

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

**The people of The United Methodist Church®**

# *FUTURE-FOCUSED MISSION DRIVEN*

**TOGETHER IN MISSION FOR SAKE OF THE WORLD**



# DEAR SISTERS AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST,

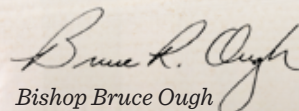
**IN THE FALL OF 2013**, the Council of Bishops gathered in North Carolina for its first full meeting of the new quadrennium. At that meeting, we engaged in Christian conferencing – a visioning process that created a roadmap for our journey together as United Methodists around the world. Many aspects of this vision became concrete strategies that resulted in vital ministries connecting annual conferences and general agencies. And many of these have borne fruit. Praise God!

In the midst of successes and failures, strategies and visions, we reflect on our shared mission, on the call to each follower of Jesus, each United Methodist faith community, each conference to therefore go and make disciples of Jesus Christ throughout all the nations. As we reflect on the journey we have traveled together for the past three years, and as we prepare for General Conference, we remember first and foremost our call as the people called United Methodist. God calls us to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In Matthew, we are instructed by Jesus to “make disciples of all the nations.” Over the decades, we have taken this task to heart and have grown our denomination in nations throughout the world. Praise God!

The 2013-16 quadrennium has been one of focus, alignment and affirmation. We have remained faithful to our goal to increase the number of vital congregations and to bear fruit in the four areas of missional focus – leadership, new places for new people, ministry with the poor and global health. This work continues to deepen throughout annual conferences, districts and local congregations as we respond to God’s call on each of our lives. Praise God!

We invite you to join us in recommitting ourselves to engage in our fundamental task of practicing the means of grace for our salvation and the salvation of the world. May God’s Word inspire and revitalize the journey of your congregation and the journey of your annual conference – in connection with the whole church – as we all bear witness to Christ’s saving love for the world.

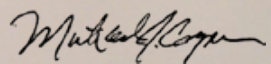
Affirmed in God’s Grace,

  
Bishop Bruce Ough

CHAIRPERSON, CONNECTIONAL TABLE



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



Bishop Michael Coyner  
PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNCIL  
ON FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION



## FUTURE-FOCUSED > MISSION-DRIVEN

# INCREASING VITAL CONGREGATIONS

*The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena in which disciple-making occurs. (2012 Book of Discipline, ¶ 120)*

**SINCE 2010**, the Council of Bishops has affirmed focusing attention, energy and resources on our core mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As a means to fulfill this mission, we are focused on increasing the number of disciple-making vital congregations across the United Methodist connection. Church leaders are deepening their understanding of the drivers of vitality and recommitting themselves to strive for improvements in five key areas: professions of faith, worship attendance, small group ministries, missional engagement and missional giving. In the United States, many annual conferences have been tracking these five measures, comparing them annually and addressing the gaps.

In 2014, The United Methodist Church in the United States saw slight decreases in worship attendance, professions of faith and small groups, but a significant increase in missional engagement. Mission giving remained steady. Church leaders will

continue to track and engage these measures to assist in assessing the fruitfulness of their ministries.

As The United Methodist Church continues to move toward better and more consistent measures of vitality across our worldwide denomination, we are using various methods to learn about the fruit of our ministries and gather life-changing stories.

### NAMING THE BRIGHT SPOTS: VITAL CONGREGATIONS IN CENTRAL CONFERENCES

In 2015, Bishops John Schol and Mike Lowry worked with their episcopal colleagues in the Philippines to identify “bright spots” – places where vital ministries are thriving. They worked with local leaders to identify the ministries and strategies that lead to vitality (“bright spots”) and can be replicated in other places in the Philippines. There will be a similar consultation in two episcopal areas in Africa in 2016.

### THE VITAL CONGREGATIONS OPERATIONS TEAM

Our commitment to vital congregations continues to inspire working together



CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE/JAMES K. KANG

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toward our mission. The Vital Congregations Operations Team monitors and celebrates the progress of annual conferences as they seek to increase the numbers of disciples attending worship, professing their faith in Jesus, engaging in small groups and in mission and giving generously. The members of this team – representatives of annual conferences and general agencies – collect and share inspiring stories of these congregations. Time and again, we see these congregations bearing fruit in their ministries with the poor, their concern for global health, their commitment to developing faithful leaders and their passion to start new faith communities around the world.

TOGETHER IN MISSION FOR SAKE OF THE WORLD



UNICOM/JAY MALIN

# MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

The United Methodist Church reports a professing membership of 12.3 million disciples worldwide, a 24 percent increase over the past 10 years. The membership numbers have shifted globally during the past 10 years, with growth in Africa and Asia and decline in the United States and Europe.

