitment and creativity of clergy and lay leadership in the congregations, conferences and the general church. ... As we humble ourselves before God, serve together, grow the faith of our laity and engage in justice and mercy ministries in the community, we will continue to grow our vitality.”

Bias agrees. He is convinced the world will be different in 10 years because of The United Methodist Church.

“It’s not about program; it’s not about agencies,” he says. “It’s about being focused on a living God that we know in Jesus Christ so we do what God has created us to do. For me, I wouldn’t be doing what I do now if I didn’t believe that. I think we’re on the right track.”

Tita Parham is a communications consultant, writer and editor based in Apopka, Fla.

INTENTIONALITY PAVES WAY FOR *vitality*

BY TITA PARHAM

NO BRUTAL CRITIQUES FROM BILLIONAIRES DECIDED WHICH BUDDING ENTREPRENEUR WOULD GET THEIR INVESTMENT, BUT THE EXPERIENCE WAS AS ENERGIZED AS ANY EPISODE OF ABC’S “SHARK TANK” REALITY SHOW — WITH A FEW DIFFERENCES.

Instead of successful business-people grilling contestants about their business plans, annual conference representatives thoughtfully judged proposals designed by their colleagues to increase congregational vitality.

The winner? A preaching improvement pilot presented by a team from the Upper New York Annual Conference.

The drama-free exercise took place during Team Vital, a two-year, peer-learning experience led by the Council of Bishops and coordinated by the denomination’s Discipleship Ministries (General Board of Discipleship) with support from various other United Methodist agencies.

Congregational vitality and new church-development staff, district superintendents, bishops and local pastors from seven annual conferences gathered twice each year beginning in 2013 to learn how to increase the number of vital congregations in their conferences. They shared strategies, learned about new resources and held each other accountable for meeting goals. Between sessions, participants worked to incorporate what they had learned.

It is part of the denomination’s Vital Congregation’s Initiative, which launched in 2011 to help congregations and conferences across the connection increase their vitality and disciple-making ability.

Leaders say Team Vital and other strategies are helping the



UMNS/KATHLEEN BARRY

The Rev. Amy Valdez Barker

denomination achieve its vitality goals, but the method used is not the key. Intentionality is. It is producing positive results.

GETTING THERE

A congregational vitality report presented to the denomination’s Council of Bishops in November showed the percentage of highly vital U.S. congregations — those with at least two of five vitality indicators in the top 25 percent of churches and none in the bottom

25 percent — increased from 15 percent in 2010 to 34 percent in 2012. Professions of faith, small-group participation, mission participation and mission giving also grew.

Church starts in the United States jumped from 116 in 2012 to 145 in 2013. In the denomination's central conferences in Africa, Asia and Europe, 688 new faith communities launched.

The number of highly vital congregations dropped to 27 percent in 2013, with growth only in small-group participation and mission giving. More than 70 percent of churches are still struggling to be vital.

Despite those challenges, vitality is increasing “in congregations of all sizes and geographic areas,” says New Jersey Area Bishop John R. Schol, a Vital Congregations leader.

His area is one of them. “We are one of 10 conferences to increase in the percent of highly vital congregations,” he says. “We are also the conference with the second-highest percentage of congregations growing.”

THE CRITICAL COMPONENT

Specific strategies have made those gains in the New Jersey Area possible: helping congregations assess where they are and the steps needed to reach their goals, equipping lay and clergy leaders through coaching and learning groups, and providing financial resources to help churches grow.

The main strategy for the Upper New York Conference is Hand to Plow, an adaptation of the Healthy Church Initiative many conferences are using. It is a series of clergy and lay peer-learning groups focused on specific factors — clarity of vision and mission, effective leadership and vital worship. It also includes congregational assessments and consultations.

That is in addition to the newly launched Illuminate Preaching Academy

UPPER NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The Rev. Aaron Bouwens

“The key focus of any congregation is helping people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and if we’re growing disciples of Jesus Christ, the system doesn’t make any difference.”

proposed during Team Vital, says the Rev. Aaron Bouwens, the conference’s director of vital congregations.

At the academy’s core are “bright spot preachers” — pastors from the conference who embody the skills and characteristics identified as unique to effective preachers. They will serve as mentors to other pastors. The model also offers four training sessions and instruction by outside resource people, all over the course of six months.

The strategic plan for the Minnesota Conference, another Team Vital participant, is Journey Toward Vitality. Its focus is “equipping missional congregations, developing missional leaders, generating missional resources and extending missional impact.”

“Numbers are a lagging indicator, and we have not seen dramatic change in those yet, but the culture is shifting,” says the Rev. Cindy Gregorson, the conference’s director of connectional ministries.

The Rev. Amy Valdez Barker, executive secretary of the denomination’s Connectional Table, says churches and conferences with a “clearly defined and adopted strategic plan for mission and ministry” are experiencing the most fruitfulness.

The Rev. Tim Bias agrees and says that is key. Bias is general secretary of Discipleship Ministries, one of the agencies charged with leading the vitality initiative.

Churches with a clear vision that is lived into and “not just a written vision on the wall” are experiencing greater vitality, he says. That is also true for conferences that intentionally equip laity and clergy to fulfill their mission and engage in their community.

“The key focus of any congregation is helping people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, and if we’re growing disciples of

Jesus Christ, the system doesn’t make any difference,” Bias says. “Any one system that helps us grow in our faith and engages us in the community is a good system.”

MORE TO COME

Bouwens says the Team Vital experience helped his conference — particularly the conversation between conferences about what they are doing and reflections with his own team about what they learned.

“The greatest benefit was the chance to pull together some leaders, get offsite out of the context of the conference and have a

place to have conversation around what are we doing in our conference,” he says. “Certainly, the time with our team held the greatest value.”

Both Gregorson and the Rev. Bener Agtarap, superintendent for congregational vitality in the California-Nevada Conference, agree.

Agtarap says building working relationships with other conference leaders who share “common vision and passion for creating and improving the culture of congregational vitality” was an added benefit.

On the downside, Gregorson says, the project did not function as a “true strategy team” for her conference because only part of the leadership team could participate. Because the conference is already implementing a variety of strategies, the team felt there was not as much new learning as anticipated.

It was also a significant financial investment, Schol says, with conferences



CALIFORNIA/NEVADA CONFERENCE

The Rev. Bener Agtarap



UMMS/MELISSA LAUBER

Bishop John Schol (left) talks with Bishop Daniel Arichea (center) and Bishop Rodolfo Juan of the Philippines. Juan leads the Manila Episcopal Area where monthly class-meeting style groups for district superintendents are contributing to vitality.

covering costs for five to seven participants.

Overall, participants believe the project helped sharpen and focus their work, he says. It also showed “there is no one way to grow vitality.”

That will likely prove true in the central conferences with a project launching this year called Bright Spots. It will focus on increasing vitality in Nigeria, Central Congo and the Philippines using a research method called “positive variance” or “bright spots.”

“This process studies the most vital congregations and identifies what they are doing that is different from other congregations,” Schol says. “The goal is to help all congregations do what will increase their vitality.”

Because ministry is “contextual and varies because of culture,” he says, each geographic area will likely identify and adopt different characteristics of vital churches — their own “bright spots.”

Valdez Barker says the Manila Episcopal Area already is seeing signs of growth with a strategic plan called UMC DOC: Disciples of Christ. Each month, Bishop Rodolfo Alfonso Juan shares a lesson with three “care” or accountability groups of district superintendents. The superintendents then replicate that lesson and process with their pastors, who do the same with their congregations.

“This emphasis on class-meeting style growth has been very fruitful,” Valdez Barker says, with churches seeing increases in both small groups and worship attendance.

She calls it just one example of the vitality growing within conferences that are “intentional and strategic.”

Schol is optimistic about the progress, but says the church must do more.

“We anticipate continued growth in the future, but also recognize we have significant challenges ahead of us,” he says. “The culture is looking for new ways to experience and encounter God. What worked for so long for The United Methodist Church was no longer connecting with people in our communities. The Vital Congregations Initiative is helping congregations better connect with the community.”

The ultimate goal, he says, is building a church that is making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Tita Parham

Factors calculated in vitality

To be considered “highly vital,” a congregation must be in the top 25 percent of all U.S. congregations in two of the four major areas and cannot be in the bottom 25 percent in any one of the areas.

GROWTH

- » Five-year change in average worship attendance, divided by five-year average of worship attendance.
- » Five-year change in persons received by profession of faith and faith restored, divided by five-year average professions and faith restored.

INVOLVEMENT

- » Number of people (all ages) in small groups, Bible study and Sunday school as a percent of worship attendance.
- » Number of young adults in Christian formation activities as a percentage of worship attendance.
- » Average worship attendance as a percentage of professing membership.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

- » Number of people engaged in mission as a percent of worship attendance.
- » Number of professions of faith and faith restored (who are not confirmands) as a percent of worship attendance.

GIVING

- » Apportionment percentage paid for most current year.
- » Five-year change in mission giving per attendee, divided by five-year average of mission giving per attendee.
- » Five-year change in giving (defined as total non-capital local church spending) per attendee, divided by five-year average of non-capital spending per attendee.

Source: General Council on Finance and Administration, published by United Methodist News Service, Nov. 19, 2014.

TEXAS CHURCH BUILDS DISCIPLES OF ALL AGES

Today is church day!" Taylor, 4, shouts, as her parents drive to church.

Taylor's family joined First United Methodist Church of Rowlett, Texas, in 2013. They are part of a worshipping congregation that expects every person, young and old, to grow in faith. "We want our children to know that going to church should be a part of their lives," says Jenny Peterson, Taylor's mom.

The Rev. Dretha Burris, associate pastor of First Church, says the children listen to the same message five Sundays in a row during Sunday school as they color and do other activities. She believes repetition in learning, especially for young children, is important.

In 2010, the church went through a visioning process that focused on intentional discipleship. Taylor's parents and the

church family are expected to live, learn and love by participating in three groups.

The first is a Life Group, a small gathering of members who meet regularly to support and hold each other accountable. Peterson and her husband, Chris, connect with other parents in Foundation, the life group for parents raising young children. "If a baby or child gets baptized, the whole class stands with the family," says Peterson.

Learn Groups are the next component to the discipleship journey. Participants attend Bible study, youth retreats, vacation Bible school or church camp.

Lastly, church members are encouraged to engage in a Love Group to "Find a need; fill a need." Participants engage

COURTESY PHOTO



The Petersons — Chris, holding Taylor, 4, and Jenny, with Harper, 1 — are active members of First United Methodist Church, Rowlett, Texas.

in mission trips, volunteer in the church clothes closet and help with events serving people outside the church.

Taylor and her family have found a church home that feeds and nourishes them spiritually as they grow as disciples. Taylor's excitement is contagious. "We are at church!" she exclaims. "Oh, my goodness!"

Christine Kumar is a freelance writer and administrator, Baltimore Metropolitan District, Baltimore-Washington Conference.

AT A GLANCE:

First United Methodist Church of Rowlett | 4405 Main St., Rowlett, TX 75088 | info@fumc-rowlett.org | www.fumc-rowlett.org | Pastor: The Rev. Jan Davis | Attendance: 536 | North Texas Conference

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State of the Church—By the Numbers

Quick Facts

2003	TOTAL CLERGY	ORGANIZED CHURCHES	REGULAR PREACHING PLACES	ANNUAL CONFERENCES	ACTIVE BISHOPS
AFRICA	6,886	4,792	4,880	19	1
ASIA	3,279	1,691	444	24	3
EUROPE	1,100	881	829	21	4
NORTH AMERICA	50,823	35,275		65	50

2013	TOTAL CLERGY	ORGANIZED CHURCHES	REGULAR PREACHING PLACES	ANNUAL CONFERENCES	ACTIVE BISHOPS
AFRICA	6,886	4,792	4,880	19	11
ASIA	3,025	1,444	1,444	24	3
EUROPE	1,831	1,047	1,741	21	4
NORTH AMERICA	49,814	32,608		59	46

Paid on Apportionments to All General Funds

	APPORTIONED	PAID	% PAID
1993	\$107,556,097	\$90,695,740	84.32%
1994	\$110,639,996	\$93,339,909	84.36%
1995	\$113,828,214	\$97,868,862	85.98%
1996	\$117,146,649	\$100,382,948	85.69%
1997	\$118,425,273	\$104,496,463	88.24%
1998	\$118,431,010	\$105,394,783	88.99%
1999	\$119,630,756	\$107,857,724	90.16%
2000	\$121,999,757	\$111,187,769	91.14%
2001	\$127,256,750	\$114,676,537	90.11%
2002	\$127,860,750	\$113,095,935	88.45%
2003	\$129,634,750	\$112,418,090	86.72%
2004	\$132,656,250	\$116,808,070	88.05%
2005	\$139,955,000	\$121,703,502	86.96%
2006	\$142,849,627	\$126,427,676	88.50%
2007	\$145,693,841	\$130,564,022	89.62%
2008	\$150,973,581	\$130,210,994	86.25%
2009	\$150,308,000	\$126,303,259	84.03%
2010	\$150,232,058	\$129,428,321	86.15%
2011	\$149,472,006	\$130,885,848	87.57%
2012	\$147,268,131	\$138,765,037	94.23%
2013	\$143,302,750	\$134,248,386	93.68%

United Methodist Church Membership

CENTRAL CONFERENCE/ REGION	2003 MEMBERS (PROFESSED, BAPTIZED, CONSTITUENTS)	2013 MEMBERS (PROFESSED, BAPTIZED, CONSTITUENTS)	% CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP	PROFESSING MEMBERS (2013)
AFRICA CENTRAL	236,396	459,431	94%	
CONGO	1,240,214	3,872,000	212%	
WEST AFRICA	692,989	2,076,559	200%	
AFRICA REGION TOTAL	2,169,599	6,407,990	195%	4,290,870
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE	36,930	42,169	14%	
GERMANY	64,058	71,112	11%	
NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA	28,458	29,554	4%	
EUROPE REGION TOTAL	129,446	142,835	10%	48,829
PHILIPPINES	229,046	293,341	28%	216,326
UNITED STATES	10,831,042	9,543,407	-12%*	7,299,753
TOTAL	13,359,133	16,387,573	23%	

Benevolent Giving

Benevolences describe the portion of a church's budget that goes toward benevolent causes including designated United Methodist funds and causes, general giving to United Methodist causes and general giving not related to The United Methodist Church. For denominational funds and causes, money is sent to the annual conference treasurer and included in the conference's annual total giving report. In this chart, "Total Benevolences" represents the total giving reported by conference treasurers.

In their annual statistical reports, churches may report other giving to charitable causes, giving not sent through the conference treasurer. Benevolences are not included in apportionment calculations.

- » If a United Methodist church runs a soup kitchen ministry, opera-

tional costs are reported as church program expenses and used in the calculation of apportionments.

- » If a United Methodist church sends a check every month to support a soup kitchen housed at a local Baptist church, that is reported as a non-UM benevolent cause.
- » If a church sends the offering for disaster relief to the General Board of Global Ministries, this United Methodist-related giving that is not reported to the conference treasurer.
- » Receiving a disaster relief offering and sending it to Red Cross is giving to a non-United Methodist benevolent cause.

Lauren S. Arieux, statistician and research fellow, Data Services, General Council on Finance and Administration

Total Benevolences

YEAR	TOTAL BENEVOLENCES	OTHER BENEVOLENT GIVING	TOTAL
2004	\$ 92,753,956	\$230,901,938	\$323,655,894
*2005	\$169,651,348	\$278,249,781	\$447,901,130
2006	\$ 94,617,159	\$271,973,364	\$366,590,523
2007	\$ 98,165,753	\$286,344,383	\$384,510,136
2008	\$106,597,122	\$284,615,024	\$391,212,326
*2009	\$49,924,787	\$253,203,164	\$303,127,951
2010	\$73,551,325	\$267,832,213	\$341,383,538
2011	\$70,158,881	\$200,467,917	\$270,626,798
2012	\$75,351,321	\$225,809,923	\$301,161,244
*2013	\$81,313,346	\$234,145,997	\$315,459,343

*Denotes a new quadrennium and subsequent table updates. Fluctuations can be attributed to changes in the ways benevolences are reported with an adjustment period following the initial change.

All statistics on this page were provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration.

AVITAL CONGREGATION

SEATTLEITES STAND UP FOR THEIR CONVICTIONS

Valley & Mountain United Methodist Fellowship created a new church holiday. “Turning Tables Monday,” the Monday of Holy Week, commemorates Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple.

“It’s a significant but often overlooked part of the Holy Week story,” said the Rev. John Helmiere. “We felt the church needed a day to emphasize direct action against oppression.”

V&M, a new church start situated in the economically challenged Hillman City neighborhood of Seattle, is “an activist church,” said the pastor. “We’re on the street; we’re out lobbying; we perform direct action for social justice. All of this is rooted in our faith.

“I want us to be a church that’s not playing the ‘everybody-be-like-us’ church game,” he said. “I want us to stand up out of our convictions.”

The church began in 2010 with a small

group meeting at Helmiere’s house. The parachute-dropped church now has 50 to 60 Sunday worshippers, but that is not the sole indicator of church vitality.

In 2013, the church joined with an arts organization to create the Hillman City Collaboratory. The website describes it as a neighborhood hub where community thrives, a breeding ground where collaborations are born and relationships form, a compost bucket where positive social movements blossom.”

Worship happens Sundays at 4 p.m. with singing, praying, preaching and offering. Following that, however, is a 15-minute Quaker Meeting-style time where worshippers share what is on their hearts or reflect on the sermon. Then, people



COURTESY VALLEY & MOUNTAIN UMC, SEATTLE

“We’re an activist church,” says the Rev. John Helmiere of Valley and Mountain United Methodist Church, Seattle.

break into small groups, each with a specific spiritual practice. Finally, everyone gathers for a Love Feast.

“There are a lot of ways to connect to God,” Helmiere said. “We organize our resources, love and gifts to make a tangible difference in people.”

The Rev. Erik Alsgaard is managing editor for the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

AT A GLANCE

Valley & Mountain United Methodist Fellowship | 5623 Ranier Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98118 | john@valleyandmountain.org | www.valleyandmountain.org | Pastor: The Rev. John Helmiere | Pacific Northwest Conference



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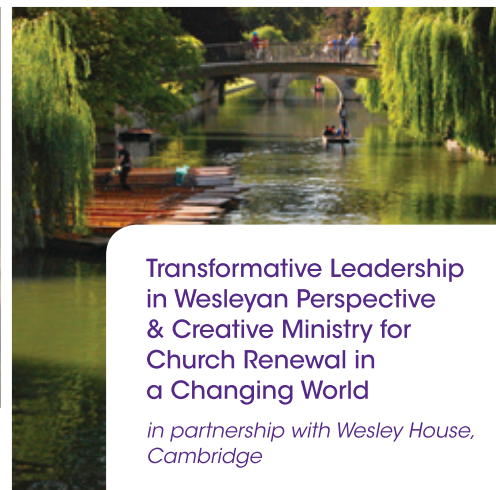
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How does the church nurture a new generation of leaders? This 2012 video features current and former staff of Discipleship Ministries.

CHURCH MAKES DEVELOPING *young leaders*

A PRIORITY

BY POLLY HOUSE

BLAINE WILSON ADMITS HIS CALL TO MINISTRY WAS “A LITTLE UNIQUE.”

The Sioux Falls, S.D., resident confessed that his “calling” was never really his idea. It was a call to him through other people who recognized his potential.

“My pastor came to me at Thanksgiving 2005 and asked if I would preach for him on New Year’s Day Sunday 2006,” Wilson said. “At the time I thought the pastor was nuts (“You want me to do what?”), but I agreed to fill in. I had every expectation that it was going to be a one-and-done deal, but the feedback was positive enough that I was asked to do it again, and it ... went from there. I got certified as a lay speaker (now called lay servant) and then became a certified lay minister in 2012.”

Louisiana Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey prays with young adults considering God’s call to ordained ministry during Exploration 2013 in Denver.



Wilson said pastors in the Dakotas Conference, who have always been available for guidance and mentoring, have encouraged him. However, one especially significant mentor has been the Rev. Steve Trefz, the husband of Wilson’s former pastor.



GBHEM

Blaine Wilson

“Steve and I serve on the conference Lay Servant Ministries Executive Team, and we have worked well together in scheduling and crafting educational opportunities not only for me, but [also for] my fellow lay servant leaders and certified lay ministers,” he said. “Having access to Steve locally was critical to my success. Through the pastors I have had and the training I have received from the conference, I have developed sermon-writing skills for both the lectionary and fitting a message into a strictly specified series and theme.”

Wilson now has a certified lay minister assignment as the designated pulpit supply for his district. Nearer to home, he leads worship one Sunday every other month for a retirement complex.

Wilson is an outstanding example of the young adults The United Methodist Church is working to develop as Christian leaders.

FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS

In 2008, the General Conference adopted what are termed the Four Areas of Focus. The goal was to sharpen the mission of The United Methodist

Church and direct critical aspects of its connectional ministries in collaboration.

The implementation of the first focus – developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world – went to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry with Discipleship Ministries (General Board of Discipleship) collaborating in the development of lay leaders. As the primary agency for leadership development, Higher Education and Ministry understands that good leaders are critical. The agency invites, equips and supports faithful and effective clergy and lay leaders for vital congregations in the church and the world. It also provides resources and training crucial for developing leaders in the pulpit and those who serve from the pews.

TWO KINDS OF LEADERS

Congregational leaders in The United Methodist Church can be both ordained and licensed clergy and laity. Though their roles differ, both kinds are necessary to meet the needs of a world of people who need God.

In the Wesleyan tradition, both laity and clergy have always been encouraged to take responsibility for leading ministry. Laity do the work of Christ alongside clergy.

“Clergy are leaders, of course, but when we talk about church leaders, we certainly are not only talking about clergy,” said the Rev. Steve Manskar, director of Wesleyan leadership for Discipleship Ministries. “More important is the formation of lay

leadership. These lay leaders are a very important part of the Wesleyan tradition.”

Jodi Cataldo, the agency’s director of laity in leadership, agrees. “If we look back at the history of when the church was at its best, it was when the laity was mostly in charge.

“Even in Acts 2, the laity again was instrumental,” she said. “The partnership between the clergy and the laity is essential. When we as a church handed the responsibilities of ministry over to the professionals, we paid them to do what we should have been doing. When you look at our Wesleyan heritage, you see our time of most vibrancy and growth ... (was) when we had the strongest lay leadership. When we stopped being a church of lay leaders, we began to decline.”



Jodi Cataldo

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

COURTESY PHOTO

YOUNG LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

The inclusion of laity in church work requires leadership training outside of traditional seminary education. Church leaders who recognize young people who show leadership potential and a passion for serving others can direct them to appropriate training.

The Rev. Myron Wingfield, associate general secretary of Higher Education and Ministry’s division of ordained ministry, is encouraged to see the potential in young people as they discern a call to professional ministry.

“It’s exciting to see these young adults going into ministry with a new and different frame of reference than I had,” he said. “They see ministry in a much broader light. I believe the Holy Spirit is providing us a new generation of leadership.”

Wingfield looks for certain things when he talks with young people who are determining if God is calling them to ordained or licensed ministry. First, he wants them to articulate a clear call. He wants to see emotional intelligence. He looks for the desire and ability to grow and a passion for lifelong learning. He



The Rev. Myron Wingfield

GBHEM

also wants to see a passion for The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Trip Lowery, the agency’s director of young adult ministry discernment and enlistment, encourages young people who feel God may be calling them into professional ministry to experience doing ministry in their local church.

“A local church can do things different than what the big church can do,” he said. “The big church can offer conferences



The Rev. Trip Lowery

showing broad sweeps of what ministry is. That seems to help clarify and focus, but it doesn’t take the place of sitting down (for) one-on-one conversations with someone on what their specific call might mean.”

Lowery said he is seeing a trend of people moving outside the local church for professional ministry. “It’s more reframing what church is,” he said. “For so long, it’s been people going to the church for ministry. Now we are seeing more people moving outside the building into the world for ministry. People are realizing ministry is more than just preaching.”

The Rev. David Martinez, the board’s director of specialized theological education, works in Mexico, Latin America and the United States. Part of his job is seeking out young Latino adults who are considering going into ordained or licensed ministry.

“I search for the passion of ministry they have in their hearts,” he said. “I look for the Spirit of God that generates their callings. I like to talk with them to hear them articulate their calls and encourage them. I look for the intensity and the authenticity of the call. I look at their eyes and see the fire.”

Like Lowery, Martinez encourages young adults to get involved in their local churches. That is where they will begin to understand how the church functions.

“We also encourage them to attend the Hispanic Youth Leadership



The Rev. David Martinez

GBHEM

Academy (HYLA),” he said. “After HYLA, they go back to their local churches and help. Then, the next year, they go back to HYLA and report on how their year went. It’s great leadership training for them.”

It is important to help these young leaders to understand where God is calling them, Martinez said.

“Some will go into the ordained ministry,” he said, “but others, like nurses, will take their professions and do ministry in that context.”

The Rev. Kim Cape, Higher Education and Ministry general secretary, sees hope



The Rev. Kim Cape

in the new breed of young leaders.

“As I interact with young clergy leaders, I have a renewed hope for our church,” she said. “The energy and passion young clergy bring to their call to reach their generation for Christ is a powerful witness. God is still moving in and through United Methodism.

“While many people my age are ‘done,’ our young clergy confront their own challenge of being faithful, fruitful leaders. We must recognize and address the roadblocks in their way and provide the tools and education they need to achieve what God calls them to do in their mission field. With Simeon, I can truly say, ‘Mine eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord.’”

The United Methodist Church is intentional about finding and being disciples to these young leaders and future servants.

The Rev. Carol Bruse, director of the Center for Clergy Excellence in the Texas Annual Conference, said annual conferences must teach local churches how to emphasize call.

“Most of the future clergy of The United Methodist Church are sitting in the pews today,” she said. “If we don’t teach congregations how to encourage them, we won’t have them.”

Polly House is a freelance writer and editor based in Nashville, Tenn.