CENTRAL CONFERENCE/REGION	2004	2014	10-YEAR CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP	10-YEAR % CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP
AFRICA CENTRAL	174,617	748,963	574,346	329%
CONGO	862,275	2,595,317	1,733,042	201%
WEST AFRICA	594,739	1,508,696	913,957	154%
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE	18,410	15,352	(3,058)	-17%
GERMANY	37,924	32,108	(5,816)	-15%
NORTHERN EUROPE AND EURASIA	16,355	11,483	(4,872)	-30%
PHILIPPINES	179,452	216,326	36,874	21%
UNITED STATES	8,075,010	7,183,193	(891,817)	-11%
TOTAL	9,958,782	12,311,438	2,352,656	24%

REGION	ANNUAL CONFERENCES	CONGREGATIONS	PROFESSING MEMBERS
AFRICA REGION TOTAL	30	12,431	4,852,976
PHILIPPINES TOTAL	24	1,444	216,326
EUROPE TOTAL	20	1,065	58,943
NORTH AMERICA TOTAL	57	32,408	7,183,193



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ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE/LUKE LUCAS

## UMC CLERGY, BISHOPS, CONGREGATIONS, CONFERENCES

In 10 years, The United Methodist Church has experienced strong growth in Africa as evidenced by increases in the number of clergy, congregations, conferences and members.

2014	TOTAL CLERGY	ORGANIZED CHURCHES	ANNUAL CONFERENCES	ACTIVE BISHOPS
AFRICA	9,620	12,431	30	13
ASIA	1,910	1,444	24	3
EUROPE	1,130	1,065	20	4
NORTH AMERICA	45,651	32,408	57	46
TOTALS	58,311	47,348	131	66

2004	TOTAL CLERGY	TOTAL CONGREGATIONS	ANNUAL CONFERENCES	ACTIVE BISHOPS
AFRICA	6,886	4,792	19	11
ASIA	3,279	1,691	24	3
EUROPE	1,100	881	21	4
NORTH AMERICA	45,176	35,065	65	50
TOTALS	56,441	42,429	129	68

PHOTOS: UMNS/MIKE DUBOSE

TOGETHER IN MISSION FOR SAKE OF THE WORLD

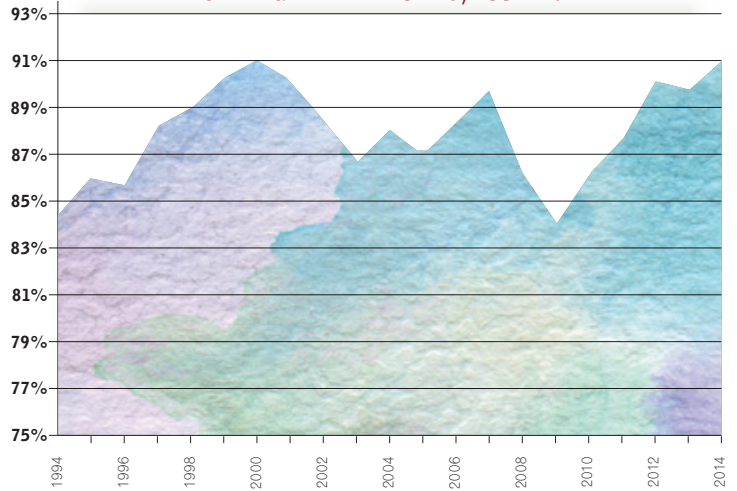
# GENERAL CHURCH FUNDS

The following charts show the total amount of apportioned funds requested and received from annual conferences in the United States. In 2016, the delegates to General Conference will have an opportunity to deliberate on proposals to expand apportionment collections to central conferences. Some central conferences have contributed to apportioned funds in the past, but not in a formalized apportionment collection system.

PAID ON APPORTIONMENTS TO ALL GENERAL FUNDS, 1994-2014\*

YEAR	TOTAL FUNDS APPORTIONED	PAID	% PAID
1994	\$110,639,996	\$93,339,909	84.4%
1995	\$113,828,214	\$97,868,862	86.0%
1996	\$117,146,649	\$100,382,948	85.7%
1997	\$118,425,273	\$104,496,463	88.2%
1998	\$118,431,010	\$105,394,783	89.0%
1999	\$119,630,756	\$107,857,724	90.2%
2000	\$121,999,757	\$111,187,769	91.1%
2001	\$127,256,750	\$114,676,537	90.1%
2002	\$127,860,750	\$113,095,935	88.5%
2003	\$129,634,750	\$112,418,090	86.7%
2004	\$132,656,250	\$116,808,070	88.1%
2005	\$139,955,000	\$121,703,502	87.0%
2006	\$142,849,627	\$126,427,676	88.5%
2007	\$145,693,841	\$130,564,022	89.6%
2008	\$150,973,581	\$130,210,994	86.2%
2009	\$150,308,000	\$126,303,259	84.0%
2010	\$150,232,058	\$129,428,321	86.2%
2011	\$149,472,006	\$130,885,848	87.6%
2012	\$147,268,131	\$132,743,590	90.1%
2013	\$143,302,750	\$128,613,187	89.7%
2014	\$143,132,984	\$130,069,948	90.9%

PERCENTAGE PAID ON APPORTIONMENTS TO ALL GENERAL FUNDS, 1994-2014



# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE **FOUR** AREAS OF FOCUS



UMNS/MIKE DUBOSE

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**AS UNITED METHODIST** conferences and congregations implement strategies to:

- » develop new leaders
- » create new places for new people
- » engage in ministry with the poor and
- » improve the health of communities around the globe,

we demonstrate what it means to be a vital connected church in the tradition of the Wesleyan movement. The Council of Bishops highlighted these four areas 10 years ago as ways in which their conferences were bearing fruit for Christ.