Leaders are first disciples

Leaders who make a positive impact are more than just visionaries, organizers and risk takers. They are people of principle and integrity.

For Christian leaders, it also demands a deep spiritual walk with Christ.

“To put it succinctly, being a principled leader in the Wesleyan tradition means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ,” said the Rev. Steve Manskar, director of Wesleyan leadership for Discipleship Ministries.

“Clergy are leaders, of course, but when we talk about Christian leaders in the Wesleyan tradition, we certainly are not only talking about clergy,” Manskar said. “More important is the formation of lay leadership. These lay leaders are a very important part of the Wesleyan tradition. When we talk about Christian leadership, we are talking about those involved in the formation and equipping of laity for ministry.”

Manskar said the Rev. Randy Maddox, William Kellon Quick professor of Wesleyan and Methodist studies at Duke University, gave a good explanation of Wesleyan leadership in a document *The United Methodist Way*.

- » Wesleyan leadership provides the teaching, discipline and spirit people need to grow in holiness of heart (loving God) and life (loving those whom God loves). It fosters a culture of holiness that equips Christians to join Jesus Christ and his mission for the world.
- » Wesleyan leadership is missional. It is centered in the life and mission of Jesus Christ who is preparing the world for the coming reign of God. Wesleyan leadership keeps the church focused on Christ and God’s mission in the world.
- » Wesleyan leadership is relational. Disciples are made when Christians care enough about their neighbors to introduce them to Jesus Christ and model his way of life that leads to holiness of heart and life.
- » Wesleyan leadership is incarnational. “The Word became flesh and made his home among us” (John 1:14, CEB). Wesleyan leadership forms a culture in the church that is centered in Jesus Christ and his mission for the world he loves (holiness of heart and life).

Polly House

SPOTLIGHT

A VITAL CONGREGATION

LIGHT AND LIFE CHURCH HOPES TO RISE FROM TYPHOON

The congregation of Light and Life United Methodist Church in Tacloban City, Philippines, offers witness that two typhoons within less than a year can batter buildings, but not spirits.

After Typhoon Haiyan wiped out the city a year ago, Light and Life Church moved into a corrugated metal building. Then Typhoon Hagupit — also known as Ruby — hit. As of Dec. 7, 2014, the church was under water; bunkhouses in which some members displaced in 2013 were living had been destroyed.

Still, the Rev. Iris Picardal Terana, a Christian educator at the church who was serving as pastor when the 2013 storm struck, continues to count blessings.

“We have felt our global (United) Methodist connection. We realized how God loves us when we were reached out to by others whom we did not even know,” she said.

A quick look at the church’s Facebook page shows a thriving congregation. “We are the church of God who proclaims the gospel,” it says. Images reveal people of all ages who are grateful for opportunities to share God’s love. “There is no hope

in the world but the hope of Jesus. He is the only Savior!” one post reads.

The Rev. Joseph Cornito, the church’s current pastor, said the congregation participated in an ecumenical worship service on the anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan on Nov. 8, 2014. Hundreds of Tacloban City residents attended.

Before Typhoon Hagupit struck, the United Methodist Committee on Relief had begun building 218 houses in Calogcog. Sixteen were completed, and 24 were in progress. Cornito and the Light and Life church had also worked with projects on the Pacao and Hinyangan islands.

Yet, Tacloban City was still a long way from recovery. In their local dialect, residents use the word *ta-bangunon* to describe Tacloban City, which means, “It needs help.”

Nevertheless, Cornito said he has faith that God will continue to provide help.

Gladys Mangiduyos is a deaconess in the United Methodist Philippines Central Conference and a professor at Wesleyan University-Philippines in Cabanatuan City.

Light and Life United Methodist Church, Tacloban City, Philippines



Developing

PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN 2015

Here are some of the plans for developing and supporting leaders in 2015 submitted to the Connectional Table by general agencies and some other groups receiving apportioned funds.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND MINISTRY

- » Evaluate the progress of Young Clergy Initiative grant recipients.
- » Increase the number of young people pursuing the call to ordained ministry through events, the Journey to Ordained Ministry and Hispanic, Asian and Native American (HANA) program; work with annual conference vocational discernment coordinators.
- » Increase campus ministers and chaplains' participation in training.
- » Train at least 10 United Methodist Student Movement field organizers.
- » Increase the number and dollar amount of scholarships and loans.
- » Guide United Methodist clergy through certification, licensing and ordination; train coaches.
- » Implement the e-reader program at 22 central conference theological schools (in collaboration with Discipleship Ministries).
- » Award grants to develop theological education in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.
- » Expand the multilingual UMC Cyber Campus offerings.
- » Help United Methodist higher education institutions engage in more international work.
- » Administer the Black College and Africa University funds.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

- » Expand the Route 122 congregational transformation network.
- » Feature at least 40 vital congregations in the Romans 12 newsletter.
- » Test Korean Vital Congregations Training.
- » Have district superintendents reflect on their role as missional strategist.
- » Host the Black Church Think Tank on extending hospitality to young adults.
- » Increase effective congregational leadership through webinars, face-to-face training, networks and events.
- » Increase the effective leaders in ministry with youth and young adults.

- » Involve 1,000 people in new spiritual practices because of Youth 2015.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- » Use training, partnerships and new organizers to build capacity to engage in transformative justice ministries.
- » Strengthen the seminar program.
- » Develop new internships and expand access to internships.

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

- » Increase attention to the physical and professional needs of missionaries.
- » Involve more young adults in mission service.
- » Increase mission pastor/lay leader training through Bible schools and collaboration among new and existing congregations, seminaries and ecumenical partnerships.

ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

- » Train chairs of conference commissions on archives and history, historians and archivists.
- » Staff and seek financial support for the African American Methodist Heritage Center.
- » Support the collection of oral histories in the Latino community and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, an archive at Africa University and the Evangelical United Brethren Heritage Center.

RELIGION AND RACE

- » Increase the number and effectiveness of interculturally competent leaders in the United States and the central conferences.
- » Increase the number of healthy cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments and ministries.

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

- » Translate the "Women Called to Ministry" Bible study in French and Portuguese.
- » Launch the Clergy Family Resources website.
- » Complete the "God of the Bible" expansive language Bible study.
- » Report the Pipeline Study on where gaps occur early in clergywomen's careers.
- » Provide the "Do No Harm" summit in October and develop resources for laity on healthy boundaries.
- » Develop resources for campus ministers to respond to sexual assaults on campus (with GBHEM).

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS

- » Expand Information and Communications Technologies for Development (ICT4D).
- » Equip church leaders in Asia and Europe with communication skills for creating vital congregations.
- » Create a new family values initiative for families with young children.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

- » Recruit and train 100 Men's Ministry Specialists.
- » Provide mentors for youth through partnerships with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H, Big Brothers/Big Sisters.
- » Resource local congregations to disciple men.

ASIAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE MINISTRY/PACIFIC ISLANDER MINISTRIES' PLAN

- » Train lay leadership in all areas of ministry.

NATIONAL PLAN FOR HISPANIC/LATINO MINISTRY

- » Accompany annual conferences in the development of 10 strategies for Hispanic/Latino ministry.
- » Invest \$1.3 million to fund grants for conference strategies, youth development, Hispanic/Latino Training Centers and Social Justice Centers.
- » Conduct the third National Consultation on Hispanic/Latino Ministry.

KOREAN MINISTRY PLAN

- » Provide the United Methodist Korean-American Information and Mentoring Session.
- » Provide the Academy for Spiritual Formation in Korean.

NATIVE AMERICAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- » Offer a Native American Lay Servant School.
- » Support leaders within Native American churches, fellowships and ministries, conferences and general agencies.

STRENGTHENING THE BLACK CHURCH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

- » Provide rising clergy with experiences and skills to develop and maintain a vital congregation.
- » Develop certification in African-American Church Leadership.

A VITAL CONGREGATION

COLLEGE-TOWN CHURCH EMBRACES, SHARES MUSIC

Old North United Methodist Church in Evansville, Ind., is a midsized congregation with a heart for worship enhanced by its love of congregational singing, both a cappella and well-accompanied by pipe organ, drums and other instruments.

has always been “to give our best gift to God no matter what style of anthem, solo or instrumental piece.” Craig’s dual role serving the church and the college provides opportunities to bring the community together in music, worship and concert in the church sanctuary.

The congregation combines its passion for music, good facilities and people with connections to the local college to reach out to the wider community. The church, college and community contribute to worship and to concerts featuring major musical works of the classic past and the challenging present. For example, the church hosted a large First Nations Service that included newly composed music and involved a local Native American pastor and congregation. The church has also coordinated and hosted a community Taizé service during Lent.

Adapted from Romans 12 newsletter, www.gbod.org/leadership-resources/best-practices-romans-12, Discipleship Ministries, Nashville, Tenn.

Listen as the choir of Old North United Methodist Church sings an “Irish Blessing.”



The Chancel Choir is one of many musical ministry opportunities for members of Old North United Methodist Church in Evansville, Ind.

Feeding the vitality and importance of congregational worship and song are the church’s renovated worship space, excellent acoustic and aesthetic surroundings and regular use of the three hymnals in the church’s pew racks: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, *The Faith We Sing* and *Worship & Song*.

Daniel Craig, the church’s director of music ministries, is also a professor of music at the University of Southern Indiana. He frequently creates worship and music materials and incorporates them into the congregation’s worship. The church’s philosophy, he said,



COURTESY DANIEL CRAIG

MISSOURI CHURCH BOOSTS COMMUNITY OUTREACH

For four years, First United Methodist Church in Sikeston, Mo., has annually hosted three community-wide events to strengthen the congregation’s outreach.

After the 147-year-old congregation received a Rethink Church grant from United Methodist Communications, members began offering community events “to change the culture of a dying church from inward to outward,” says Brad Aycock, executive pastor.

“In 2010,” he continues, “we were averaging around 250 in worship with few to no baptisms or new memberships. In 2014, we average around 600 in worship. Since 2012, we’ve had around 300 people commit to membership and more than 150 baptisms.

“We focus on the three peak opportunities for church attendance,” explains Aycock.

A three-day Hope Epidemic near Easter involves thousands of volunteers in local mission projects and packing food bundles for children in Haiti.

“Hope Epidemic changed us from an inward to an outward church,” says Aycock. Sponsored by area churches and businesses, the event involves 80 groups volunteering throughout the community.

In 2014, First Church raised \$83,000 for Hope Epidemic and recruited 1,500 volunteers to pack 375,000 “manna packs.”

HopeFest, at the beginning of the school year, helps some 800 needy children who receive new backpacks, supplies, haircuts, dental and vision screenings and one-on-one time with church members to “invest in relationships,” says Aycock.

“HopeFest prepares local under-resourced kids for a better start to the school year.”

Through Radical Christmas, says Aycock, “we have converted our Christmas Eve



COURTESY FIRST UMC, SIKESTON, MO.

Young participants wear matching T-shirts and smiles during HopeFest at First United Methodist Church, Sikeston, Mo.

service to something more.”

In 2013, Aycock said, 1,000 children and 1,600 community members received vouchers to attend four Christian music concerts at First Church.

“Those in need register for the voucher two weeks before the event,” he said. “They get inspiration from the show. Afterward, we distribute the gifts, groceries, shoes, Bibles and lots of love.”

Heather Peck Travis is a freelance journalist living in Glasgow, Ky.

AT A GLANCE

Old North United Methodist Church | 4201 Stringtown Road, Evansville, IN 47711 | 812-423-2483 | mail@oldnorthumc.com | www.oldnorthumc.com | Pastor: The Rev. Michael Monahan | Attendance: 174 | Indiana Conference

AT A GLANCE

First United Methodist Church | 1307 N. Main St., Sikeston, MO 63801 | 573-471-3283 | info@thefunchurch.org | www.thefunchurch.org | Lead pastor: The Rev. Geoff Posegate | Average Attendance: 619 | Missouri Conference

NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE ENERGIZE WORSHIP,

Outreach

BY TOM GILLEM

STARTING NEW PLACES FOR NEW PEOPLE IN NEW MEXICO'S HISPANIC/LATINO COMMUNITIES IS A PERSONAL MISSION FOR THE REV. LOURDES CALDERON.

In the past year, Calderon, the New Mexico Annual Conference's first Hispanic female pastor, has merged two Anglo churches into a new bilingual, multicultural church in Albuquerque and opened a school to train Spanish-speaking lay ministers to start new faith communities.

"I think right now I am in a very good place to make a difference," said Calderon, the daughter of a second-career United Methodist pastor in the Texas Rio Conference. She hopes to be ordained an elder in June.

Her new, revitalized church, Cornerstone United Methodist, officially started in December 2014 and is the merger of two churches Calderon served. As with many mergers, those churches joined because of dwindling membership and high costs to maintain two facilities.

Calderon is coordinator of Hispanic/Latino ministries for the conference, but



The Rev. Jerry Herships (left) is founder of AfterHours Denver. The congregation meets in a bar – and serves sandwiches and offers Communion daily in a park that is home to part of Denver's homeless population.

she started Escuela de Liderazgo (School of Leadership) on her own. The school, which her conference supports, uses some modules from Path 1's Lay Missionary Planting Network (LMPN). It has received other assistance from Discipleship Ministries (General Board of Discipleship).

The planting network provides a 10-session training program, in English and Spanish, designed to equip lay people to start new communities of faith, said Samuel Rodriguez, director of Hispanic, Latino and multiethnic new church starts at Discipleship Ministries.

"LMPN's primary goal is to start house churches to reach new people – people who aren't attending church," Rodriguez said.

Most who go to Calderon's school are Spanish-speaking laity who attended the Methodist Church in Mexico before arriving in the United States. They learn about United Methodist doctrine and church history, John Wesley and the *Book of Discipline*. Since the school began a year ago, 24 people have completed the study and most have started house churches to serve others in the Hispanic/Latino community, Calderon said.

CONFERENCES TAKE LEAD

"I don't want to say I'm producing pastors because that's not true. I'm just producing lay leaders," she said. "Some of them might want to be pastors. Some of them may be lay ministers."

The work of starting churches rests within annual conferences. In all jurisdictions in the United States, conferences are working to create new places for new people, said the Rev. Candace Lewis, associate general secretary for New Church Starts/Path 1 at Discipleship Ministries. The emphasis on developing new congregations and revitalizing existing ones is among the denomination's four areas of focus.

Path 1 collaborates with annual conferences through training, consulting, resourcing and coaching. A Path 1 staff member, deployed to each jurisdiction, works with conference developers and on the district level with church planters.

"One of the most effective ways we have for reaching new people is starting new churches," Lewis said.

Path 1 was organized in 2009. During the 2009-12 quadrennium, Path 1 helped

the connection start 684 churches in the United States. In its latest statistical update on Feb. 19, 2013, Path 1 said data from the General Council on Finance and Administration showed 59 of those 684 churches had closed, for a close rate of 8.6 percent. For the years 2004-07, the new-church close rate was 26 percent, or 72 of 278 church starts.

To collect additional information about new church starts, a new database is scheduled to go online next spring. "Right now, we only have information when they started, the racial-ethnic group and the strategy that they are going to utilize," Lewis said. "With the new database, (churches) can report worship attendance, small-group ministry, testimonies or praise reports – what's happening in the church – so we can actually have a sense of what lives are being touched."

Path 1 set an ambitious goal to plant 1,000 new churches during the current quadrennium; 116 started in 2012 and 145 in 2013. "It's a goal designed really to motivate us to see the opportunity and keep moving toward it," Lewis said. "Even though the numbers are trending similarly, we haven't had the big spike that we want to see. But we believe that we can continue to work at building a system that's going to help be a catalyst to doing more work."

PLANTING STRATEGIES VARY

In various settings across the U.S., both clergy and lay planters are establishing new places for worship. Planting strategies include traditional starts by annual conferences, partner church projects, vital mergers and church-within-a-church, as well as house churches and new faith communities in nontraditional locations, such as bars and prisons.

One creative and highly relational faith community in Seattle, called Valley & Mountain, meets on Sunday afternoons for "celebrations" in the Hillman City Collaboratory. The community co-founded and sponsors the social change incubator and community center. Led by the Rev. John Helmiere of the Pacific

COURTESY PHOTO



The Rev. Candace Lewis

Northwest Conference, Valley & Mountain is dedicated to building community, advancing social justice and empowering people to develop authentic and deep spiritual lives (Read more on page 25.)

As in New Mexico, other annual conferences are looking at readiness for revitalization and determining which churches are ready to start making changes, said the Rev. Betsey Heavner, director of leadership for congregational renewal at Discipleship Ministries. More and more are adding congregational redevelopment staff and becoming strategic about how they use money and people for renewal.

Congregations arrive at the end of their life cycle for various reasons: population shifts, financial problems or large, aging church buildings in need of expensive maintenance. For many, the urge to hold on to what they have always done, rather than connecting with things God is doing is a major challenge to their revitalization, Heavner said.

"Sometimes people just have a hard time giving up the old ways of doing things or the old roles that they've had," she said. "People who have been in the church a long, long time have to develop a real openness to put what God wants them to do ahead of what they have always done."

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Heavner said change has been part of churches, from the time of the Reformation and the Methodist roots in the Wesleyan movement. "John Wesley realized that many people were not in the Church of England, so he went out and preached in

Worshippers at Easter fill revitalized Grace Memorial United Methodist Church in Atlanta, where attendance has been on a steady rise.



UMMS FILE PHOTO/JOSEPH MCBRYAYER



Congregants from Valley & Mountain, a United Methodist faith community in Seattle, gather for their annual Waffles and White Elephant party during Advent.

the fields or met the miners as they were coming out of the coal mines. That whole pattern is who we are," she said.

Church revitalization has more to do with the heart of the people in a congregation than things like worship style, music or the leader's age. "Churches that are revitalized are really connecting with their communities and ... the people who live there by offering the presence of God according to the context and neighborhood where they are," she said.

For example, the Rev. Judy Cramer found a discouraged and struggling community when she arrived two years ago to serve Magnetic Springs United Methodist Church, located in a rural central Ohio village. Population had dwindled to 300 from about 3,000 in Magnetic Springs' heyday a century ago.

Cramer saw children walking the streets, teasing, bullying and fighting each other because they had nothing else to do. As a major part of its revitalization, the church began a place for children and youth to gather with activities and recreation. Soon the children came on Sunday mornings, and the adults followed.

Heavner said she believes The United Methodist Church is at a tipping point. "I think more and more churches are starting to do new things and see new possibilities than say, 10 years ago. I feel hopeful about revitalization in North America in particular," she said.

Tom Gillem is a freelance writer and photojournalist based in Brentwood, Tenn.

Mission Initiatives birth new faith communities

With the help of Mission Initiatives, a ministry of the General Board of Global Ministries, new faith communities are emerging throughout the world, including in countries where governments do not recognize The United Methodist Church.

George Howard, who heads Mission Initiatives, said the new faith communities range from congregations to Bible study or prayer groups that meet regularly.

"The people that I encounter in these initiatives, and frankly, in many central conferences across the world, understand that God has performed yet again another miracle in their life," Howard said. "And every time they take a step forward, they give thanks for the presence of God in their life."

During 2009-12, Mission Initiatives helped start 574 faith communities, surpassing a goal of 400. The goal for the current quadrennium is 600, and 275 faith communities launched in 2013 and 2014.

Mission Initiatives is present in 12 countries and regions: Cambodia, Cameroon, Central Asia, Honduras, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Russia/Eurasia, Senegal, Thailand and Vietnam.

In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, former refugees introduced to the church in the United States returned as United Methodist missionaries to plant faith communities.

United Methodists, Korean Methodists and Singapore Methodists are collaborating to birth an autonomous Methodist Church in Cambodia.

In Vietnam and Laos, the government has not registered The United Methodist Church. Still, missionaries and local leaders manage to reach new people. More than 300 faith communities are in Vietnam and more than 60 in Laos.

"In both of those countries, there are places where the local government – the local leaders – have said, 'Go ahead,' so

we actually have churches," Howard said. "There are other places where they're in houses and other places where they're outdoors."

Vietnam has more than 270 pastors and 14 local elders in mission with 15,000 people participating in house churches.



COURTESY WEST OHIO CONFERENCE

Since the Revs. Ut and Karen Vo-To became missionaries in 2002, the Vietnam Mission Initiative has grown to include more than 300 churches.

Russia is now a full annual conference within The United Methodist Church. Lithuania and Latvia are part of annual conferences. All three countries will transition out of Mission Initiatives.

In the past few years, Cameroon added six new faith communities. "These are small, fledgling bands of Christians in a very Muslim context," Howard said. "These are pioneers who are birthing a new Wesleyan movement."

Howard said three factors determine sustainability of the faith communities:

- » Are they continuing to replicate? Do they naturally, as part of their DNA, reach out to birth new faith communities?
- » Is there self-determination? Do local people set strategies, priorities and the course and live into it? Are they looking for new leaders constantly?
- » Are they financially self-sufficient? How do they operate so all resources are not automatically coming from outside the community

Tom Gillem

Developing, RENEWING CONGREGATIONS IN 2015

Following are some of the plans for 2015 submitted to the Connectional Table by groups receiving apportioned funds..

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

- » Have at least 10 new participants in the Large Impact Church Planting Residency Program.
- » Equip 1,600 church planters through training events in partnership with the annual conferences.
- » Add staff to resource Asian-American church planting in the United States.
- » Develop five new publishing teams in Africa, Eastern Europe and the Philippines.
- » Encourage use of *The God We Can Know* study to support vital congregations.

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

- » Develop 600 new faith communities during the quadrennium through Mission Initiatives.
- » Move toward self-sufficiency in the Mission Initiatives.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- » Integrate faith-rooted organizing as a tool for congregational development and community transformation.
- » Nurture relationships and partnerships with new communities of people directly affected by broken systems such as immigration and mass incarceration.
- » Build strong relationships with churches and societies wherever a United Methodist presence exists.

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN

- » Develop a resource to prepare congregations for their first woman or cross-cultural appointment.

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS

- » Expand Find-A-Church to include information on congregations in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.
- » Continue intense use of social media to reach and engage seekers and to connect members with resources to enhance advertising efforts.
- » Encourage local churches to get involved with their communities.

NATIVE AMERICAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- » Produce culturally appropriate books and other written resources through a Native American Writers Gathering for Young Persons.
- » Gather and train clergy and laity from new Native American fellowships, church starts and ministries and Native and non-Native leadership and congregational development staff working toward new Native American churches.
- » Support people in ministry with new Native American faith communities and revitalizing existing churches.

ASIAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE MINISTRY AND PACIFIC ISLANDER MINISTRIES PLAN

- » Cooperate with annual conferences and general agencies to start new faith communities for immigrants needing specific language ministries.
- » Assist with development of language resources and literature.

KOREAN MINISTRY PLAN

- » Conduct Conflict Transformation Workshop.
- » Train small group ministry leaders at the School for Congregational Development.

SPOTLIGHT

A VITAL CONGREGATION

PEOPLE 'LIVE OUT THEIR PASSION' AT COLORADO CHURCH

In order to become a member of Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church in Monument, Colo., you first must participate in a 10-week discipleship class. Called "Blueprint for Discipleship," the course covers the basics of United Methodist and Christian beliefs.

The classes are the first step in building disciples rather than building a church.

"We want to grab them right away," said the Rev. Bob Kaylor, lead pastor since 2010. "We have lifelong members who don't know much about their own theological DNA, and new Christians and seekers attend."

Kaylor said the classes have been instrumental in the church's vitality and growth. He has noticed that new members are assimilated more quickly, build relationships faster and join small groups more frequently.

The church started in 1991 as a church plant in an abandoned truck stop. In 2000, the congregation purchased 40 acres. Six years later, it held its first worship service in new facilities. Today, the congregation has 600 members with about 350 attending its three worship services.

Each worship service includes Holy Communion.

"It's a means of grace," Kaylor said. "My preaching isn't enough. Wesley said to take



COURTESY TRI-LAKES UIMC

Volunteers from Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church in Monument, Colo., pass out preparedness information during a community FireWise fair.

Communion at every opportunity, and that's what we've done for the past two years."

Vibrancy goes beyond numbers, Kaylor said. "If you build a church, you rarely build disciples. If you build disciples, you always get the church."

Kaylor takes delight when people at Tri-Lakes live out their passion through outreach. He points to an emergency-preparedness ministry that sprang from wildfires around the area in the past two years.

This ministry, he said, which now involves 30 people, came out of the passion of two church members. "I, as a pastor, had nothing to do with it other than to create the conditions for people to live out their passion. That's pretty cool."

The Rev. Erik Alsgaard is managing editor, Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

AT A GLANCE

Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church | 20256 Hunting Downs Way, Monument, CO 80132 | tlumc@tlumc.net | www.trilakesumc.org | Pastor: The Rev. Robert Kaylor | Average Attendance: 346 | Rocky Mountain Conference

Interpreter invited a number of people across The United Methodist Church to submit brief essays describing a unified United Methodist Church. These are the responses received. For more thoughts on this topic, see page 12.

VISIONS OF Unity

YOKED TO ONE ANOTHER

Being a unified church has to do with being yoked to one another in our mission of being disciples, making disciples and transformational activity. We seek to be people who

are demonstrating God's goodness to everyone in the name of Jesus Christ. Unity makes our witness stronger and our message more believable. That's at the heart of who we are called to be. In Acts 2, the early church, full of the Holy Spirit, huddled together trying to figure out, "Well, what do we do now?" And they began to treat one another respectfully and share what they had, discover their gifts and engage people around them in ministries of love and hope and watching as change occurred.

Where we see brokenness in community, the church can play a transformative role. When we are unified in our spiritual and social witness we can help those in need and give them a reason to hope. There are endless opportunities, and we're called to be the people who bring that witness in a way that's relevant.

Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr., San Francisco Area; president, Council of Bishops

UNITED IN MISSION

I work daily with young people who are living on the streets of Chicago. They are there, oftentimes, because their families have kicked them out of their homes due to their parents' disapproval of their perceived sexual orientation and gender



COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

Bishop Warner H. Brown Jr.

identity. When I ask their parents why they would do this, they tell me it's because their faith does not condone this.