Today, the Four Areas of Focus continue to bear evidence of vital ministries across the connection, ministries that fulfill our mission to make disciples. Our worldwide church planting efforts and our commitment to end malaria are two clear examples.

In 2014 and 2015, church leaders planted 839 new churches and faith communities in annual conferences worldwide and 226 new faith communities through mission initiatives in places where the United Methodist presence is new. We celebrate the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in Malawi, which is transitioning from a mission initiative to a new provisional conference, a step toward becoming a full annual conference.

In 2008, the General Conference affirmed a United Methodist missional focus to end death and suffering from malaria, a preventable disease that still claims the life of a child every two minutes. In 2012, church leaders launched the Imagine No Malaria campaign to raise \$75 million to help prevent the spread of malaria and fund long-term solutions toward eradicating the disease. As of November 2015, the campaign had raised more than

*In 2014 and 2015, church leaders planted 839 new churches and faith communities through annual conferences.*

90 percent of its goal – thanks to the generosity of United Methodists around the world committed to saving the lives of sisters and brothers in need!

The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table will continue to partner with the United



*The Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table will continue to partner with the United Methodist general agencies to strengthen and align the focus of each area and lead the church in the next four years.*

Methodist general agencies to strengthen and align the focus of each area and lead the church in the next four years. We have identified specific ways in which the worldwide connection can engage in world-transforming ministries.

Together, we will reach more people, make the best use of our resources, deepen the impact of our ministries and more effectively tell the story of God's love for the world. Every United Methodist has a role to play in achieving our shared goals.

As we increase the vitality of our own spiritual journey, our congregations and the life of the whole church through the four areas of missional focus, we remain *focused on the mission*. By the millions, we are responding to the Great Commission, to make disciples of Jesus Christ worldwide and to transform the world.

# STRENGTHENING OUR WORLDWIDE CONNECTION

**TO BE A VITAL CONNECTED CHURCH** that lives as “interdependent worldwide partners in prayer, mission and worship together,” (*The Book of Discipline 2012*, ¶125) we must order our lives differently. We must live out of the vision God has set before us as The United Methodist Church, that is to become more contextually relevant, to be open to conversations that foster deeper connections and to steward faithfully the resources we share.

The work we are doing now and in the next quadrennium to build these relationships for carrying out the mission is essential if we want to succeed. The structure of our church must be built on collaborative work. Leaders have created a roadmap for change and are leading the church on this journey of faith together.

Milestones on the Journey for a Stronger Worldwide Connection:

» The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters has developed

a prototype of a *General Book of Discipline* and has laid the groundwork for engaging the whole church to have a proposal ready for the 2020 General Conference.

» The General Board of Church and Society has engaged United Methodists across the connection worldwide to help shape what **worldwide Social Principles** would look like.

» The General Council on Finance and Administration has developed a proposal

for expanding the apportionment system and will continue to work toward equitable financial systems for a worldwide connection.

» The Connectional Table has engaged the connection in conversations about our general church **structure**, and how churches in the United States might make decisions that are relevant to their setting.





This report was a collaborative effort with statistical data provided by the General Council on Finance and Administration and the Vital Congregations Initiative. Production support was provided by United Methodist Communications.

To view this report online, visit [www.umc.org/sotc](http://www.umc.org/sotc).

# FUTURE-FOCUSED/ MISSION DRIVEN

**THE WORLD TRULY IS OUR PARISH.** For decades, the church has experienced shifting demographics. United Methodist leaders continue to discern how best to order the life of the church in ways that embody authenticity, equity and sustainability.

During the past four years, church leaders have nurtured a vision for a more authentic worldwide connection, and the roadmap has come more clearly into focus. The collaborative work – both administrative and programmatic – of general church commissions, committees and boards to adapt to the exciting changes in the church is truly inspiring. We are focused on creating new relationships and engaging in meaningful Christian conferencing. We believe that walking together on this journey will generate a more effective, equitable and sustainable church structure.

With clearer focus and stronger alignment of our program life together as United Methodists, we are bearing much fruit for God's kingdom. We celebrate and affirm the ministries around the world that bring the healing love of Jesus Christ to the broken, the hungry, the sick, the lost and forsaken.

May God bless our journey together with Christ for the salvation and the transformation of the world.

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