A unified church is united in our mission of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." This transformation cannot and must not occur on the backs of the most vulnerable. A unified United Methodist Church that seeks to preserve the institution but sacrifices its children is not truly united, nor even church. Raised in rural Ohio, I've ministered in Zimbabwe and am serving in Chicago. I know The United Methodist Church must be a large umbrella that allows us to fully serve all in the contexts to which we are appointed.

The Rev. Gregory D. Gross, community health manager, The Night Ministry, and family ministries coordinator, Berry United Methodist Church, Chicago, Ill.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Rev. Gregory Gross

BUILT AROUND THE WORD OF GOD

As the body of Jesus Christ, the word of God is our initial point such that all we do is built around it. In a changing world, our God remains unchanged yesterday, today and tomorrow, just like the word of God, the Holy Bible.

The (United Methodist) Christian operational manual is the Holy



UMMS/PAUL JEFFREY

Betty Katiyo

Bible coupled with our doctrine and Social Principles.

Being a worldwide church, we have different cultures and backgrounds, but it is the fundamental things that keep us unified (1 Corinthians 1:10). The United Methodist Church respects diversity of opinions held by conscientious persons of faith. John Wesley once said, "As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think."

A unified United Methodist Church is one that does not succumb to pressure to conform to the world. Instead, it must focus on the fundamentals (Romans 12:2).

Betty Katiyo, former lay leader, Zimbabwe West Annual Conference



COURTESY PHOTO

Mazvita Machinga

BELIEVERS ARE ONE

A unified United Methodist Church is an entity that belongs to one body, united in belief (in) Christ as the head. In a unified United Methodist Church, all believers are one, engulfed and united by Christ's love in salvation, service and in making disciples for Christ. For as many as they are and in their differences, they are equal, but unique and joined together in spreading God's message of hope, salvation and in making disciples for Christ. Each individual, as part of the body, functions for the good of the whole and in honor of Christ and the church. Each believer in this unified United Methodist Church has a God-given ability that strengthens the whole body through rendering different

services such as serving the poor, the hungry, the stranger and the prisoner. A unified United Methodist Church strives to listen to Christ the head as they mutually care for one another and live their faith.

Mazvita Machinga,
psychotherapist, Zimbabwe

WELCOMING ALL THE GIFTS

United Methodists today are defined, in large measure, by our willingness to share the gospel across boundaries of class, race, culture and nationality. We pray, preach and sing the Good News story across our neighborhoods, and across the earth.

What we have often neglected to do, however, is to welcome fully all the gifts, experiences and insights that these new communities of (United) Methodists have to offer the church. Until we are willing, in humility, to value the abundant gifts, wisdom and spirituality of those who are unlike us, we will never learn to appreciate the gift of unity for which Christ prayed.

We can increasingly distance ourselves from any who hold differing views about the mission, direction and organization of The United Methodist Church. Or, we can journey into a new season of Pentecost where all the voices are heard and all the gifts are welcomed because the Holy Spirit has baptized all, filled all and sent all.

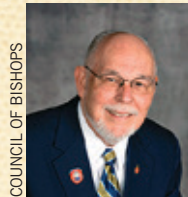
We need every United Methodist's gift, experience and insight if we are to live into the latter vision of our future. Come Holy Spirit. Ven Espiritu Santo.

Bishop Joel Martinez (Retired), San Antonio

HOLY, JUST, DIVERSE, KENOTIC

As I look at my toddler daughter and wonder what kind of church could possibly be unified enough for her to inherit someday, I believe a holy, just, diverse and kenotic church might be our best hope.

- » A holy church perpetually seeks personal and social holiness in the Wesleyan tradition.
- » A just church funnels that holy discontent to transform society into a more



COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
Bishop Joel Martinez



COURTESY PHOTO
The Rev. Jeremy Smith

just community and boldly confronts the “isms” within the church itself.

- » A diverse church overcomes our restrictive polity by honoring unity in diversity, engaging our varied mission fields in contextual, accountable ways through a more adaptive polity.
- » A kenotic “self-emptying” church prioritizes missional needs over institutional maintenance.

That'll do it. Oh, one more: if we truly live out our baptismal affirmation “you are a beloved child of God” that was said to my daughter — and all your daughters and sons — then God will be glorified indeed.

The Rev. Jeremy Smith, minister of discipleship, First United Methodist Church, Portland, Ore.

RECOGNIZE, RESPECT UNIQUENESS

One of the pieces that stands out about The United Methodist Church is the fact that we are a diverse group of Christian women and men who have chosen this denomination to live out our faith. Our faith is lived out through our worship and service to God to the world. Our worship and service of Creator God is lived out in diverse ways, and we are not required to all think and believe and act the same.

Our task is to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our task is to respect and recognize the unique ways that we all arrive at this common goal. One is not superior to the other, but each actually complements one another. We all have a contribution to make and we bring our contributions together to make it work. Native American folks have understood that for years. One of my favorite quotes, attributed to Chief Seattle, the great Suquamish leader, in 1854 sums up what it means to be in unity.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

All things are bound together. All things connect.

The Rev. David Wilson, conference superintendent, Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference



COURTESY PHOTO
The Rev. David Wilson

SCRIPTURE PRIMARY

A unified United Methodist Church reflects oneness in its nature, mission, and vision as it seeks to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It must accept Scripture as the primary source of theological reflection in a world that is degenerated by sin and unable to redeem itself. Indeed, a unified United Methodist Church is that church that respects and abides by the dictates of the United Methodist *Book of Discipline*. A unified United Methodist Church is authentically global in nature and practice insofar as it accepts all as equal in the sight of God: black, white, African, Asian, etc. A truly unified United Methodist Church opens its doors wide enough so that all will have a comfortable space, a space that is welcoming and accommodating enough, where God's people can feel the love of Jesus Christ who died for sinners so that they can be reconciled with the God of compassion and justice.

COURTESY PHOTO
The Rev. George Wilson

The Rev. George D. Wilson Jr., director of connectional ministries, Liberia Episcopal Area

The Rev. George D. Wilson Jr., director of connectional ministries, Liberia Episcopal Area

LOVE UNITES

It has been said that any entity with the word “united” in its title, isn't.

“In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and

he lives in all of us.” (Colossians 3:11, NLT)

We do not have the same theology. We do not have the same opinions. We do not look the same. We do not love the same. We do not speak the same language. We do not worship the same. We do not pray the same. We are not the same.

But God loves you. God loves me. God loves US. So I love you and you love me. This is the same. This unites us. So we walk together, unique but not apart.

Heather Wilson, Volunteer In Mission coordinator, Western Jurisdiction



COURTESY PHOTO
Heather Wilson

Watch as United Methodists in Hungary welcome the Roma people (commonly known as Gypsies) who have faced discrimination for centuries.



Watch as a catering company in Tampa, Fla., fights homelessness one box lunch at a time.

Celebrating

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN

BY BARBARA DUNLAP-BERG

READING FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH, JESUS SAID, “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE THE LORD HAS ANOINTED ME. HE HAS SENT ME TO PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR, TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE PRISONERS AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO LIBERATE THE OPPRESSED” (LUKE 4:18, CEB).

Across the United States and around the world, United Methodists “preach good news to the poor” through a variety of ministries. Ministry with the Poor is one of the denomination’s four priority areas of focus, and the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries are leading the way.

United Methodists from 16 conferences in 12 states gathered in May 2014 at the Church for All People in Columbus, Ohio, to participate in “Crossing Boundaries: A Conference for the Poor and Those Who Work Alongside Them.”

“Crossing Boundaries” grew out of two roundtables with practitioners and conference staff hosted by Bishop Michael McKee in Dallas and Bishop Sally Dyck in Chicago. The goal was to strengthen and expand the network of practitioners engaged in ministry with the poor, learn from each other and identify additional Ministry with the Poor trainers and training sites.



COURTESY CENTRAL UMC

Through the Saranam ministry at Central United Methodist Church, Albuquerque, N.M., children meet new friends in a new community.

CENTRAL, ALBUQUERQUE

The Rev. Greg Henneman, associate pastor of Central United Methodist Church, Albuquerque, N.M., attended the Dallas roundtable in November 2013, sponsored by Church and Society and Global Ministries. Funding from his church and the New Mexico Annual Conference allowed him to take a team to the May 2014 “Crossing Boundaries” training in Columbus.

Central is located across the street from the University of New Mexico. Its 1,000 members are primarily middle- to upper-middle class. However, said the Rev. Scott Sharp, senior pastor, “Our location affords us contact with many transient, poor and homeless persons. On a Sunday morning in the fall, there are people in



UMINS/SAM HODGES

Coral Romero, youth band member and guitar teacher at Christ's Foundry United Methodist Church, helps Guitars with Grace student Kevin Landlin with his fingering.

fur coats and people carrying all of their belongings on their backs in our worship services.”

When Henneman joined the staff in 2009, the mission ministry began to evolve from a catch-as-catch-can effort to comprehensive outreach. The first program was an outdoor worship ministry for homeless people.

“We began to talk about it with the congregation,” Sharp said. “We recruited volunteers. In February 2011, we launched what became Community of Hope. That ministry now is a worship service and meal every Sunday afternoon on the south lawn of our church.”

But it's not just ministry to the poor, he noted.

“Everything we do is related to conversation, relationship building and getting to know one another.”

Today, Central offers a full spectrum of ministries with the poor and the homeless.

“We have engaged the local elementary school — a very poor school — and have a daily running program with the students called Mighty Milers, and a monthly mobile food pantry that feeds about 300 people,” Sharp said. “We have a four-day-a-week ministry called Helping Hands that offers sack lunches, bus passes, coffee and conversation.” Saranam, a two-year residential and educational program for homeless families, is 11 years old.

“Too often,” Sharp said, “we have a limited view of what the church can do, and fear about ‘scarce’ resources often surfaces. Several years ago, as our ministry with the poor was really starting to ramp up, we heard some complaints about ‘those people’ in the church, but that has gone away.”

“Central's ministry with the poor has become one of the things that we are really known for in the community,” Sharp said. “We put a lot of energy into it, and that energy requires financial and human resources that are limited.”

The general church and the annual conference have provided financial assistance.

“Ultimately,” Sharp said, “the rich and the poor have to worship together, be together, learn together and be shaped in discipleship together.”

CHRIST'S FOUNDRY, DALLAS

“Our congregation is of the poor and for the poor,” said the Rev. Owen K. Ross, pastor/missionary at Christ's Foundry United Methodist Mission.

The congregation's more than 200 members represent the urban poor, Hispanics and young immigrant families who are involved in a gamut of ministries for all age levels.

“Most of our churches are willing to go to, rather than invite the poor to be a part of the full lives of their congregations,” Ross said. They are “comfortable in interacting with the poor in a soup kitchen but not necessarily in their children's Sunday school class.”

Ross does not draw a distinction between ministry with the poor and other

Learning opportunities

In September 2014, Global Ministries funded a planning session in Little Rock, Ark., for Ministry with the Poor practitioners from five locations to design regional experiential trainings to host in 2015 at their locations. The preliminary list of regional training sites includes Columbus, Detroit, Houston, Little Rock and San Francisco.

An October 2014 Summit on the Black Church, hosted by the South Carolina Conference and attended by about 200 people, was devoted to equipping and resourcing congregations to engage in ministry with, rather than to, the poor.

“That conference,” said Mary Ellen Kris of Global Ministries, “has made a commitment to children and poverty, with a particular focus on stamping out childhood illiteracy.” The starting point is Bishop Jonathan L. Holston's Million Book Campaign, an entry point for churches to form relationships with severely under-resourced schools and children living in poverty. In addition, the Greenville District of South Carolina has begun a Ministry with the Poor [initiative] that encourages all of the churches in the district to form a relationship with at least one low-income family in the district.”

During 2014, Global Ministries also recruited 25 practitioners to attend a 60-hour certification program to become coaches teaching others to develop multiclass, multicultural congregations. They will complete their training and be certified in January 2015.

church outreach, saying simply, “They are one and the same.”

He participated in the Dallas roundtable and brought a team from his church to “Crossing Boundaries,” thanks to funding from the North Texas Conference. In Columbus, Ross led a workshop on “Evangelism and Ministry with the Poor,” the subject of his doctoral dissertation.

“Ministry with the poor is discipleship for those serving and a means of making new disciples through service,” he said. The new paradigm aligns social services with discipleship ministries.

Funds received through the United Methodist connection have aided Christ's Foundry Mission. “We have received grants throughout our 12-year history for our work with leadership development,” Ross said.

**CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE,
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

The United Methodist Church for All People on the south side of Columbus, Ohio, seems the perfect training site for ministry with the poor. A third of the households live below the federal poverty level. Unemployment is nearly 20 percent. One-third of the community is younger than 18.

“Our flagship direct service, the Free Store, launched in 1999 and has served more than 150,000 since its inception,” said the Rev. Karen Cook, associate pastor. From that, other ministries emerged, including affordable housing, youth development, health and wellness, Bikes for All People and community gardens.

A breakfast ministry — Feeding by Faith — began in 2002. One man had a vision of reaching out to homeless individuals in downtown Columbus by offering hearty food. People from the church made and delivered breakfast sandwiches to locations by the river. Their goal, Cook said, was “to make contact with homeless folks.”

When the response was disappointing, a church staff member suggested the crew bring food to the Free Store, where there was always a crowd on Saturday mornings. It was an instant success. Four teams of volunteers now rotate duties, serving an average of 150 meals each week.

“Our lived theology in this regard is fully Wesleyan,” she said, “as we encourage



COURTESY THE CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE

Margaret Madison measures a child during vacation Bible school at Church for All People.

individuals to experience the fullness of God’s grace in their lives, moving through the Wesleyan progression of prevenient grace leading to justifying grace and ultimately unfolding in sanctifying grace, where folks embrace the call to follow in Christ’s steps as servant leaders.”

Four-days-a-week worship experiences, Cook said, represent the “many channels we use to invite people to become full participants and, ultimately, professing members. Two-thirds of the members of our growing congregation are low-income persons who have come to know the love of Christ through our community development ministries.” Worship attendance averages 280 people a week.

The Church for All People sees every individual as an asset. The challenge, Cook said, is to help others see “all people” with worth, value, assets and gifts.

“Embracing the assets of all people continues to make a positive impact on our community,” she continued. “The two essential and universal assets in any endeavor are the people in the community and the dynamic presence of God’s Spirit.”

Barbara Dunlap-Berg is associate editor, Interpreter, and general church content editor, United Methodist Communications.

Engaging

IN MINISTRY WITH THE POOR IN 2015

Following are the plans for 2015 submitted to the Connectional Table by general agencies and some other groups receiving apportioned funds.

GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- » Increase faith-rooted organizing efforts to help United Methodists shift from transactional models of ministry “to” into relational ministries “with” those struggling in poverty.

GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES

- » Draw closer links between Ministry with the Poor and global migration.
- » Facilitate coaching in local/regional ministries with the poor.
- » Foster relations with annual conferences and congregations in the development of multi-class ministries.

NATIVE AMERICAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- » Most of the ministry that will be conducted within the 2013-16 quadrennial plan relates to this focus area. Demographics for Native Americans in the United States indicate the majority live at or below the poverty line.

A VITAL CONGREGATION

DANISH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH VALUES GLOBAL TIES

In Denmark, where only 2 percent of the population regularly attends church, every United Methodist congregation must be “vital.”



COURTESY OLE BIRCH

Although only a small percentage of Danes are regular churchgoers, the pews at Jerusalemskirken United Methodist are often full.

The general Danish population is secular, despite belonging to the Lutheran State Church.

“People go [to church] to get their children baptized, have weddings and funerals there, maybe go to Christmas service, but that’s it. It’s disengaging and doesn’t require anything of you in return,” says the Rev. Ole Birch, a member of the Connectional Table and pastor of Jerusalemskirken United Methodist, the oldest church in Copenhagen. It has around 450 members. He also serves as district superintendent in the annual conference with 10 churches and 200 members.

However, Birch says United Methodism’s global connection is a huge help.

“Thanks to the connection, we’ve been able to introduce the concept of Sunday school and various music styles, as

well as central mission and local outreach,” Birch says.

Jerusalemskirken hosts soup kitchens and halfway houses, and offers personal counseling. It also has active small groups and an English-speaking worship service for asylum-seeking refugees, mainly from West Africa.

He also credits the global church connection for the popularity of African-American gospel music in Denmark.

“A man from my congregation spent six months in the United States and became a huge fan of gospel music. He brought it back to Denmark and started a popular movement,” Birch says. Jerusalemskirken has three gospel choirs and there are probably 100 choirs in the city. Flekkefjord United Methodist in Norway has African-British staff members who lead gospel choirs.

Birch says the church in Central Europe also embraces mission work. Centralkirken in Oslo, Norway, has a strong heart for African mission. New Beginnings in Estonia and Riga First in Latvia successfully reach out to young people. Six new churches have been planted in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

“The state church is national in reach and isolated,” Birch says, “but we’re influenced far beyond our own size and reach because of the global connection.”

Joey Butler is multimedia editor for Interpreter.

‘TUTTI’ GATHERS YOUNG ADULTS IN THE EAST VILLAGE

On a cold evening in New York’s East Village, more than two dozen young people share conversation, soup, worship and sweet pastries at Tutti, a Sunday night gathering at the BrokenBuilders United Methodist Church, a predominantly Korean congregation.

“I feel peaceful in my heart here,” says Dylan Yiyang Qiu, a New York University graduate student. “All my family is on the other half of the world. I had to find a home.”

Qiu is not the only one looking to build community. Gookhi Min, 20, a finance student at Baruch College, came to the diverse gathering that is Tutti (Italian for “all” or “together”) at a friend’s invitation. She then trained to become one of the church’s first community developers, learning “how to interact with new people.”

Joyce Lee, a lawyer and associate pastor of BrokenBuilders, says the community-developer program started with seven students. Church leaders realized local congregations were not reaching “the sea of college students in this area.” In response, they started Tutti in 2014.

During worship, Lee leads the singing and plays keyboards. And she does a whole

lot more. Before the service, she slices apples while the Rev. Paul Moon slices pomegranates – all the while engaging in lively conversation with the young people drifting into the community center.

The Tutti worship service features small-group sharing, praise hymn singing and a sermon from community member Pastor Joshua Cheng from Queens, N.Y.



MARY BETH COUDAL

Music enriches worship at BrokenBuilders United Methodist Church, New York.

There is a new BrokenBuilders congregation in the Korean community in Queens and another is planned near Harlem. “We’re still witnessing how this is going to unfold,” says Lee.

Moon said that the name BrokenBuilders is based on the reality, “We are all broken. Even in our brokenness, we can rebuild the kingdom.”

Mary Beth Coudal is a journalist and a blogger. She blogs about faith and happiness at mbcoudal.com.

AT A GLANCE

BrokenBuilders United Methodist Church | 48 St. Marks Place, Room 4B, New York, NY 10003 | info@b3m.org | <http://b3m.org> | Pastor: The Rev. Paul Moon | Attendance: 81 | New York Conference



Watch this quick overview of the Imagine No Malaria initiative.

MOVING TOWARD A HEALTHIER World

BY CINDY SOLOMON

IN 2008, STAMPING OUT THE KILLER DISEASES OF POVERTY WAS AFFIRMED AS ONE OF THE FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE IS TO ELIMINATE WORLDWIDE UNNECESSARY SUFFERING FROM DISEASES OF POVERTY, INCLUDING MALARIA, HIV/AIDS AND TUBERCULOSIS. WHILE MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE, PROGRESS HAS COME DURING THE PAST SIX YEARS.

ONCE ONLY IMAGINED, NOW BECOMING REALITY

Launched in April 2010, Imagine No Malaria's fundraising goal of \$75 million is now 85 percent complete. "It has been amazing to witness the contagious appeal of this ministry with United Methodists all over the world," says the Rev. Gary Henderson, executive director of the Global Health Initiative for the denomination. "People learn about the need, and the suffering and death caused by malaria, and they instinctively give."

Money from the \$65 million raised has already been used to fight malaria in sub-Saharan Africa where the death rate, especially among pregnant women and children under 5, has been halved. Grant money from Imagine No Malaria has provided staff and resources for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)-led efforts in environmental cleanup (removing stagnant water and trash), providing basic sanitation (latrines and clean water), diagnosing and treating individuals with malaria, providing insecticide-treated bed

nets and education to prevent malaria, training health care workers and health boards and improving existing hospitals and clinics.

While the fight against malaria continues, United Methodist health workers equipped by Imagine No Malaria's infrastructure are also battling the Ebola outbreak that continues in West Africa, especially Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. "It's a blessing and a gift," says Henderson referring to health boards and other new infrastructure. "No one dreamed that the church would be called upon in this way."

When dealing with diseases such as malaria and Ebola, a clear message saves lives. "Communication precedes prevention and treatment," says the Rev. Larry Hollon, general secretary for United Methodist Communications. "The diseases of poverty are intertwined. The contagion of Ebola is affecting the ability of health care workers to identify and treat victims of malaria and other diseases. Preventing and controlling these diseases requires

consistent messages about prevention, early identification and treatment. If we communicate clearly and effectively, using new technologies as well as traditional ways of communicating, lives are saved."

HEALTH BOARDS IMPACT EBOLA FIGHT

UMCOR is working with United Methodist health boards in West Africa in a three-pronged approach to confront the spread of the Ebola virus. "Community education about the disease, health worker protection and psychosocial counseling for affected people and their families are the strategy's three prongs," said Dr. Olusimbo Ige, senior program manager for Imagine No Malaria for UMCOR.

With a shortage of local health networks and medical personnel in affected countries and people's distrust of their government and health systems, annual conference health board structures in

To Learn More

Imagine No Malaria, www.imagenomalaria.org

The Church Responds to Ebola (special coverage), www.umc.org/news-and-media/the-church-responds-to-ebola.

UMC Health Ministry Network (information about congregational health ministries), <http://www.gbophb.org/cfh/umchmn>.

United Methodist Global AIDS Fund, www.umglobalaidsfund.com.

countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia play a vital role. Currently there are 13 health boards in 16 countries.

Originally trained to address malaria-related issues, health board members are responsible for identifying and designing programs to address varied health needs, mobilizing resources through grant application, overseeing project implementation and reporting to donors. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, Ebola-related grants are being used for community education, health worker training, medical supplies and protective equipment, food support to families, and setting up Ebola case holding centers — transition places for suspected Ebola patients before they are diagnosed or transported to a treatment center.

FAITH COMMUNITY NURSES ADDRESS HEALTH ISSUES

Across the United States, more than 1,500 United Methodist faith community nurses are addressing health care issues at the grassroots. While these nurses are members of a church staff — some paid and some volunteer, some part time and others full time — all must be registered nurses licensed in their state of residence and follow the American Nurses Association and the Health Ministry Association's "Scope and Standards of Faith Community Nursing Practice."

Some faith community nurses work in local health and human service organizations; others visit church members

"This reflection and data evaluation will help us set the Global Health Initiative special goals and objectives in a meaningful way."

at home or in the hospital. While they do not provide direct patient care, faith community nurses regularly coordinate and participate in health and wellness outreach programs, health screenings and community health fairs.

"The greatest benefit of [faith community] nursing is the ability of the nurse ... to provide educational principles, along with spiritual care and nurturing, during times of need," said Patricia Magyar, executive secretary of U.S. Health for Global Ministries. "This is a role that no other in the church is able to provide, bringing... together health and healing of the mind and body through spiritual care."

HIV/AIDS FIGHT CONTINUES

Since the first cases of HIV and AIDS were reported in 1981, the disease has claimed the lives of more than 39 million people worldwide. More than 33 million people are currently living with HIV, and one in six of those is unaware that he or she has the disease.

HIV and AIDS are still a problem, and work to eradicate the disease is ongoing. United Methodists contribute through the work of the United Methodist Global AIDS Fund. Created by the 2004 General

Conference, the Global AIDS Fund is governed by an inter-agency committee that oversees grant-making and sponsors educational and advocacy opportunities for United Methodists.

"Just Save One," a current emphasis of the fund, focuses on education and testing to prevent the transmission of HIV from AIDS-infected mothers to their newborns. The campaign is already impacting women in Uganda's Kibaale District. Through a \$10,000 grant from the Global AIDS Fund, pregnant women are being tested for HIV. Health care workers are better equipped to provide medications for HIV-infected pregnant women prior to their delivery. Approximately \$10 provides the medication for an HIV-infected mom and newborn to prevent the baby from acquiring the HIV virus.

"Our hope is for United Methodists to step up to the plate to support efforts to eradicate the spread of HIV to newborns. We've seen it happen in the United States; let's make it a reality around the globe," says Linda Bales Todd, co-chair of the Global AIDS Fund. Since 2004, more than \$3 million has been distributed to 200 projects in 38 countries.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE?

Global Ministries is evaluating programmatic gains and lessons learned from the Imagine No Malaria campaign and the Africa conference health boards and using input from partners around the world to develop a robust global health platform. Thomas Kemper, general secretary of Global Ministries, says, "We are learning from the past and engaging in reflective conversations as well as data gathering and analysis in order for us to perform at our best moving forward."

Cindy Solomon is a marketing consultant and content writer living in Franklin, Tenn.

Sergia Daulney (left) helps Sierra Leonian volunteer Mohamed Huseni (right) tie up a bundle of mosquito nets for families in her village during a June 2014 distribution by the Imagine No Malaria campaign in the Gbo Chiefdom outside Bo, Sierra Leone.



UMINS/MIKE DUBOSE



In the midst of the Ebola crisis, **Watch** this powerful "Poem for the Living"

Stamping OUT THE KILLER DISEASES OF POVERTY IN 2015

Following are the plans for 2015 submitted to the Connectional Table by general agencies.

GENERAL BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

- » Commit dedicated staff to support Imagine No Malaria.
- » Offer new regionally specific pastor education resources on the health of women and children to support an emphasis on a holistic approach to community-based health.
- » Provide additional funding, to offset reduced grant funding, in support of the Healthy Families, Healthy Planet program aimed at increasing worldwide maternal and child survival.

GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES

- » Celebrate the achievements of Imagine No Malaria.
- » Plan and implement the work of Global Ministries' new unit on Global Health, which will relate to the African conference health boards and to more than 300 United Methodist hospitals and clinics.

UNITED METHODIST COMMUNICATIONS

- » Continue a crisis communications strategy in West Africa, in collaboration with the African bishops, aimed at controlling the Ebola outbreak, saving lives and providing hope.
- » Continue commitment to ending death and suffering from malaria through Imagine No Malaria, strengthening health systems, training health providers and providing more than 2 million bed nets, saving millions of lives.



Watch Emile Uwimana, a refugee from Burundi, talks about life at Hope House.



Watch Emile discusses his feelings about coming to America.



Watch recovery and wellness program coordinator Liz L. discuss the origins of HopeGateWay's yoga recovery ministry.

SPOTLIGHT

A VITAL CONGREGATION

HOPEGATEWAY BUILDS A FAITH COMMUNITY IN MAINE

HopeGateWay is a newly formed faith community springing from the roots of the former Chestnut Street United Methodist Church in Portland, Maine.

The Revs. Allen and Sarah Ewing-Merrill, co-pastors of HopeGateWay, A United Methodist Community, moved to the area in 2007 with a dream of forming a new ministry. The church sprang from a small group that met in their home.

"We call it a faith community rather than a church because I think 'church' is a loaded word for people who carry some baggage (about religion)," says Allen Ewing-Merrill.

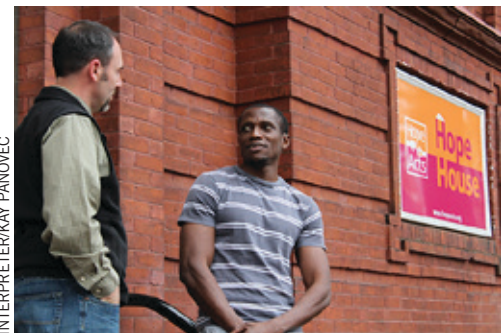
Now, the church has two worship locations in Portland and runs Hope Acts, a separate outreach program. Hope Acts was created in response to growing ministries with people in recovery from addiction and newly arrived immigrants seeking asylum. Hope Acts hosts a growing recovery program that offers traditional Alcoholics Anonymous meetings as well as classes that use yoga, meditation and drum circles to help those struggling with dependency.

Hope House is a housing program for asylum seekers – primarily those fleeing Burundi, Angola, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. Thirteen residents share five two- and three-bedroom apartments. They will stay at least as long as the 150 days it takes to get permits allowing them to work. In addition to providing a place to live, Hope House helps

the residents learn English, find jobs, get legal services and acclimate to American culture.

A resident from Burundi says of the church: "Pastor Allen and Sara are like parents. They make me free to feel like home. If I'm at HopeGateWay, I'm home."

The church's story was featured in *We Refused to Lead a Dying Church!* (Pilgrim Press) by the Rev.



INTERPRETERIKAY PANOVIC

The Rev. Allen Ewing-Merrill (left) speaks with Emile Uwimana, a resident of Hope House who fled his home in Burundi and is seeking asylum in the United States.

Paul Nixon, mission developer and church strategist with Path 1 of Discipleship Ministries.

"I think that churches need to pay attention to who's in the neighborhood, who's walking to the doors and what the needs are – not us-and-them kind of ministry," says Allen Ewing-Merrill.

Joey Butler is multimedia editor for Interpreter.

AT A GLANCE

HopeGateWay United Methodist Church | 185 High St., Portland, ME 04101 | allen@hopegateway.com | www.hopegateway.com | Pastors: The Revs. Allen and Sara Ewing-Merrill | Average Attendance: 91 | New England Conference

ZIMBABWE PASTOR: 'I HAVE TRAVELED FAR, AND SO HAS THE CHURCH'

In Zimbabwe 40 years ago, a bicycle was the only way to travel from one United Methodist congregation to another. The Rev. Jairos Mafondokoto and his fellow graduates each received a bicycle when they completed studies at United Theological College, Harare.

"The annual conference gave each pastor a bicycle, and we had to pay for it in installments," he said. "Years later, we were given motorbikes, which we also had to pay for."

His first appointment was to the Zimunya Circuit and was comprised of 12 stations – now referred to as local churches.

"The furthest distance I traveled on that bicycle was from Munyarari to Rimiti and Himalaya stations, about 28 kilometers (17.36 miles). At times, I walked or used buses, depending on my mission," Mafondokoto said.

"I would leave home on Tuesday in or-

der to start my visitations on Wednesday. Thursdays were a day for home visits and station administration duties." He reserved Fridays for various meetings.

Sunday was for preaching and church committees. He rested on Monday before setting out for the next station. Mafondokoto usually spent three weeks away from his family, relying on the congregations to provide accommodations.

The Rev. Kelvin Mwandira also faced many challenges during his early years in ministry.

"I was one of the first pastors of Bulawayo West Circuit, and when I arrived with my family, we discovered there was no parsonage," Mwandira recalled.

After the family lived in two classrooms for a year, the church leased a four-room house with an outdoor toilet.

"We were not paid salaries," Mafondokoto said. "Quarterly conferences were

JIMNSRAY MUNGOMEZ



The Rev. Jairos Mafondokoto (left) and the Rev. Kelvin Mwandira are interviewed by Eveline Chikwanah in Harare, Zimbabwe.

convened every three months where the 12 stations under my charge would gather and contribute finances to a common pool. The budget was written on a blackboard, and the first item on the list was my *tuso* (compensation)."

Today, The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is thriving.

"We have witnessed tremendous growth," Mafondokoto said. "Pastors today have fixed salaries and fixed paydays. Circuits have good accommodation and new motor vehicles for pastors to use.

"I have traveled far, and so has the church."

Eveline Chikwanah is a communicator for the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference.

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BY KATHY NOBLE

A *BOOK OF DISCIPLINE* FOCUSING ON THE ESSENTIALS OF UNITED METHODISM AND WHAT CONNECTS CHURCH MEMBERS AROUND THE WORLD COULD BE IN THE DENOMINATION'S FUTURE.

Bishop Patrick Streiff leads the Central and Southern Europe Area and chairs the denomination's Standing Committee on Central Conference Affairs. That group is working with the United Methodist Committee on Faith and Order to respond to a mandate from General Conference 2012, which includes determining "which parts of the general *Book of Discipline* are global

and cannot be adapted by the central conferences."

That work is among major efforts to have church statements and practices more reflective of the worldwide nature of the church. Others include consultations on the Social Principles, work around apportionments by the General

Bishop Patrick Streiff

Council on Finance and Administration and the work of a new Commission on Central Conference Theological Education.

The Central Conferences and Faith and Order committees have met twice in 2014. The standing committee will meet in February with the Connectional Table to consider and adopt legislation to be proposed to General Conference 2016. The standing committee will receive feedback on the proposed draft and finalize the proposals in early summer.

Streiff anticipates those to include a constitutional amendment to change the language giving central conferences "adaptation rights" (Para.31.5, "The Constitution," *The Book of Discipline*). He also expects proposing a process to lay the groundwork for developing a new general (worldwide) *Book of Discipline* and to change the name of the central conferences to regional conferences – so they no longer carry a name similar to that of the racially segregated Central Jurisdiction in the United States that was abolished in 1968.

As the two committees began reviewing each of the major chapters on "Organization and Administration" of the *Discipline*, Streiff says, "We realized that up to now the background and paradigm is that the United States has developed a *Discipline* at the level of General Conference and then the central conferences can adapt to their situation as needed. It gives the idea that the U.S. is the normal situation and model for the church.

"Asking 'What binds us as a worldwide United Methodist connection, what is essential for our mission?' ... is a different mindset. We do not talk about adaptation. Based on the essentials, a region has the freedom to implement (the *Discipline*) in its context."

Already labeled as essential, he says, are The Constitution, Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task, The Social Principles and The Ministry of All Christians as distinctive parts of the *Book of Discipline*.

But there are also essentials for a worldwide connection in Church Membership and The Ministry of the Ordained.

A challenge will be balancing essentials and avoiding repetition and micromanaging. As an example, Streiff cited the statement on inclusiveness in Article IV of The Constitution. "It is part of the DNA of our church," he said, "but when you look now at the present *Book of Discipline*, it is repeated over and over in so many places."

An essentials-focused *Discipline* would be shorter and have a longer shelf life than the volume that General Conference now revises every four years. "If we find it right around the essentials, they should remain for more than four years," he says. "If we need to change every four years, they are not the essentials." That potentially is a money-saver, as, after each General Conference, "the *Discipline* must be translated in a hundred languages to make it accessible to people in each annual conference."

GLOBALLY RELEVANT SOCIAL PRINCIPLES

A process is also underway to update the United Methodist Social Principles to be more succinct, theologically founded and globally relevant.

The General Board of Church and Society has conducted seven consultations in the Philippines, the United States, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and the Czech Republic. One planned in Nigeria was delayed by the Ebola crisis.

The consultations will lead to a recommendation to the 2016 General Conference to fund public hearings across the connection to develop a proposal to

COURTESY COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

the 2020 General Conference to update the Social Principles. The 2012 General Conference approved establishing a process to assess the Social Principles.

The Rev. Neal Christie, Church and Society's assistant general secretary for education and leadership formation, spearheaded the events.

APPORTIONMENTS FOR CENTRAL CONFERENCES

Central conferences contribute to the Episcopal Fund. Work is underway also to make contributions to the General Administration Fund worldwide.

The General Council on Finance and Administration, Streiff said, is working on "proposals as to how we can measure the economic strength of different regions of the world." The proposal is looking in official, comparable data not only on economic factors (Gross Domestic Product), but also on life quality factors such as infant mortality, life span and malnutrition, he said.

Other apportioned funds support work that happens mainly in the United States. "General agencies do some global work outside the U.S. also, and we are very glad," he says noting that similar mission boards

and organizations affiliated with and supported by central conferences work in other parts of the world. "We Europeans fund these mission boards ourselves, building up capacity in each region."

WORLDWIDE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Streiff is excited by the work of the Commission on Central Conference Theological Education, chaired by Bishop John Innis of Liberia. It supports leadership development in the central conferences by funding proposals that come through boards of ordained ministry or theological schools.

Representatives from each central conference episcopal area, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Global Ministries serve on the commission that will disburse over \$5 million this quadrennium. "It is more than just disbursing money," Streiff said, "it is an excellent place to discuss what is going on, what priorities to set and to have the most effective work in the long run."

The Rev. Kathy Noble is editor of Interpreter and Interpreter OnLine, publications of United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn.

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A VITAL CONGREGATION

OUTREACH BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO CONGREGATION

If something happened and Fletcher's Chapel had to close, lots of people would be very sad," said the Rev. Kris Williams, the pastor appointed to the church in 2013. That was not the case a few years ago.

Finding itself aging and out of touch with its neighborhood, the 250-member church in Durham, N.C., decided to open its doors to area children and reach out to the local elementary school.

The church's outreach to Merrick-Moore Elementary is resonating with the community, church and school leaders say.

Longtime Fletcher's Chapel member Robin Sorrell said volunteering has the congregation "revved up." Many who cannot volunteer at the school donate food or money.

Attendance at Fletcher's Chapel is slowly building and becoming more racially diverse, Williams said. Record numbers are showing up for Wednesday night dinner service and festivals, due to the church's outreach. The number of students playing basketball at the church's outdoor courts and attending youth group has tripled.

Eight members of Fletcher's Chapel volunteer at Merrick-Moore each week. They help teach kindergarten and work in the library.

"They have been a blessing to our school," said guidance counselor Anissa Hicklen. Merrick-Moore is located in a low-income neighborhood. The extra attention kindergartners receive in learning to read, spell and count makes a big difference in their education, Hicklen said.

COURTESY MERRICK-MOORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Fletcher's Chapel United Methodist Church member Robin Sorrell volunteers at Merrick-Moore Elementary School in Durham, N.C.

Fletcher's Chapel provides backpacks filled with snacks that children take home at the end of the week to ensure food to eat over the weekend, adopts a student's family at Christmas and has furnished thousands of books and classroom supplies.

Sorrell volunteers in a Merrick-Moore kindergarten class.

"It just lifts my spirits seeing the little children learn and grow," she said. "It fulfills something in me."

Erin Edgemon is a freelance writer in Montgomery, Ala.

MCKENDREE'S HOMELESS OUTREACH CONNECTS HEARTS

Being a part of McKendree and staying in The Foundry has saved my life and given me a purpose," says Ronnie Milton, a resident and current manager of the congregation's shelter ministry.

McKendree United Methodist Church is a multiethnic, multigenerational and multicultural congregation in downtown Nashville, Tenn. "Every Sunday and throughout the week," says the Rev. Stephen Handy, lead pastor, "diversity is expected and embraced."

Ministry with the homeless has been part of McKendree

The Foundry, meals twice a week for 350, a clothes closet and a dental clinic.

"The church needs to see God's poor as sacred persons who can broaden our hearts and offer grace, and not as a mission or service project to be completed," Handy says.

Energetic worship, Life Groups and an active children's program also drive McKendree.

Through Missional Partnerships, McKendree leverages personal and financial resources. The most recent partner is the General Council on Finance and Administration. Bobby Smith, a Restoration Pointe board member and GCFA employee, invited Michael Daniel, a Home Depot executive, to visit The Foundry. Daniel liked what he saw. In December, Daniel, along with Smith and GCFA chief executive Moses Kumar, presented an advance check to The Foundry for \$5,000.

"Some people in our homeless population have a variety of emotional, psychological, financial and physical challenges," Handy says, "but we are open to God's creative means for connecting our hearts with their hearts. We have realized that we need our homeless maybe more than they need us."

Barbara Dunlap-Berg

GCFA/SHARON DEAN



Pictured (left to right) are Moses Kumar, Michael Daniel, Bobby Smith and the Rev. Stephen Handy, pastor, McKendree United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tenn.

for more than 30 years. The Foundry provides on-campus transitional housing for eight men, job training and placement, financial planning, veterans' case management, coaching and weekly spiritual formation.

In 2013, the church established Restoration Pointe, a non-profit agency overseeing

AT A GLANCE

Fletcher's Chapel United Methodist Church | 1919 Fletcher's Chapel Road, Durham, NC 27703 | fletchers.chapel@nccumc.org | <https://fletcherschapel.nccumc.net> | Pastor: The Rev. Kristen D. Williams | Attendance: 69 | North Carolina Conference

AT A GLANCE

McKendree United Methodist Church | 523 Church St., Nashville, TN 37219 | mckendreeinfo@gmail.com | www.mckendreetoday.com | Lead Pastor: The Rev. Stephen Handy | Tennessee Conference

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Read these stories telling of United Methodists connecting for mission and ministry. Know that there are thousands more to be told.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ALL

The Stegall Seminary Scholarship Endowment Foundation allows each full-time, on-campus seminary student from the Alabama-West Florida Conference to receive a \$10,000 scholarship each year. *Mary Catherine Phillips*

FROM CLEAN UP TO REBUILDING

After an April 2 tornado ripped through Central Arkansas, more than 950 United Methodists and their friends assisted over 200 households with clean up and debris removal, chainsaw and heavy equipment work, utilities, storage, temporary housing and rebuilding. *Amy Forbus*

BREAKFAST'S READY — EVERY DAY

Manna House in Baltimore, which started 48 years ago, feeds 200 homeless people breakfast every day – 365 days a year. *The Rev. Erik Alsgaard*

BEGINNING 'GREEN'

A grant from the United Methodist Council of Bishops allowed Valley & Mountain United Methodist Community in Seattle to create “Green from the Start.” The resource helps churches incorporate ecologically healthy behaviors. *Valley & Mountain UM Community, Seattle*

1,000 CHILDREN LOVED

A \$10,000 grant from UMCOR let volunteers from Desert Southwest churches offer love and hope to over 1,000 unaccompanied

immigrant children and displaced families searching for help in the United States. *Christina Dillabough*

LEARNING AND SHARING

The Children's Ministries Network of Discipleship Ministries uses Facebook to provide continual learning and idea exchange among 800 annual conference and local church leaders. Webinars also provide training. *Report to the Connectional Table*

BRINGING CAMP TO CHURCH

In North Georgia, 34 youth volunteered more than 4,200 hours as day camp counselors for 630 children at 24 local churches. *Sybil Davidson*

PAINLESS FUNDRAISING

The General Council on Finance and Administration regularly reviews UMC-market.org, an online shopping service

Volunteers for Impact Las Vegas 2013 help clean up the Palos Verdes neighborhood near the Las Vegas Strip. Together, more than 3,700 churches have rallied more than 103,000 volunteers to serve 4.2 million people through Impact Community events. The events are part of Rethink Church, a program of United Methodist Communications.

UMNS/JOEY BUTLER





Students at Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia explore their e-readers provided through a collaborative project of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and Discipleship Ministries. The United Methodist Publishing House provided at no cost many of the theological texts and reference books loaded on the devices.

that allows United Methodists to have a percentage of their total purchase donated to a congregation or church-related organization. www.gcfa.org, www.umcmarket.org

SUPPORTING DISPLACED WORKERS

Greater New Jersey United Methodists formed the Atlantic City Emergency Response Team to help the thousands of workers who were laid off from the casino industry this fall. *Carolyn Conover*

EXPANDING CAMPUS MINISTRY

Over 500 campus ministers used training offered in 2014 by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, which also has developed new collegiate ministries in Japan, South-east Asia and the Philippines. *Report to the Connectional Table*



Students Luzia Bandeira, Angel Tshindj Musaw, Rose Otshi and Betty Kayembe wait to begin graduation rehearsal at Africa University. More than 3,000 students from throughout Africa have graduated from the university, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2013.

SHARING LEARNING

Germantown United Methodist Church in the Memphis Conference trained over 100 volunteers from several churches for Team Read. The program is now in 16 elementary schools. Church teams lead all but one. *Lane Gardner Camp*

'I HAVE A HOME.'

Mississippi United Methodist churches in the Jackson area, Methodist Build for Habitat for Humanity, have built or rehabbed six houses since 2009. *Tamica Smith*

SHARING TOGETHER

United Methodists in Missouri were among volunteers assembling 9,269 health and school kits and loading 45 tons of gleaned potatoes and grain to deliver to local relief agencies during an annual Festival of Sharing. *Fred Koenig*

FILLING TUMMIES

More than 2,000 Action Ministries volunteers in North Georgia donated 23,000 hours in summer 2014 to serve 200,000-plus healthy lunches to 24,390 individual children. A United Methodist mission network in Western North Carolina's Northern Piedmont District collaborated with schools and local businesses to serve more than 43,000 meals in summer 2014. *Sybil Davidson and the Rev. Michael Rich*

NEW UNDIES, SOCKS AROUND

Churches in the Oregon-Idaho Conference had "Undie Sunday" to gather

underwear for collection at annual conference and distribution to agencies in the Boise, Idaho, area. The Desert Southwest Conference collected 43,946 pairs of socks for 20 different agencies. *Greg Nelson and Christina Dillabough*

DRIVING CHANGE

Improvements in working conditions and treatment of tomato pickers in Florida have been partly driven by the work of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits. The pension board acts on its stance that a sustainable, stable and productive global economy requires fair and equitable treatment of all workers by having discussions with the companies in which the church is a shareholder. *Sondra Long Weaver, www.gbophb.org*

HAVING VITAL CONVERSATIONS

The General Commission on Religion and Race awarded nearly \$1.3 million in grants to fund initiatives across local churches, annual conferences, jurisdic-



U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II, a United Methodist clergyman, discusses faith and public policy and other subjects with summer interns from the General Board of Church and Society and its Ethnic Minority Young Adult program.

tions, seminaries and central conferences to increase intercultural competency and vital conversations about race, cultural diversity and systemic equity leading to action. www.gcorr.org

STARTING A MINISTRY

In the South Georgia Conference, Speedwell and Trinity United Methodist churches in Savannah are joining in a community project to feed the homeless. *Kara Witherow*



George Howard of the General Board of Global Ministries (right) shares a photo with student baker Huang Wen Hui (left) and special education teacher Zhang Yun at the Amity Bakery in Nanjing, China. The bakery provides job skills training for people with mental disabilities.

FORMING FAITH

More than 2,400 children and youth experience radical acceptance and faith formation in Christian community during the North Georgia Conference's summer camps at Glisson. *Sybil Davidson*

CARING FOR FAMILIES

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women leads an interagency task force that convened the Clergy Family Care Summit. Participants emphasized that healthy clergy families underpin effective pastoral leadership – one of the drivers of vital congregations. www.gcsrw.org

OPENING DOORS TO SERVE

United Methodists from 13 churches in Western North Carolina helped turn a former prison into a homeless shelter, soup kitchen and halfway house. *The Rev. Michael Rich*

GIVING TO THOSE WHO SERVE

Since 2002, more than 400,000 military members have received copies of the *Strength for Service to God and Country* devotional from the General Commission on United Methodist Men and local United Methodist congregations. *United Methodist Men*

HAVE BOOKS?

United Methodist Women of the Mid-State District of the Missouri Conference created a district library to increase access to books for the UMW Reading Program. The collection travels to district meetings where members can check out and return books. *Stephanie Greiner, United Methodist Women News*

CARING FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

Several churches in the Desert Southwest Conference committed to Family Promise. Each feeds and houses homeless families for one week and provides services to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness. *Christina Dillabough*

UMMS 2013 FILE PHOTOMIKE DUBOSE



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Katie Quigley serves as a site supervisor for A Future With Hope, a long-term recovery program of the Greater New Jersey Conference. It started with support from the United Methodist Committee on Relief. More than 5,000 volunteers from 37 United Methodist conferences have traveled to Greater New Jersey to help rebuild more than 107 Hurricane Sandy-damaged homes.

Interpreter thanks the **annual conference communicators** who provided many of these vignettes of connectional mission and ministry.



Barratt's Chapel, which opened in 1780 at Frederica, Del., is the oldest existing Methodist building in America. The General Commission on Archives and History maintains vigilance on heritage landmarks, such as the chapel, which is owned by the Peninsula-Delaware Commission on Archives and History.

A VITAL CONGREGATION

CROSSROADS CHURCH BRIDGES CULTURES IN PHOENIX

Rather than focusing on a Spanish-language service that reaches first-generation immigrants, CrossRoads United Methodist Church in Phoenix decided to reach second-generation children and adults.

Pastor of CrossRoads since July, the Rev. Javier Olivares says second-generation immigrants often speak English as their primary language and serve as the bridge between the culture of the United States and the culture of their parents' homeland.

"We have forgotten the second-generation immigrants," says Olivares. "Proof of it is that we don't have many in our United Methodist churches."

Before the church deliberately reached out to second-generation immigrants, CrossRoads had 30 to 60 in worship attendance, one worship service and mostly white and older church members.

In July 2005, shortly after CrossRoads' former pastor the Rev. Dottie Escobedo-Frank arrived, the church began a contemporary worship service to reach second-generation children and adults in its multicultural, multi-socio-economic and multiethnic neighborhood.

"We had one Hispanic family come because their daughter, whose primary language



COURTESY CROSSROADS UMC, PHOENIX

The Rev. Javier Olivares

was English, brought them," Escobedo-Frank says. "This family modeled the idea of reaching Hispanics by focusing on children."

Today, Olivares says, CrossRoads has two worship services and approximately 278 diverse members. Most of the Hispanic church members are second generation. It is considering a third service to reach Spanish-speaking and bilingual people.

"It's empowering to include other ethnicities and be seated together in worship," he says.

Olivares notes that CrossRoads received a Racial Ethnic Local Church grant from the General Board of Global Ministries and an equitable-compensation grant from the annual conference.

Heather Peck Travis is a freelance journalist living in Glasgow, Ky.

FRESH, LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE HELPS CHANGING COMMUNITY

The ground was prepared. The soil was tilled, fertilized and ready for the planting and harvesting of 2,000 pounds of tomatoes, beans, leeks, sweet peas, sweet potatoes and other vegetables. It was all so that people in the changing Minneapolis suburb of Eden Prairie could eat.

Eden Prairie has many large homes with swimming pools, tennis courts and immaculate yards. The thought that this community also has people who go to bed hungry was hard to believe until the people of Eden Prairie United Methodist Church looked beyond their walls and learned who is in their neighborhood.

"It began as a Healthy Church Initiative," said the Rev. Dan Schneider-Bryan, pastor. Assessing the needs of its changing community, the congregation realized that their immigrant neighbors could not afford fresh produce regularly. They decided to get their hands dirty for the love of God and their community. Members also donated financially to support the garden.

"The church's 55-foot-by-55-foot plot was a perfect size," Schneider-Bryan said. Eden Prairie also has members Lois and Eric Hyde, who love to garden but have a small yard. Lois Hyde spearheaded the Healthy Church Initiative and



COURTESY EDEN PRAIRIE UMC

Women from Eden Prairie United Methodist Church in Minnesota gather vegetables from the garden.

recruited church members to tend the garden. The space is broken into eight plots. A head gardener recruits volunteers who plant, weed, water and harvest the vegetables.

"Many of the church volunteers are passionate about gardening," said Schneider-Bryan. "We even had the Minnesota Vikings groundskeeper help us by tilling the soil with his rototiller."

The church donates fresh vegetables to People Reaching Out to People (PROP), a local agency that also helps those in need with clothes and financial assistance. "We are cultivating spirituality in vegetables," said Schneider-Bryan.

The congregation plans to continue the garden as long as the community needs fresh produce. Schneider-Bryan said members have also helped surrounding churches start their own gardens and have coordinated what each grows to ensure a variety of vegetables to donate to PROP.

Christine Kumar

AT A GLANCE

CrossRoads United Methodist Church | 7901 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85020 | info@crossroadsphx.com | www.crossroadsphx.com | Pastor: The Rev. Javier Olivares | Attendance: 178 | Desert Southwest Conference

AT A GLANCE

Eden Prairie United Methodist Church | 15050 Scenic Heights Road, Eden Prairie, MN 55344 | 952-937-8781 | office@prairiechurch.org | www.prairiechurch.org | Pastor: The Rev. Daniel Schneider-Bryan | Attendance: 164 | Minnesota Conference